



The Professional Writer Podcast

Episode #10 Transcript

Moving from Self-Focused to Self-Forgetful

<https://bloggingbistro.com/podcast/moving-from-self-focused-to-self-forgetful>

Think about a time you've been with three or more people – maybe at a networking event or conference, or a social event or even a family gathering. You're having a conversation with someone, and that person appears to be constantly looking around to see who else they'd rather be talking to.

I've been on the receiving end of that kind of behavior, and to my shame, I've also done that to others.

It's the sign of a self-absorbed person who's only interested in using others to make herself look good.

A self-focused person is the opposite of a self-forgetful person. A self-forgetful person isn't concerned with how she looks or whom she's with or what others might be thinking of her. She isn't thinking about herself at all; she is sincerely focused on the person she's interacting with and what they are saying.

Whenever we walk away from talking with a self-forgetful person, we know it inside. We can feel the difference. "She has given us a gift—the gift of her full attention, telling us without so many words that we matter."

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PAGE 1



That information is adapted from a book titled, [*Sensitive and Strong: A Guide for Highly Sensitive Persons and Those Who Love Them*](#), by my friend Cheri Gregory and her co-author, Denise J. Hughes. They were examining a passage from another book, [*The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*](#), by Timothy Keller.

Cheri and Denise write that embracing the gift of self-forgetfulness enables us to be “fully present with others, fully engaged in what the other person is saying. Because this kind of person is not thinking about herself, she is a gift to everyone around her. That is the gift of self-forgetfulness.”

“As HSPs we want to be that kind of friend, that kind of coworker, that kind of spouse, and that kind of parent.”

I love that contrast between self-focused and self-forgetful. It ties in with what we discussed in [episode #9, titled “Being True to Yourself.”](#) We talked about all the things platform-building experts and marketing gurus tell us we must do if we’re going to fulfill *their* definition of “successful writer.”

I mentioned how several of the ways I am intentionally choosing to build my business fly directly in the face of the so-called “wisdom” that these marketers are dispensing.

When I read *Sensitive and Strong*, I realized that the reason that I’ve chosen to do these things and why doing them *energizes* me, rather than *drains* me, is because, when doing them, I don’t feel self-focused at all. I feel self-forgetful. And that’s how I want to feel.

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PAGE 2



In [episode #3, titled "Going All In,"](#) I told you about why I decided to start a podcast now, instead of three years ago, when I first began considering launching a podcast. One marketer I know chastised me for waiting three years. He told me, "Do you realize how much money you've left on the table by not starting your podcast sooner?"

I replied, "Yes, I do. And I'm perfectly fine with that. Because three years ago, two years ago, and even one year ago, I wasn't ready to start a podcast."

But now I am. And here's the cool thing, which my friend, Cheri Gregory, the co-author of *Sensitive and Strong*, reaffirmed in a Voxer message. Cheri said, "I'm thrilled to hear that you're starting a podcast. I think you're going to have a blast with it. There's something about podcasting that frees up your creativity and gets you thinking in new directions."

Cheri was on target with her prediction. As I was preparing to launch The Professional Writer podcast, I devoted a couple of hours each workday for about a month brainstorming topics and themes and outlining the first 10 episodes. I wrote over 25,000 words in a couple of weeks. The ideas have been flowing, and I am feeling such freedom and joy as I settle in to communicating in a way that's stretching and growing me.

In their book, *Sensitive and Strong*, Cheri and Denise include a chapter titled, "The Gift of Time: Saying Less to Yes So You Can Give More." The chapter includes a six-word, six-question exercise to help us prayerfully consider new commitments.

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The exercise starts with asking yourself a basic question that's only 6 words long. The question is:

Why am I doing this now?

As you're considering a new commitment, ask yourself the question six different ways, putting the emphasis on a different word each time, and pray for guidance.

1. Why am I doing this now?
2. Why am I doing this now?
3. Why am I doing this now?
4. Why am I doing this now?
5. Why am I doing this now?
6. Why am I doing this now?

WHY? What's your *motivation*? As I asked myself the WHY question, I added, "Am I doing this because I want to be self-focused or self-forgetful?"

AM? This is a deeper *purpose* question, and the answer takes some digging. Say a friend invites you to meet for coffee or lunch. Sometimes, the WHY answer, such as "It sounds like fun," covers up the true answer, which might be, "I'm feeling overextended, and I'm looking for an escape."

I? This is an *identity* question with two followup questions:

Is this something ONLY I can do?

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PAGE 4



Am I doing it because I'm lured by the idol of productivity, the idol of being needed, the idol of human approval, or the idol of false peace?

DOING? This is a *process* question. Is DOING the right step at this point? Or should I be researching, reflecting, resting, seeking counsel, asking for help, waiting, or backing away instead?

THIS? This is a *priority* question. Of all the things I could be doing, is this the best use of my time and energy? Do I need to reprioritize how I'm using my time?

NOW? This is a *timing* question. Is there a green light to move forward, a yellow light to slow down, or a red light to stop? Does this project have to be done NOW, or is there a better time to work on it? Do I already have enough on my plate, and I need to fulfill other commitments before starting new ones?

ACTION STEP

As you're evaluating whether to take on the next opportunity, ask yourself:

Why am I doing this now?

Ask it 6 ways. And pray for wisdom to discern whether this is the right path for you to take now.

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