

MWG Writes On Q

A Quarterly Publication

The Mississauga Writers Group

Promoting
the Written
Word!

MWG Writes On Q

From The Editor

Welcome to the third issue of the Mississauga Writers Group's quarterly magazine MWG Writes on Q. It has been a good quarter for the group. We launched our second anthology WordFest, Celebrating Our Journeys. We also participated in the Culture Days Festival at the Mississauga Central Library. Details of the event are included in this issue.

Several of our members had new book releases including Scott Berger's debut novel *Quite the Catch*, Nicholas Boving's *Castle Dark*, Angela Ford's *Time to Love*, Samna Ghani's *Mirror of Love*, Rashmi Pluscec's *Desolate World* and Ian Stout's *Murder Unedited*. We've been busy!

In this issue, you will find a variety of prose, poetry and writing tips. We also talk about the Toronto International Film Festival as reported from location by Veronica Lerner, an active member of our group. We hope you will enjoy this issue and as always, any feedback will be greatly appreciated.

Happy Reading!

Samna Ghani

Editor

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Editor: Samna Ghani

Assistant Editor: Rashmi Pluscec

Copy Editor: Elizabeth Banfalvi

Book Launch

Word Fest, Celebrating Our Journeys @CultureDays

The Mississauga Writers Group launched its new anthology Word Fest, Celebrating Our Journeys on the 26th of September during the Culture Days festival at the Mississauga Central Library.

The place buzzed with excitement with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures attended the event. The members of MWG participated throughout the day and interacted with the general public, talking about books, books and more books. In addition, MWG conducted a workshop on the writing process where four specific topics were discussed:

Why do we want to write? by Hans Victor von Maltzahn

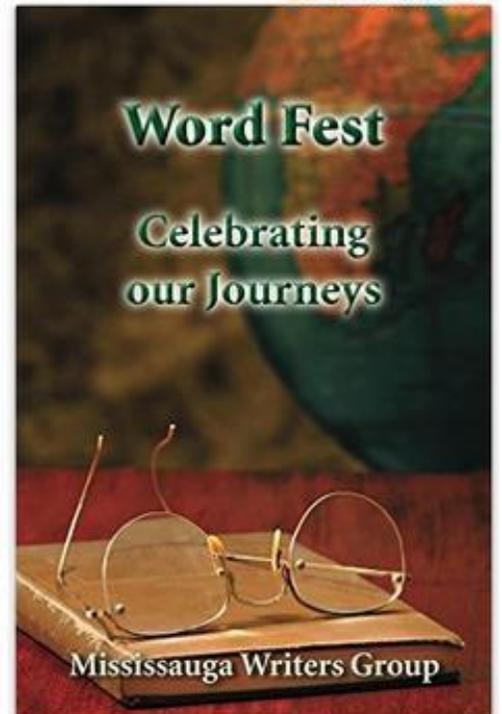
How do we write? by Joseph Monachino

Now how do we complete it? by Elizabeth Banfalvi

How do we get it published? by Elizabeth Banfalvi

Each section generated some interesting questions and insightful experiences. Overall, it was a great experience for MWG and we hope to have more productive sessions at the library in the future as well. Here are a few pics of MWG @CultureDays

By: *Mississauga Writers Group*



Poetry

Imprisoned

shards that cut pieces
that reflect some
sharp edges some
smooth bubbles

a shattered picture
Of a moment perfectly captured

Of a perfect moment captured

Of a perfect moment captured
perfectly

Of a captured moment

in these pieces
a beginning an end.
a fragmented past
a dichotomous future.

By: Rashmi Pluscec

Author of poetry books *Chaos* and *Desolate World*. Poet on anthologies *Threads, Passages, Ballads* and *Word Fest*.



Featured Author

Scott Berger



Scott has been writing since 2006 when he got the writing bug after reading a chapter of a co-worker's story. The previous 40-something years were spent gathering experiences or imagining them. Scott lives in the Greater Toronto Area with his wife Rita and a 100-pound Rottweiler named Puppy.

