

## **PODCAST 76: SCIENCE OF SLEEP & HOW IT CAN HELP YOUR WRITING CAREER – WITH DR ANNE BARTOLUCCI**

**Speaker 1:** Two writers, one just starting out, the other a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James: Hello and welcome to The Self-Publishing Formula podcast with Mark and James. If you're watching on YouTube, just another quick plug for our mug, which I still don't have a mug.

Mark: There we go, there it is, the excellent item itself.

James: Yeah, beautiful.

Mark: Very nice.

James: It's a beautiful thing, and if you've signed up to our [Patreon](#), if you've become a subscriber and a supporter of the podcast, you've got a good chance of winning a mug so we're sending a mug out, at least one a month, probably two, as soon as we get some more supply, as soon as I get one, to people who are signing up to Patreon. It's [patreon.com/spfpodcast](https://patreon.com/spfpodcast).

Mark: I'll give one to John if he fills it with coffee for me.

James: He'll do it. He'll do anything for a mug. You're on. Not now, though, you'll make too much noise offscreen.

We occasionally talk about mindfulness on the podcast, and we know it's an important thing to be in the right place mentally, to function, particularly

when you work by yourself, and writing in a creative space. There's a lot of talk about this, a lot of thinking that goes into this. Is that you yawning?

Mark: Yeah.

James: Because we're about to talk about sleep.

Mark: Yeah, another bad night's sleep for Mark, unfortunately.

James: Was that because of the children?

Mark: Yes. It was. That's always the answer to that question.

James: Yeah, well I've had two bad nights' sleep. We're staying in a hotel over here in Salisbury, and you never particularly sleep well in hotels, I don't, certainly not the first night, but I've had two bad nights' sleep. It does without question affect your ability to a) obviously, just energy levels in terms of work, but I think also in terms of the creative process. You do need parts of your brain to be functioning pretty well to create. We are going to talk about sleep specifically then, with Anne Bartolucci as our guest today. Anne does a lot of writing on this subject. She's an author herself, fiction as well as non-fiction in terms of talking about things like sleep.

She's got an eBook coming out on how to get better sleep patterns to help your productivity. We're going to talk to Ann and she's put together an excellent pdf giveaway, which you'll hear me refer to in the interview, and we'll give you the url for that at the end, so let's hear from Ann first.

Anne: My name is Anne Bartolucci. I'm a clinical health psychologist and behavioral sleep medicine specialist, so most of my day is spent helping people sleep without drugs.

I also write as author Cecilia Dominic. I write urban fantasy, new adult contemporary, and steampunk.

James: Okay, so a reasonable cross of books there.

How long have you been writing?

Anne: My mother claims that she has a story I wrote when I was two. I have yet to see this story, but seriously since about 2003, that's when I really started working on my craft, going to conferences and things, and then I broke out in 2013.

James: So you broke out, that's when you got published or when you published yourself?

Anne: That's when I got the email from my editor at Samhain Publishing, and she emailed me and said, "Hey, is this book still available?" I clutched the edge of my desk and said, "Holy crap, I think this is it." And my husband's like, "What's going on?" So I said, "She wants the book," so he calmed me down and I sent her the book, and yes, I had seven books published with Samhain before they closed this past February.

James: Wow, okay. Brilliant. Yes, they closed.

What are you doing now?

Anne: I got this wonderful gift of seven edited novels, and I'm currently in the process of putting them back out myself.

James: Okay, great.

It's always great to do the self-publishing thing when you've got a back catalog to work with.

Anne: Definitely, and my goal is one a month this year. We'll see how that works.

James: Yeah, it's gonna be busy, but good luck with that.

Anne, we're here to talk really about the mind, about sleep and productivity.

This is something you have to practice as a writer, and something you have a clinical background in as well.

Anne: Correct. I was going to say, as you can tell I'm a fairly busy person, so yes, I've definitely had to implement some of these strategies myself, and I will admit, I am better at some of them than I am at others.

James: That's the old thing about physician heal thyself, but there's absolutely no reason, in fact the only way you'd be good at telling people how to do things if we're all flawed, right? Nobody's perfect, and you struggle with the same challenges that we do.

I know, 'cause I had a sneak peek of your brilliant pdf that we're giving out to go with this, what we're going to talk about, and I think it's superb, so I'm looking forward to this.

We always say on our podcast we want it to be of value to people, not to waste their time, that precious time listening, so I think let's just crack on because I can see some really good tips with that.

The first thing you're gonna say that we need to look after is a five-letter word.

Anne: Yes. That would be sleep.

Essentially, that is one of our biggest challenges in modern society, both because we are all so busy, so we don't give ourselves adequate opportunity to sleep.

And then there's also the issue of the fact that we have all of these things going on around us up until bedtime that keep us from being able to get good quality sleep.

James: That's not been helped by the advent of the digital age. I'm probably one of a billion parents on the planet who currently struggle with trying to get children to have a break and have gaps and limit their digital time, but actually, probably don't look after myself in that way, in the same way.

