



Chapter Four – Doubt & Confidence - Transcript

In this chapter, we look at 'Doubt and Confidence' and how both can have massive impacts on your writing. You've learned in previous chapters how to start to plan and to mind map and to go about writing poems but to continue to do so takes a lot of self-belief and self-confidence in what you have to say. The more you write, the more you start to compare your writing to other pieces of your writing that you're really proud of or even start to compare them to other poets or people who are writing around you. It's really easy at this stage to start to get in your head and start doubting your abilities or to feel the pressure, if you've, if you've had a great success so far, and you're really happy with everything you've written. To feel, to feel the pressure to keep writing 'good' things, um, can be really strong right now. This chapter will teach you how to counter that.

CHAPTER 4 – AM I GOOD ENOUGH?

So when I was 23 (maybe not long out of university) when I was 23, uh, I'm 30 now, I wrote a list of things that I wanted to accomplish by the time I was 30. And it had things like 'write a novel', 'direct a feature film', 'travel the world', 'buy a house', there was a lot on there, there was a lot. And at the time my 22-year-old self looked at the eight years and thought that I could do all of those things hands down no problem I had more than enough time. The 22-year-old obviously didn't know that life takes sharp left turns and all the other opportunities, the 22-year-old didn't know anything about spoken word poetry. That being said, I was 28 and I discovered the list again. And as much as I'd ticked off quite a few things. Things like 'direct a feature film' and 'write a novel', uh, things like that were still on the list and I just had this panic. I was like: 'I need to finish this list by the time I'm 30. Oh my god. I need to, I need to pick, I need to pick which one's more important to me. I can't do all of them. I have to, I have to choose one, um, otherwise I will have wasted my time. I mean I, I wrote this eight years ago did I not know that it was coming I knew this was gonna happen.' And I started getting so down on myself and feeling this massive pressure to achieve a certain number of things by the time I turned 30 or else I wasn't good enough. And I had to, like, really sit myself down and be like 'Right are you planning on getting hit by a bus the day you turn 30? No, chill out'. 'Spark', in the middle, is probably one of the most personal poems I've ever written. And it's my, my way of asking if I'm still the trailblazer that I was at 22. It's really easy to either think of a time that you were doing stuff you were really proud of or to even look at people who you feel are smashing life and you just feel that you're not and just have this question. 'Am I good enough?' Even on your worst days, you are absolutely good enough. 'Spark', the whole show, the poem, is all about how when you're in that place know that all it takes is a spark. You just need the smallest kernel of self-belief and self-worth and you can do anything.

TRANSCRIPT FOR 'SPARK'

on the nights you are a ghost in your own bed and the summer heat creeps in the window and licks up the inside of your thighs and laughs at all your haunting when all you are is burning don't forget to breathe you see, fire needs air to burn too and this isn't your first time scorching the summers here are few and far between but when the heat comes it can be suffocating stuffing you in to straitjacket stickiness and groping at your skin it's okay to be missing him when you're in each other's warmth on the nights everything is so close it pushes you away think of the thunderstorms you hold in your hands and their power to clear things, you see sadness is a subtle phantom slipping you out of your body before you've ever felt its possession you are no one's possession remember that when you are floating above yourself you are the girl with the subway system beneath the surface of your city skin always rushing never stopping never sleeping so many places to be and you begin to lose yourself in the dark on the nights all the lights go out do not be afraid remember all the places you went and the pieces of yourself that stayed remember not every ghost has to die to get there and not everything that dies has to stay dead breathe just breathe follow every subway line like it's the only story you have left and burn you are allowed to burn think of all the great things that happen when you do the way your feet pound the pavement and maybe your worst stories hide in the pages of your diaries remember you are scary too and not every fire has to bring the world to its knees sometimes all it takes is a Spark so keep matches in your teeth and show them off in all your smiles keep the heat in your heartbeat grip it with your lightning hands and feel your own power light up a room light up your home feel the walls shake under your tempest body ghost no more haunter no more somewhere a girl with her heels in her hands runs to catch the last subway home somewhere an old house creaks with the memories of times long gone someone lights a candle someone starts a campfire a volcano stirs and scientists shit themselves because they all thought it was long dead and you lie in bed and breathe the arms of the one who loves you most who fans your flames with the flickers in his chest holds you a little tighter a cool breeze climbs in the window and the sky gets a little lighter he grabs the duvet and pulls you both under and outside the air starts to clear with the first rumbles of thunder

WRITING EXERCISE – SEVEN MINUTES

We're going to once again take our brains off the hook and do another seven minutes of free writing. You've done this before and I hope it's been useful so we're going to do it again only this time it's called 'I am good enough because...' So I want you to take a new page in your notebook and write down at the top 'I am good enough because...' and you're going to just start writing for seven minutes and don't stop. This time if you get stuck instead of continuing to write 'I am writing, I am writing, I am writing' I want you to write 'I am good enough because...' So if you come to a natural stop just keep writing the prompt and you'll come up with new ways to tell yourself why you're good enough so seven minutes are on the clock now. Happy writing.