In an exclusive interview, Scott shares his thoughts and feelings about writing and the writing process. Enjoy!

Why do you write?

I write because

Which writers inspire you?

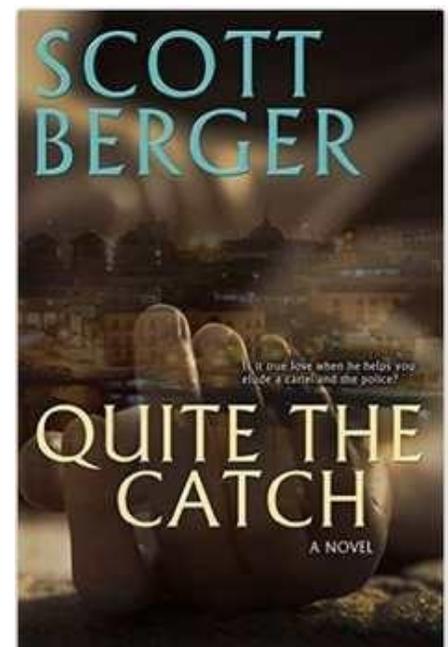
Sydney Sheldon and Stephen King.

What is your favourite book and why?

Prisoner of Tehran by Marina Nemat. A true story so implausible that if I wrote it, calling it fiction, no one would believe it. So well written I felt like I was there.

By: Samna Ghani

Regional Editor, Health Management.org; Author with Books to Go Now and Laurus Publishing.



Featured Author

What do you think is the easiest thing about writing? What is the most difficult?

Coming up with new ideas is the easiest. The most difficult is editing. It's like counting the brush strokes on the Mona Lisa.

From books that have already been published by other authors, which book do you wish you had written?

Good question! Anything by Stephen King, I guess. His stories are classics, but I also learn about writing when I read him.

How do you market your books?

I'm new at it, so it's blogs, websites, word of mouth. My wife makes a wonderful press agent. She actually helped make a sale from a swimming pool in Niagara Falls!

Any new release? If yes, what is it about?

I do have a new release. It's actually my debut novel, *Quite The Catch*. It's about a Colombian woman who meets a vacationing doctor from Alabama when a cartel blows up her family's deep sea fishing boat. She survives only because he pulls her from the sea and rushes her to a hospital. When she realizes she has amnesia, he knows he can't leave her. When another attempt on her life fails, the two find both the cartel and police on their trail. They realize the money the cartel claims her brother stole from them may be the key to their future ... if they have one.

Book blurb

When a Colombian cartel blows up her family's fishing boat looking for their stolen money, Gabriela Concepción faces a new world. Her father and brother are dead, and she would've been were it not for a vacationing Alabama doctor, Royce Haddon. But when she kills two cartel gunmen, their situation goes from bad to worse. Now on the run from the police and the cartel, Gabriela and Royce decide the stolen money, if it exists, is the key to ending their nightmare. But can they find it before they are found? And what if they do? Then what? Where do they go from there?

You can find out more about Scott:

Website: <https://romanticadventurestories.wordpress.com/>

Blog: <http://berger-new-rom-suspense.blogspot.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bergernewromsuspense>

Amazon Author Page: http://www.amazon.com/Scott-Berger/e/B014YXWDT4/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_1

Book Link: http://www.amazon.com/Quite-Catch-Scott-Berger/dp/1517303281/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Poetry

Help

I search for a lifeline
to throw it
my thoughts
moving in the dark

is all in vain
my cries are muffled
by deaf ears

why scream
they say
there is no such lifeline
hang on what is left

only I don't see it
and smashed to crumbs
I slowly dribble
under the rocks

go then on the spiral
the road towards the
light
is wide open

look there for a lifeline
you only have to find

...to find it..

in yourself

By: Veronica Lerner

Editor of Romanian newspaper
Observatorul. Author of five books of
prose and poetry.



