

TACKLING TOUGH TOPICS

Many feel compelled to write about a difficult life circumstance, loss, or grief. In writing a tough topic, you have the opportunity to reach those who are hurting, feel alienated and alone, and are searching for ways to heal their pain. No matter what the situation, there are overarching common threads inherent in writing tough topics that foster hope and healing.

The process:

- Identify why you are writing your tough topic.
- Process your pain before writing for publication.
- Be judicious with graphic details.
- Pitfalls of writing with a nom de plume.
 1. A pen name thwarts marketing endeavors. You can't maintain anonymity and market your book – no book signings, speaking engagements, readings, TV appearances.
 2. Later, you may wish you could claim the credit.
 3. Using a pen name doesn't exempt you from liability issues if, in telling your story, you mention others without their permission, or their identity is inferred by association.
 4. Some publications and book publishers require actual names – author and others in the story
- To fiction or not to fiction? That's often the question.
 1. Some try to cloak their tough topic in fiction, but writing good fiction isn't easy. If you are a nonfiction writer, writing fiction may feel like writing with your non-dominant hand, and for most, non-dominant writing isn't as good.
 2. There are still potential liable issues if you include thinly-veiled portrayals of others in your story without their permission.
 3. Good nonfiction writing employs fiction elements – storytelling, use of dialogue, suspense, beginning the story in the middle of action, not always writing in chronological order, providing a satisfying conclusion, but not necessarily a happy ending.
- Editors may require the addition of experts on your tough topic.
- Finding markets for tough topics – research blogs, online articles, magazines, and publishers to determine receptiveness to tough topics. Network with other tough topics writers.
- For books or long-form articles, consider incorporating the experiences of others.
- Connect with readers - Tell your story in a way that allows others to identify with shared emotions and challenges even if their experiences aren't exactly the same.
- Provide practical steps to promote healing and moving forward.
- Based on your audience, support with scripture, but sparingly.
- End on a positive note—not a sappy-happy ending, but end in a way that gives hope.

Key Takeaways:

Make sure you're ready to write. Process emotions first. Don't write for spite, revenge, or catharsis.

Even if it's your story, remember to write for your readers.

Harness the power of story and fiction technique to convey your message.

Include positive elements that promote hope and healing.

Provide practical suggestions for taking action to move forward.

