

So Your Loved One Is a Writer

WELCOME TO THE
WRITER'S LIFE

Check out the acknowledgments of any book to see how much the loved ones of a writer can affect their work. You're a part of writing, because you're a part of a writer's world. Welcome.

After years of watching me work toward writing as a profession, my friends and family have become like my writing support team. They tell me when what I'm talking about would be good fodder for writing, leave me alone when they know I'm working, and help me plan my writing into my day. They have helped me become the writer I am.

Here are some frequently asked questions about loving a writer:

What if my loved one's writing is terrible?

Don't be alarmed; everyone's writing starts out being terrible. Don't judge their potential by the quality of the work you see now. They may have to write terribly for years in order to write well. Writing terribly is just a part of the deal. While you may have to serve as a reader, you never have to be an editor if it makes you uncomfortable. If you don't want to give your opinions, just advise your writer to join a workshopping group.

What does my writer need to thrive?

Lots of sunlight, daily waterings, and time and space to write. They need you to be a force that helps them meet their writing goals, not a force of distraction. It's hard. You want to play with your writer. But your writer will need to be shut away for fifteen minutes to an hour or more, for as many days as possible. The upside of this is that you can take the opportunity to practice violin, play Xbox, or read.

You could offer to cook your writer dinner every now and then. If you have a child or two with this writer, you could scoop those kids up and take them out for a long ice cream break. Most of all, your writer needs you to treat their writing time and space with respect.

Do I have to care about writing?

Well, you don't have to. But if you care about the writer in your life, it might be nice to show some interest. One of the times I felt like the worst friend was when one of my besties was crying about not getting the birth she wanted for her daughter. Having children just wasn't my thing at the time, so I didn't really understand where she was coming from and didn't show her the empathy I should have. After that, I learned more about childbirth to understand her better. It became important to me because it was important to her. If literature isn't naturally your thing, making the effort to learn more about it as an act of love for your writer will mean everything to them.

How do I know what my writer wants?

Follow their lead. Some writers don't tell their loved ones what their book is even about until they're done; some like to talk through their plotlines with their partner. Ask them about their process and what helps them get work done. Then be a part of their process.

Will my writer ever make money again in their life?

Yes, maybe from writing or maybe not. When a writer doesn't have to work a full-time job, it does accelerate the improvement of their work, as a general rule. But many writers work full-time and have writing careers. Writing takes a real sacrifice of time, money, or both. Writers have to do so much work, and so much of that work is unpaid. Plus, they may want to invest in valuable classes and trips to retreats. Writers have to figure out the balance of time and money. Your writer will figure it out too.

How do I earn bonus points?

Celebrate writing victories with your writer. Buy them little writerly gifts. Make a big deal out of their writing. Pretend they have published a *New York Times* best-seller, and treat them how you would if they did.