A Thing of Bits & Pieces

Writing a Screenplay

When the MWG first started, I gave a short talk on some of the dos and don'ts when writing and submitting screenplays. Samna very kindly asked if I would put it into written form, so for those of you who feel like dipping a toe into the murky waters of writing for the cinema, here are a few thoughts.

A good screenplay is a very difficult thing to write, especially if it's an original one and not an adaptation. For one thing you're confined to a certain number of pages, and secondly you must obey the law of "show, don't tell".

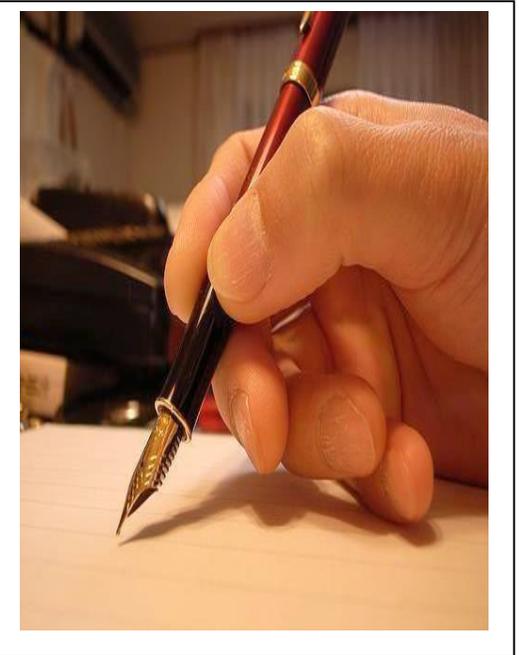
In a novel you can waffle to your heart's content, switch onto almost any side-track you like so long as it advances the story - and even if it doesn't your reader will probably forgive you if the writing is entertaining enough.

In a screenplay, every line of dialogue, every action must advance the story, and if you feel compelled to write a flashback it had better be there for a damned good reason. Fail to advance the story, leave glaring gaps and you'll lose your audience quicker than a dollar in a slot machine.

In a screenplay you MUST NOT describe an actor's thoughts or emotions. That's their job. It's the director's job to tell them what to think and feel and how to get it across to the audience. Some actors can, most can't. The late critic Dorothy Parker said of Katherine Hepburn "She ran through the gamut of her emotions, from A to B." It's an opinion.

By: Nicholas Boving

Author of the "*Maxim Gunn*" and "*Frances West*" series of action/adventure books.



A Thing of Bits & Pieces

There is approximately one page per minute of screen time. Therefore, the standard screenplay is about 120 pages. Believe it when I say the first thing a reader/director/actor/whoever will do on picking up your masterwork, will be to turn to the last page. And unless you're someone very well known or a big star is already on board, it'll probably go straight in the trash if it's way over this limit.

Never, ever, EVER begin a script without working out your outline first. If you do not you will almost certainly end up with a cold mass of tangled spaghetti that only you will love. This "Treatment" can be as short as a few pages, sketching out scenes, or even longer than the finished screenplay. Whatever works for you is good, but it must be done.

Divide your screenplay into three acts. It's a play, just with a lot more action and scenes.

1st Act - Approximately 30 minutes. This is the setup. It starts with scenes that really get the attention or sets the mood in some way, and lets the audience know what they're in for. It must grab them or they'll reach for their coats.

2nd Act. Approximately 60 minutes. The main action. You must maintain a beat; a series of ups and downs. This is where you get the hero/heroine up a tree and throw rocks at them. He/She has to get out of it, or be got out by others we already know about (see 1st act) NO DEUS EX MACHINA, meaning, no tenth cavalry to rescue just as the settlers are about to get shot full of arrows.