CHAPTER 4 – TAKING UP SPACE

Have you been doing all of your writing while sitting at your desk? If so, then stand up. Listen to this next section while you're standing, just shake it off a little bit and just get a little bit of movement into your body. It can be so easy to forget that the spoken element of it needs to actually be spoken out loud which, when you spend the entire writing process hunched over and cramped in writing, can be quite difficult. I remember when I was in school and I'd see

people have to do, um, their solo talk and everybody dreaded it. But you get, you'd see someone go to the front of the classroom and you could tell they were dreading it and they just hunched their shoulders and they'd hide behind their hair and they'd bury their head down. And it did not make them invisible (which I think they wanted it to) but it just made everybody in the room aware how uncomfortable they were so then we were uncomfortable. We're going to try a really simple exercise that's just going to help us feel a bit more confident in our writing and knowing, that when we get to the performance section (which is still later on in the programme) we're going to be ready for it because we have the fundamentals taken care of. First of all, when you're standing I want you to do a thing called 'grounding yourself.' It's very basic, you just make sure that you plant your feet shoulder-width apart and feel like you are really connected to the ground, have a really strong stance. I read somewhere that you can actually feel more confident by standing in the 'Wonder Woman' pose - just putting your hands on your hips and being aware that you are taking up space - that or I guess if you put your, um, fists like this then it's the Peter Pan pose but either way, try doing it and stand with your shoulders back and your head up. It feels strange. We don't really have to go about our daily lives doing this but it makes us feel like we are taking up space and we're allowed to. One thing that I do when I'm getting ready to go on stage is, I need to remind myself that there's just one of me and there's an audience out there and I need to make sure that what I'm saying is heard at the back. So I want to make sure that I'm not uncomfortable taking up as much space as I want to. So I want you to (in a couple of minutes) say these things out loud. I want you to go: 'I take up space. I take up space' and really take it up. Really put your arms out and make sure that you're not afraid of, um, actually moving in the space that you have, with your feet planted on the ground. You don't need to feel that you're like this, you are allowed to take up this much space. You say: 'I take up space. I have the right to be here. What I have to say is important.' Say these things either in your head or out loud, but preferably out loud. They will make you feel better and more ready to read your work out loud. Which brings us on to the short exercise we're going to be doing. You're going to put five minutes on the clock and I just want you to take the piece of writing that you just did, the free writing of 'I am good enough because...' and you're just going to read it out loud while being grounded in your space and taking up space. Remember to breathe, to stand confidently and to tell yourself that what you have to say, it's allowed. You are allowed to say and acknowledge why you are good enough and you're allowed to do that out loud. So five minutes on the clock, remember to drink plenty water if you want it and just spend five minutes saying out loud your writing exercise 'I am good enough because...' Have fun.

FIVE MINUTE TIMER

CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION

Spoken word as I've said (and I hope you're finding out for yourself now) is amazing but it is not the true purpose of this programme - it's about finding your voice. I'm going to keep saying this until I am blue in the face, your voice is worth something. Your voice is important. Your voice deserves to be heard and you are worthy of standing on a stage and have people giving you a standing ovation because you just introduced yourself. So give your voice the respect it deserves or no one else will. If you are on a stage and you are performing in a way that makes it seem like you're asking the audience for permission to be there they won't feel comfortable. They didn't come to give you permission to be there. They came to that stage to see you, they came

because they know that you are going to take them on a journey, so take them. Do not hold apologies in your mouth. Do not apologise for anything that you have to say because we can hear that. Where you might write something with so much confidence on the page but when you stand up to say it you might either mumble or say it in a way that's just like, 'Well this is just words so whatever I'm just going to get it over with.' No! Do not hold an apology in your voice. Don't be polite. Take them somewhere, you do not need permission. You don't need my permission. You don't need anyone's permission. You don't need an audience's permission to stand up and say, to introduce yourself, to say who you are.

TOP TIP – TAKE BREAKS

When you write poetry you're basically mining your emotions. You're pulling up and pulling apart memories and feelings to use in your writing and that is great but that can take a lot out of you. So just remember to keep checking in and if anytime you feel drained or tired or need to step away take the breaks that you need.

UP NEXT – CHAPTER FIVE – PLACE