

The Power of Encouragement



If anyone needs encouragement, it is a writer.

Do you like the sound of the word encouragement? How does it sound in contrast to the word criticism? Think about how you react to encouragement. How do you feel when you are criticized? I argue that encouragement is a positive motivator. Criticism is a demotivator.

One day I witnessed the following scene: Chris wrote a short story and sent it to a fellow writer for review. The reviewer read the story and decided there was still work to do. What should the reviewer say?

A. "Chris, your story doesn't grab me. Your theme and characters are not realistic. Besides, multiple technical and factual errors detract from your story."

B. "Chris, what a great start. You might consider adding an attention grabber in the first few sentences - encourage me to read on. Be sure your reader can relate to the storyline. Add some genuine physical and emotional qualities to your characters. When you are ready to publish, be sure you verify your facts and catch any grammatical and spelling slip-ups. A good editor can help you. Keep at it."

Okay, where am I going with this? Well, three places.

First: If we want others to react positively to us, isn't it better to encourage them to do the things they do rather than criticize them for what we perceive them to be doing wrong? The keyword in that sentence is "perceive," and I'll let you think on that for a bit.

Second: How often do you encourage yourself to take the next step that will lead to attaining your goal? Unfortunately, many of us "criticize" ourselves to the point of being counterproductive.

Third: Do you surround yourself with people and objects that are encouraging? Everyone is a critic. Not everyone is an encourager. Seek out people who will build on your ideas, not tear them down.

Many writers find that a local or online writers group can be encouraging. Some find working with a writing partner who complements them helpful.

When we encourage others and ourselves to use our talents and skills in new and exciting ways, we set a growth and learning tone. Very few, if any, of us got where we are today without a support system. I'm guessing that your support system was a team of encouragers. If your support system was anything like mine, you had parents, teachers, siblings, your children, other family members, friends, fellow students, teammates, co-workers, superiors, pastors, and others as part of your support system.

Supportive people won't always agree with you but will encourage you. The key person in that system is you. Others can encourage you, but in the final analysis, you must act on that encouragement. Let me encourage you to do something today that gets you closer to your dream. Write something, then rewrite it.

The Power of Encouragement is the fuel that keeps the flame burning.

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