Maintain the beat the whole way through. Each beat is when something happens: either action or verbal conflict. CONFLICT is crucial: it's what keeps the paying customers in their seats. Conflict doesn't have to be action with guns and explosions; it can be verbal or emotional. He loves me, he loves me not. Boy gets girl, boy loses girl. It's the beat. Make something happen every five pages.

3rd Act. Approximately 30 minutes. The finale. The resolution. The end. Hopefully explosive, heart wrenching, huge sigh of relief, a three-hanky job.

A film's ending is crucial. It is the last thing an audience sees and often the last thing it remembers upon leaving the theatre. Indeed, it's no stretch to suggest that, more than any other part of the film the ending is the most important.

In fact, the only really vital bits of a screenplay - being cynical - are the beginning (you've got to hook the audience and keep them in their seats), and the ending. (They've got to leave the movie theatre thinking/saying "My God that was good")

A Thing of Bits & Pieces

If you want a really good example of screenplays that will never date, read something by Alfred Hitchcock.

Never let the pace lag or you will lose the audience.

Never promise something and fail to deliver. If you bring something in early on like a gun, or a knife, it must be used otherwise why bring it in at all?

The exception being the “MacGuffin” – a term invented by Alfred Hitchcock – to describe the object that drives the plot forward but is never used. For example: the Maltese Falcon or the Holy Grail in Indiana Jones.

The element that distinguishes a MacGuffin from other types of plot devices is that it is not important what the object specifically is. Anything that serves as a motivation will do. The MacGuffin might even be ambiguous. Its importance is accepted by the story’s characters, but it does not actually have any effect on the story. It can be generic or left open to interpretation.

On the nose dialogue. We get it! Don’t beat us over the head with it! Much better to leave a sentence hanging, use a knowing look, or a gesture, and leave the rest to subtext. Every word of dialogue must be meaningful and help advance the story – the same applies to actions.

No Talking Heads and no exposition. This means, among other things, no characters yakking at us telling us what’s going on. Again, we get it!

As with any rule, there are exceptions, like courtroom dramas in which the whole story is about the brilliance of the lawyers and their skill with words.

People talk in clichés; we all do. But avoid them in a screenplay if you can, or unless one is necessary. It annoys the reader and the director and the audience.

No unnecessary scenes or actions. Eliminate the obvious. If a character tells us she’s going to the library, that’s good enough. The next scene should show her IN the library – or not, unless there is a reason: for example if it’s a thriller and she has a stalker – then various in-between scenes may be important.

A Thing of Bits & Pieces

White space. Means exactly that. A page of screenplay that's a mass of type is a lousy page. There is obviously too much dialogue, instruction, detailed action, description. The director is going to put a line through it anyway, so why write it? If Tom and Jerry get into a fight, say exactly that. The director and fight arrangers will take care of the rest.

Do not add directorial instructions such as scene transitions, lighting etc. This is the director's job and she/he will do it their way, not yours.

Unlike conventional publishers who may have their own preferred formats, screenplays MUST be presented in accordance with industry standards. They are ALWAYS written in the present tense, the font is Courier New, 12 point, correctly formatted (indents for dialogue, actions, descriptions etc), page numbers at top RH corner - get a screenplay programme and it will do all this automatically. Do not present your screenplay in a three-ring binder. It should have simple cover stock covers, white (no day-glo pink etc) held by three brass brads. The title page also has your name and address and contacts.

Once it's all done and you're satisfied, write your "pitch". This is where you, often literally, stand in front of a producer or director and try to sell them your story. It's a step outline that's got to hold your audience's attention for about ten minutes. It is vital. It's often your one kick at the can, so make it the best it can be. Rehearse it in front of a mirror, just like a part in a play.

One last thing. If someone buys your screenplay, or your book gets optioned and made into a screenplay - it's unlikely you'll be asked to write the screenplay unless you're very well known - let it go. You've been paid for it, and no one's going to ask your advice ever again. The final result won't look like anything you started out with. Bank the cheque and move on.

