

July Writing Tips & Soul Care for Writers

Edie Melson + DiAnn Mills

We may not always be the brightest bulbs in the batch, and what others learn quickly sometimes takes years to sink in. But one thing DiAnn and I have learned is this:

Time off is rarely time wasted.

Our natural type-A personalities tend to be all or nothing. We go and go and go . . . and then drop. Not really the healthiest way to do life. It's a lie to equate down time with wasted time. And really, instead of being wasted, down time when our creative reserves are refilled and renewed.

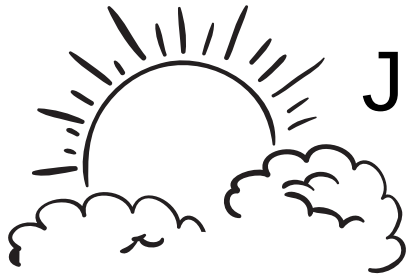
It's really hard to get water from a dry well.

So to help you take that much-needed time off, here are some writerly field trips to renew your creativity!

Boost Your Creativity with Time Off

1. Visit your local history museum. Every county and most towns have them. You'll be amazed at what you'll find.
2. Take a quick trip to a local landmark. Chances are there are some that you've never visited, no matter how long you've lived where you are now.
3. Go to your local farmer's market. Not only will you pick up some wonderful—local—edibles, you'll be inspired by those attending and those displaying their wares.





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4. Try a different cuisine. Pick one you haven't had before, if possible. Research it before you go and you'll know what to order.
5. Take a walking tour. No matter where you live, you'll find all kinds of self-guided walking tours you can take
6. Spend a few hours geocaching. Do a Google search for Geocaching 101, if you're not familiar with this hobby.
7. Do a search for hidden menus at Starbucks, then try something new. There are all kinds of cool drinks you can order, if you just know how. For example, did you know there's a concoction that's reputed to resemble Butterbeer from the Harry Potter universe?
8. Take a trip on a local river or lake. Go kayaking, canoeing, or even paddle boarding.
9. Get together a group and go on a bookstore crawl. The point is to visit all the bookstores in a geographic area. It's even more fun if you post pics to social media and see how many books you can find from authors you know and love.
10. Plan an old-fashioned murder mystery evening. You can find suggestions online or you can buy a box that has everything need.





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11. Look for endangered wildflowers. Here in South Carolina we have several habitats of endangered flora and fauna. See what hidden gems are close to you. Then take a drive and be inspired by God's creativity.

12. Visit a local art gallery. Yes, we're writers. But we've found that seeing how others express their creativity can provide inspiration.

13. Get tickets to a play at your local community theater or even a school production. You'll be inspired by the actors, the costumes, the story, and the overall atmosphere.

14. Go old school and show some community spirit by watching a local baseball game. We have a minor league team and spring and summer are great times to visit the ball field.

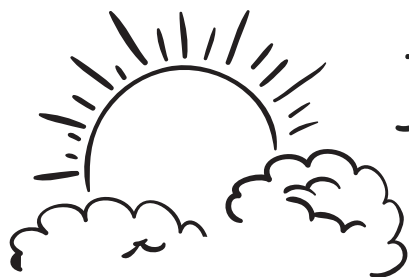
15. Take a cooking class. Again, it's the creative aspect that drives this suggestion. But you also might find a new hobby you can share with your spouse.

16. Spend the afternoon people watching at the local mall. Take a pen and paper and write down snippets of conversations. If you write fiction, you may find a place to use it in your WIP. If you write nonfiction, the things you overhear may give you article/book ideas.

17. Offer to read at your local retirement center/nursing home. It doesn't have to be your book that you're reading.

18. Visit your local zoo.





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19. Take another author's book to your local bookstore and recommend it to the manager/workers. It feels good to do something nice for someone else, and it helps the management find books they might have missed.

20. Visit some nearby historical landmarks. Greenville, SC is rife with old textile mills, bridges and general historic sites. Edie loves crawling around old foundations and taking picture of the stonework and gears that are always left behind.

21. Memorize a poem. Go to your local library or book store and find a book of poetry. It can be something funny, or touching, or anything in between. But the process will stimulate your mind and stretch your mental muscles.

22. Explore a local festival. This time of year you'll find everything from state fairs to barbeque cook-offs to pop up arts and crafts shows.

23. Take a bicycle ride. If you don't own a bike, rent one. Chances are there's someplace nearby where you can ride.

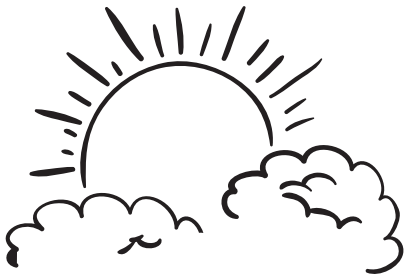
24. Listen to some live music. It might be an evening at the symphony, or a free band that plays in a park downtown.

25. Stroll through a local flea market or antique mall.

26. Go on a hike. Find a local park and take a walk.

27. Take a class. Look for something non-writing related.





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28. Spend an afternoon coloring. Find a book or download a free page from the Internet, pull out your colored pencils and pretend you're a kid. It's not a hobby for everyone—which could be said about a lot of these suggestions, but I've found if I mention coloring it's polarizing. People either love it or hate it. I'm one of those who've discovered it doesn't relax me. But if it does help you unwind, go for it. If you haven't tried it, it's past time to give this new fad a try.

29. Shop for a new pen and stationary. Go to a place where you can try out different types of pens and find one you really like.

30. Take only a pen and notebook and find a park. Spend an hour or two writing longhand. Describe your setting, do free-writing, or brainstorm your next project.



As co-directors of the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference and the Mountainside Publishing Retreats, DiAnn Mills & Edie Melson bring much more to the table than their combined half-century of writing expertise. They both exhibit a proven passion to equip writers today. Individually and together, they have encouraged thousands of writers as they stay true to the call of "changing the world one writer at a time."

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