

Armor For the Artists' Life

Judy Sima

Sometimes at a regional or national storytelling conference it is easy to look around you and see all the talent and accomplishments of your fellow tellers and think that you are not good enough or that you are just not doing enough. Then you leave the conference without the lift and rejuvenation you need.

Other times, you have a bad experience where the audience doesn't respond the way you thought they should or hoped they would. Perhaps your bookings are down. At these times, it's easy to think "what's wrong with me? I must be loosing it. I'm no good any more." Those other storytellers are soooo much better than I am.

What we have here is a "crisis of confidence" and like a writer's block, and it is sometimes difficult to overcome.

At the NSA Conference in Kansas City, I participated in a networking discussion of a common problem that affects all tellers at some point - *a crisis of confidence*.

To deal with this crisis, like heroes of old, we need some armor. Here are some possible solutions that can protect us from the crisis of confidence.

Keep a journal.

- Ask what it is you love about storytelling
- Analyze how you feel about your work
- Ask what lesson can be learned from a bad experience

Keep an "atta girl" or "atta Boy" file of positive comments to look at when you're down.

- Focus on successes
- Hear what people say - don't add meaning that isn't there
- Remember observations are not criticisms

Re-group and re-fresh.

- Learn or research a new story
- Go hear some great storytelling
- Talk to supportive friends
- Find a loving audience or a loving mentor
- Don't beat yourself up - network with other tellers

Start a feedback circle.

- In the Detroit Story League we call them "*Cric Cracs*." The circles are small, five or six members who meet on a regular basis to try out new stories and to talk about storytelling

Mentor another storyteller.

- Helping someone else grow is extremely gratifying. It is a way of giving back to those who've helped you along and it will help you see how far you've come.

Carry a camera.

- Keep an album of adoring faces to remind yourself just how wonderful you really are.

Adopt my mottos.

- "I may not be totally perfect, but parts of me are excellent!"
- "Don't judge your insides by others' outsides"
- And *my mother's mottos*: "Everything is good for something" and "this too shall pass."

Armed and armored with this information, you too can face the challenges of the artists' life. Good luck.



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