Here's an article from InkTip on writing the synopsis of a screenplay - and how not to.

http://inktip.com/article_single.php?a_id=146

Poetry

In Memory of a Masterpiece

When piano keys are
pressed,
It's your fingers who
awake them.
It's them, too, who
make them sing
Your own thoughts
softly to me
Those too deep for
your own lips
To lift slowly to the
surface

When violin strings
resonate,
It's your fingers who
dance with them.
It's your hand who
leads each step,
Going where you
never thought you
could
To the dreams where
you can run,
Not stay prisoner to
the grown

When a flute gets air,
It's your lungs who
give it life.
It's them, too, who
keep you breathing
Your whole life into
your chest
That, which you have
brought
In your wound-free
eyes again

When your lips part
It's your love who strolls by me.
It's your love who breaks free
While serenading at my ear To
which you whisper your vows
Till your last breath is taken

When a drum gets a hit,
It's your heart who's hit along. It's also
your heart
Who ends the symphony
conducted
That, which left a weeping
audience
And a masterpiece behind

By: Daniela Oana

Poet of traditional and
contemporary genres; has
written in French, Romanian
and English.

MWG @ TIFF

Toronto International Film Festival

Veronica Lerner, a member of the Mississauga Writers Group, covered the Toronto International Film Festival. Here's her take on the event!

While movies continue to be the KEY feature of TIFF, the thing that stood out most this year were the number of people who attended the event. There were so many showings and so much buzz and excitement that even the reporters and spectators within the Press & Industry Screenings, where I was, stayed only 20 minutes and then were rushing to see other movies.

