

Paying It Forward – To Yourself

By Vanessa Kier

I hate the phrase "paying it forward." It's so annoyingly self-righteous. But it occurred to me that although the phrase rubs me the wrong way, it's a principle I apply in my writing life.

The principle of paying it forward is that of helping another person with no expectation of reward except an ongoing chain of good works stretching forever into the future.

As a writer, paying it forward takes a slightly different path.

Writing requires discipline. But there are myriad daily events that interfere with a writer's determination to sit down and write. Work. Family. Extracurricular activities. Daily life maintenance—groceries, gas, house cleaning. Exercise. Sleep.

I've made a vow to write every day. Sometimes it's only for one hundred words. If I'm in the editing stage, I might edit for just ten minutes at the end of a long day. But I always work on my writing.

Yet there are days where I have to trick myself into writing. Meeting my goal when it's midnight and my eyelids are drooping requires Herculean effort.

That's when the pay it forward principle comes in.

When I feel like shirking my writing duties, I think about my future self. Will tomorrow's me be under more pressure because I didn't meet my goals today? Yes. Will the one-month forward me be frantic because she's getting ready to pitch a novel that isn't fully polished? Yes.

My future selves have guilt trips down to a science.

And if the guilt isn't enough, I think about where I want to be in five years. Published.

I won't land a contract if my manuscripts are incomplete or sloppy. I have to help my future selves by holding up my end of the bargain today.

So there you have it. Don't want to write? Can't see what difference it's going to make to skip a day?

Look into the future. Pay it forward to your future writer self by writing today.

Your future self is already smiling.