

# Dealing with the Doubt Demon

Dara Girard

*“The only good teachers for you are those friends who love you, who think you are interesting, or very important, or wonderfully funny.”*

Brenda Ueland

The doubt demon loves artists. This sensitive bunch of individuals falls prey to it so easily, from cartoonist Charles Schulz to writer Virginia Woolf. This little demon reared its ugly head when Stephen King threw the beginnings of *Carrie* into the wastebasket. We all owe our gratitude to his wife, Tabitha, who picked it out of the wastebasket and encouraged her husband to keep going. Some struggling writers don't have such champions. Many writers ask themselves: *Am I good enough? Am I wasting my time? If I was really talented I would be (published, successful, rich) by now.* These kinds of thoughts are evidence of the doubt demon. The doubt demon can only be conquered by a concerted effort to give it as little attention as possible. Not just by you, but by the people around you.

As a published author, and one who has been in the business for several years, it's hard to say this, but not everyone you know will want to see your writing dreams come true. Not because they're mean (some are), but because they are unhappy with their own life choices and don't want to see you change or cannot share in your dreams.

Avoiding the doubt demon is basically impossible for most of us, but there is something you can do about it. When you are facing the doubt demon make sure only to speak to friends or family members who are truly invested in seeing you succeed. You can identify these individuals three ways. They...

1. **...always have something upbeat to say.** You say, *“I just got another rejection. I must suck.”* They say *“No, you just sent it to the wrong editor.”* If they say something like, *“You get a lot of rejections maybe writing isn't your thing,”* they are **not** someone you want to discuss your dreams with. As artists, we know the power of the written word and how they can impact people (read any bestseller). The spoken word is just as powerful (ask any leader) and you need to protect yourself from all negative input.
2. **...are basically happy.** Sorry, but unhappy people can't give you the support you need. If they're bemoaning man troubles or their jobs they likely won't have the energy to lift your sagging spirits. Unfortunately, the phrase 'misery loves company' is true. So look for happy, optimistic individuals for support. You don't need many. One will do.

3. ... *make you feel good*. No matter what, they are enthusiastic about your efforts, ask about what you're up to, and are generally interested in what you're doing. At times, when I've begun a story and it's not coming together I have a friend who I always call. I know I can depend on her to say or do something that will make me feel good. If someone makes you feel bad, take them off your list.

**Fighting the doubt demon is hard on your own.** You need to find a cheerleader to place in your corner. As I've said earlier, even if it's only one person have someone you can call to give yourself the boost you need. The wonderful thing about a cheerleader is they can come in two forms: Those who read your works and those who don't. I know people who continue to support my writing ambitions, but who have never read any of my work. They believe in *me* and that's support enough. So go out there and find your demon fighters. You deserve them.

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