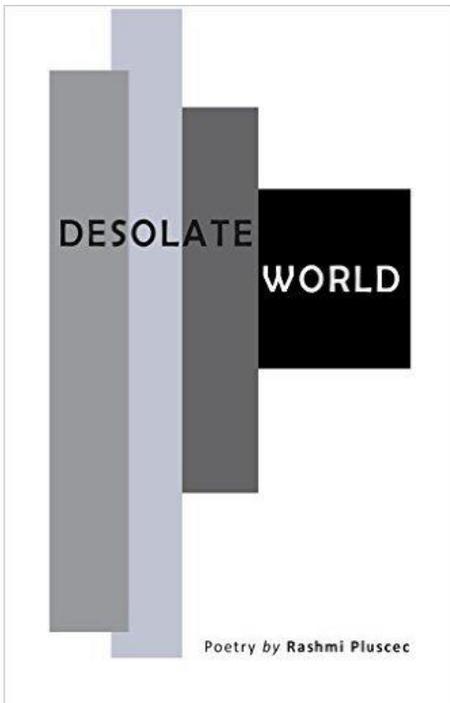
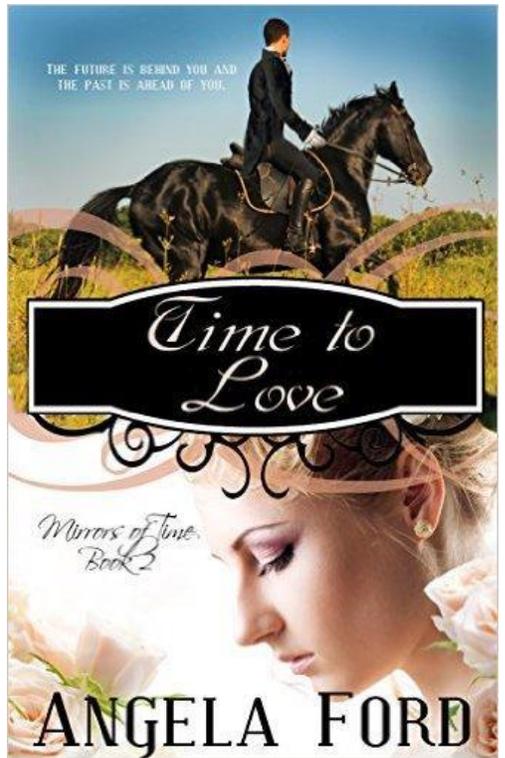
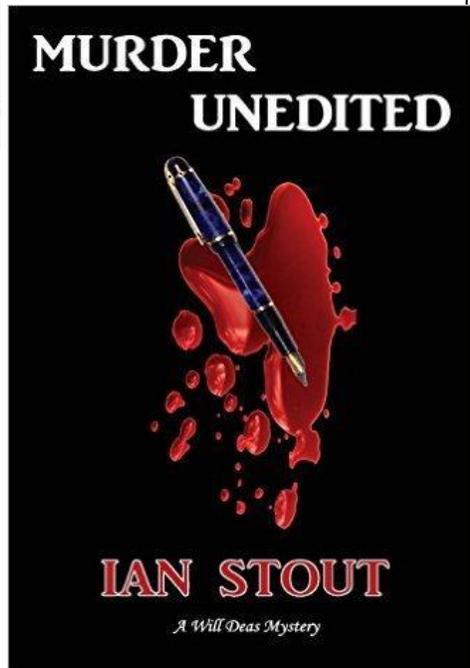
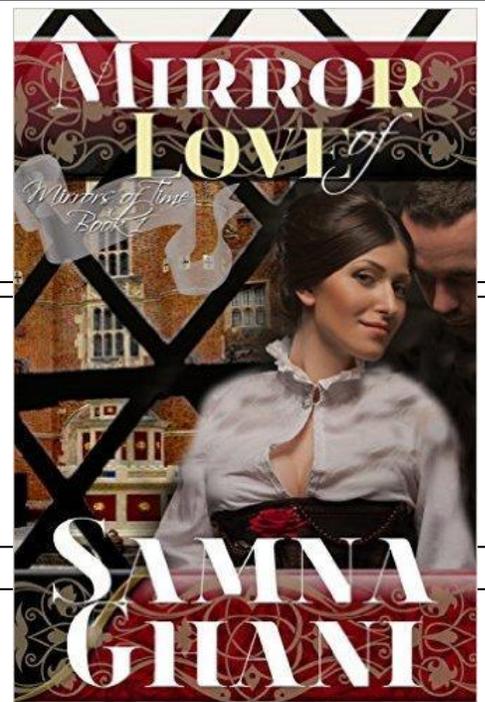
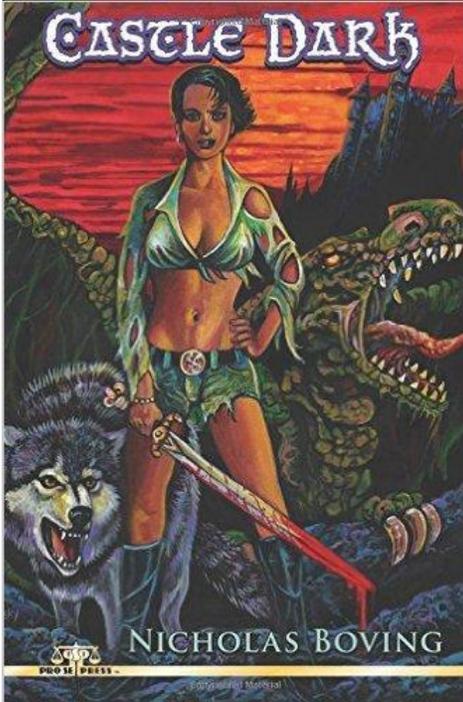
The annual event was as popular as ever this year. A great festival comparable to Cannes. The best thing is that the directors and actors feel at ease with the general public which makes it even more worthwhile for people who enthusiastically wait for this festival. There were over 140,000 people this year at TIFF, in its 40th year in the vibrant city of Toronto. Here are few pics giving you a glimpse of this fabulous festival.



