

Miranda Gray

Women's writer, artist, facilitator, menstrual and spiritual teacher



A female approach to solving writer's blocks!

We've all been there. Sitting at the blank computer screen, fingers poised above the keyboard ready to start... and nothing happens! Then, after a few attempts, the panic steps in: '**Why can't I write, what's wrong with me?**', '**What if I can't meet the deadline?**', and '**Am I really any good at this, should I get a proper job?**'!

Women's creativity has a unique element to it; **it is cyclic**. When we begin to understand this, and work practically within this cyclic nature, we find that writer's block is simply 'trying to do the wrong thing at the wrong time'!

The cyclic aspect to women's creativity lies in their menstrual cycle. Many women don't realise that the menstrual cycle affects the way we think, our abilities and skillsets, how we communicate, and how we perceive the world and ourselves. And for women in the creative industry, the menstrual cycle can be either a huge challenge or a resource of powerful tools they can actively use to excel.

The menstrual cycle can be divided into four phases; **pre-ovulation, ovulation, pre-menstruation and menstruation**. In each phase we can experience days of heightened abilities and skillsets called *Optimum Times*. For example, the pre-ovulation phase is the *Optimum Time* for logical thinking and reasoning skills, the ovulation phase has heightened feeling-orientated perception, the pre-menstrual phase offers us inspiration and problem identification, and the menstrual phase is the *Optimum Time* for touching base with core values and issues.

So how does this relate to women writers and solving Writer's Block?

A 'block' appears when we expect consistency of thinking and ability, and we expect to be able to do something not in alignment with our cyclic abilities. This is not to say we can't do any task outside of our *Optimum Time*, just that it can take longer, be more difficult and may be of poorer quality.

To get ahead, we need to apply to the 'optimized' writing the tools given to us by our cycles.

How do we use our cyclic writing skills?

The pre-ovulation phase

We can use the **pre-ovulation phase** to build the structure of our book, to plan our plots and our work schedule, to break down the chapters into sublevels, to organise our files on

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characters or to categorise piles of research, and to give ourselves the basis on which to write creatively later in the month. It's also the *Optimum Time* for analytical and structured writing, for editing and research, and for checking the small print on the publisher's contract!

The ovulation phase

With the change to the **ovulation phase** comes heightened communication, listening and empathy skills, making it an *Optimum Time* to write dialogue, to interview people for their stories, to write from the heart and from our passion, to ask for people's views and critiques, to empathise with our characters or our audience. It is the *Optimum Time* to network, contact publishers, market our books and proposals, and do talks and signings.

The pre-menstrual phase

The **pre-menstrual phase** is often the most challenging for many women, but it offers us some powerful tools for writing. It can be an intensely inspirational and creative phase if we allocate time to day-dream and ponder, often providing 'Eureka' moments as ideas lock into place.

The *Optimum Time* for creative writing and to explore ideas, it often takes only one small seed idea to start an avalanche of writing. The pre-menstrual phase is also the time to identify problems and create solutions. It is the time to analyse whether the plot really works, to explore why we are not happy with the structure, to cut away superfluous words and sections, and to brain-storm what would work, how we could approach things differently and how to re-write that awkward paragraph.

The menstrual phase

As we move into the **menstrual phase** our physical energies are often low, and mental abilities such as concentration and memory can also decline. If we have planned well in the pre-ovulation phase we are on track with our deadline and can afford to drive ourselves a little less for a few days. When we take the opportunity to rest in this phase two things happen; firstly, we come out of this phase into the next refreshed and full of renewed energy, and secondly we have the opportunity to connect to our deepest insight.

This phase is the *Optimum Time* for touching base with who we are and what we are doing, not only in our life but also in what we are writing. Does the book feel 'right'? Are we writing in a style, genre, method that feels 'comfortable' to us? Can we commit to the direction the book is taking, or do we need to go back to the core values of the book or of the publisher? Have we gone off track? Are we writing what we were asked to write? Is the

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deadline feasible? In this phase we can ask ourselves these potentially challenging questions without the emotional rollercoaster and needs we can experience in other phases.

When the **next pre-ovulation phase** comes round again we are renewed in our energies, mental abilities and commitment to get started. We can plan our work schedule for the month ahead using our *Optimum Time* skills to their best possible advantage and knowing that just because we can't write in a particular way right now, give it a couple of weeks and there'll be no stopping us! 'Writer's block' no longer exists - we simply do the right task at the right time.

To learn more about your unique *Optimum Times* and how to use them to create success and well-being read 'The Optimized Woman' by Miranda Gray.

