

Irish Summer Blues or Five Ways to deal with a Writer's Block

Where two Days of Sun are called Summer

When temperatures climb slightly over 20 degrees in Ireland, we call that a heatwave whereas it would just be considered *summer* elsewhere. Even in July it rarely happens and you have to make the most of it when it does. It could still mean that you have to get out your rain jacket the same day, so never ever leave home without one!

When the thermometer shows the magic number 20 and the sun is out, drop everything you are doing and head outside. Not before putting on a few layers of sunscreen though! It's not only the pale-skinned who burn quickly in the merciless Irish sun.

This is what I have been doing the last couple of summery days. Besides a few small projects for a German tour operator and my duties as full-time mammy, I spent a lot of time outdoors.

Imagine, me sitting in our wonderful, newly designed garden, with a cool drink beside my laptop. Our 2-year-old happily splashing around in the pool next to me. My fingers flying over the keyboard and words just miraculously appearing on my page...

Well, I was. Only that the anticipated productivity was more of a writer's wishful thinking.



Summer Slump instead of Bestseller Season

Apart from the fact that I could hardly see anything on the screen due to the sun blinding me, our son wasn't all that peacefully playing by himself either. The main difference was that nothing came into my mind to write. Perfect conditions wouldn't have changed anything about that.

Instead, thoughts of giving up my blog altogether popped into my head. No one is reading it anyway, so why bother? There are hundreds of people out there giving advice about emigrating and their lives in Ireland. If I was depending on my blog financially, we would have starved by now.

Publishing my own book is my dream. But do I even have what it takes to start a big project like that? I don't think so.

Others are by far more creative and have more discipline than me.

Summer Blues – does something like that even exist?

On days when my head is filled with “voices” like that, even the Irish sun can’t cheer me up. I just feel I am in a dark, empty place. My perfect life, my perfect family, having all I need doesn’t help either.

On the contrary, it shows me how malicious these “depressive mood swings”, as you call them I guess, are. It is not about what you have or don’t have. It can just hit you anytime out of the blue.

I am only learning to stop looking for reasons why they occur and just try to accept them. That is not easy. Same as writing about it on my blog which was not my intention at all when I started typing that post. However I do think there may be the odd person among my readers who can identify with what I am talking about. Probably someone that you wouldn’t expect it of either.

Writer’s Block – Here is what I do

Having said that, I am leaving myself a positive message and a simple action plan for bad times. It refers to writing, but maybe you get something out of it too, even though you are not a writer. So I am sharing it with you:

1) Take it easy!

Writing is and always will be my hobby. I get pleasure out of it no matter how many people read my blog. So why put myself under pressure? What is the worst that can happen if I don’t publish something on time? And what does ‘on time’ even mean when I am the one making the rules. Deadlines can be helpful and are needed especially when you are writing professionally. But I don’t and therefore I keep deadlines out of my leisure

time.

2) Short and frequent

I didn't post anything in quite a while and the pressure built up that the next post has to be extra long and super creative. But does it always have to be an extensive, deep and meaningful essay? From now on I am planning to keep it short and simple, maybe more often when time allows.

3) Competition – so what?

Surely every topic on earth has been covered at some stage by some writer. In particular when it is such a popular one as Ireland. Probably there are blogs out there that are very similar to mine. But: everything I write contains my personal touch and experience and I don't just „recycle“ or make it up. That should count for something, no?

4) Being criticised is part of it

Of course I prefer positive feedback and approval when it comes to my posts. Who doesn't? If I am honest, I quickly feel discouraged when I get negative responses. But as far as I know it is much more likely for people to leave a negative comment rather than a positive one. At least that is what I am going to tell myself from now on when I am upset about some nasty „cyber attack“.

4) Discipline vs. Creative Chaos

Usually I am someone who needs structure and clear instructions. That is why I have read loads of „How-to-organise-your-day-books“ and have started many to-do-lists in my life. Ironically I read them when I was full of energy and highly motivated anyway. On days where I would have needed them the most, I fell back into old habits of „well, I do it tomorrow“. That is who I am, I guess. Therefore my newly discovered 'technique' is the following: Write whenever you are in the flow and if possible, without a break. (Domestic

chores have to wait in this case.) Forget about sitting down every day for a certain amount of time to write a certain number of words. The result will only be a poor text that I could have done in half the time and twice the quality on one of my good days.

If you haven't already noticed yourself, the above is far from being qualified advice for (professional) writers. Instead it should be taken with a pinch of salt. However I opened up a very personal side of me in this article and hope it will be appreciated by like-minded people.