By: Veronica Lerner

Editor of Romanian newspaper
Observatorul. Author of five books of prose
and poetry

New Releases by MWG



Health and Wellness

Nothing

What is nothing? *Nothing*. What is the value of nothing? *Nothing*. How does nothing feel? Here is a different answer. Depending on where the feeling of nothing comes from is how it is felt. When we feel nothing, it is usually related to something. Is it a loss? Then the feeling is relative to the worth of the loss. Is it emptiness? Then we have a feeling of nothing being there or of having nothing to fill the void. This is usually associated again with loss of some kind. When we feel we have released and forgiven everything and there is nothing left, then it is a healthier feeling. *Nothing* can be defined as no-thing.

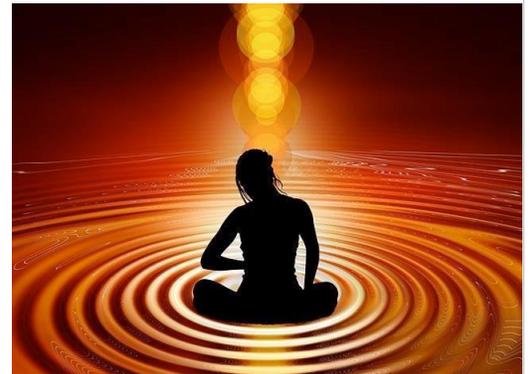
If we associate *nothing* to our five senses, it takes on another variation of *nothing*. To see – what do we see when we see nothing – do we dismiss it or do we see the clarity of nothing being there? Even the blind see something even though their quality of vision might not be able to define the sight.

To hear – a deaf person can pick up some noise even when there is a lack of sound. Sound is energy. We pick up on most of the sounds but *nothing* can be louder. We usually try to define the sounds which surround us like music, physical sounds, nature sounds or usual recognizable sounds. When we can't recognize it, then we prefer to get back to what is familiar. *Nothing* is stressful for some.

To taste and smell – these two go together. Nothing can smell because there is an anticipation of smell and taste. *Nothing* can fill our mouths with sensations of what could be. There is a taste of nothing but some can be leftover tastes like toothpaste or food eaten. Again like sound, the anticipation of taste in our mouths can be greater.

By: Elizabeth Banfalvi

Author of *Meditation* book series.
Certified Reflexologist. Conducts
workshops on stress & meditation.



Health and Wellness

To touch – There is always a sensation of something beyond our skin – it is the energy which surrounds us but isn't seen. In relative terms, usually the feeling of touch is reaching out and touching something outside of us. Reaching out and there is nothing to touch might be because of a loss or a feeling of what was there before and isn't now. A broken marriage is an example – at one point there were feelings and responsiveness but now there is nothing.

Nothing – is it empty or is it filled with loss? Unfortunately sometimes we try and fill the *nothing's* void with activity or with pursuits – not always the best. Is there a value to *nothing* – is it the end of the road or the beginning? Do we try to fill it completely or enjoy the emptiness? In meditation, the process is to empty the mind, to let go, to end up with emptiness so we have choices, or to appreciate the emptiness and the process which starts healing.

So when you find *nothing*, let it be. Find what the *nothing* means to you and then discover what you can do with absolutely *nothing*!

Defining Your Thoughts

- Be aware of your thoughts.
- Categorize and prioritize each of your thoughts.
- What is right now, later, or a constant?
- Attend to what you can and accept what you can't and realize the difference.
- Make your own goals and take care of them. You are the center of your universe. Your children will follow what you do and more than what you say.
- Move to a healthier you – make healthy choices and take care of your body. When you aren't feeling well, your thoughts aren't healthy either.
- Survival is a safe place, sustenance, and relationships – these change and evolve – don't worry when you don't have control – you never did! Also check #4.
- Worry, grief and happiness are natural processes – something is beginning and ending all the time.
- Learn what gives you joy and visit often – it is a choice.
- Breathe – this will only be a memory one day – is it that important?