Anne: Exactly, yes, so you have to be the one who sets the example.

James: Damn. Okay. That makes sense. Just going to basics here, I know some of this should be self-evident.

What is the problem with being busy, whether it's face into an iPhone or whatever it is, ahead of sleep?

Anne: We have this strange concept that once we get past childhood and past all of those wonderful childhood bedtime routines, that we can just go, go, go through our day, hit the bed, fall asleep, and that's it.

We are just not wired like that, so it can be very helpful to do a few things. First, have an actual pre-bedtime routine and part of that pre-bedtime routine should definitely be shutting off all backlit screens, whether that's television, smartphones, tablets, computers, these things, we use them all the time and we have this variable reinforcement response with them. When you log onto Facebook, for example, you don't know if you're going to find that gem of an article that is going to help you discover something new, but you know 90% of the time you don't.

It's that 10% of the time that you find something really valuable that keeps you going back to do it, so there's a problem there for two reasons. First, it keeps your brain in receptive mode and reactive mode, and then also, yes, you have that blue light exposure, which then suppresses melatonin, the sleep hormone, which then keeps you from getting good quality sleep.

James: Okay. You're including in that tablets, and the reason I say that a little bit hesitantly is that I have a bedtime reading routine. Actually the advent of the Kindle Paperwhite has been a bit of a boon for me, because I can read it in the dark and it helps me go to sleep.

I don't read a huge amount at that point, I read five or six pages, but it's something that for me, it feels like part of my routine and it helps me get off.

Anne: Right, unfortunately the Kindle Paperwhite, even though you can turn the lights way, way, way down low, there is still some of that blue light signal present. So typically for people, I recommend that they go with for people listening at home, I'm holding up the old school non-backlit Kindle, so this is just the regular e-ink Kindle.

You can still get an access to your library, but you're not getting that blue light signal, and if you're concerned about waking up the bed partner, some of the cases, like this one come with lights.

And then of course, there's also the possibility of going old school and reading paper books, remember those?

James: I do remember those, fondly, but my thing is I tend to go to bed after my wife, and it would be anti-social of me to turn the lights on and read a paperback, hence the Paperwhite. But that's a very interesting comment, really it's about the blue light.

I'm assuming the little yellow light from a case doesn't have the same chemical effect on me.

Anne: Correct.

James: Okay, that's a good tip. There's another curious thing you've put in your handout, was about the duration of sleep.

There's a bit of a myth about how much sleep we need.

Anne: Yes, people have this concept that they need this magical number of eight hours every single night in order to sleep, function, and not die. People come in to my office and they're really, really super attached to that eight hour number, whereas normal adult sleep is anywhere from seven to nine hours, and if you think about it, our sleep need varies between individuals.

For example, I'm an eight to eight-and-a-half hour sleeper. I know that's my sleep need. My husband, on the other hand, he's a six- to seven-hour sleeper. If he tries to sleep my schedule, for example, when we're traveling, we don't have all those options for separate pre-bedtime routines, he will actually have insomnia on the third or fourth night.

It's because he's maybe gotten a little bit too much sleep, or he doesn't need as much.

Also, it varies within individual. So for example, I'm a runner, and I've noticed that nights after a race or after I've done a long training run, I need more sleep those nights than I do other nights when I've been a little bit less active.

James: So it's listening to your body.

Anne: Exactly.

James: I'm a runner as well, so I definitely notice that impacts on sleep need. I wonder how extreme that goes to, 'cause you do get some people who would sleep, I'm not gonna name anybody here, who would sleep 10 to 12 hours every night if they got an opportunity and sleep in in the morning.

I kind of envy them. I definitely don't need so much, but then you hear stories, the one that comes to mind was Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister of the U.K. a few years ago, who famously did four or five hours every night and said that's all she needed.

Is that really true? Is that a real outlier?

Anne: That is a real outlier, although they do exist. I've heard the same thing, actually, about Albert Einstein, that he only needed four hours a night. I actually kind of envy those people because if I could get by with four hours of sleep a night and have that be my sleep need, I would get so much more done.

James: Yeah, find those magic extra four or five hours a day that we all look for.

I was going to mention Prince as maybe the counter to that, because although we don't want to speculate, I think his autopsy's probably out by now, but he barely slept by all accounts, in fact by his own account, he barely slept at night. He worked at night, but there's somebody who suffered an early death, probably lots of other complications in that, but not necessarily healthy in that extreme.

Anne: Right, no, Michael Jackson died because he wasn't able to get good sleep. He died in his quest for good sleep.

James: Before we move on from sleep, one or two of the other things that we should be looking for, you're referring to this routine.



Can you flesh that out a little bit? What sort of things should we be doing?  
Anne: Great question. For example, I would typically recommend that an hour before bed, people go through their evening pajama and brushing teeth routine.

Some people find it helpful to take a warm bath or shower because that will drive body temp up, and then as the body cools, it's actually a signal to sleep.

For the rest of that hour, do something relaxing, so if you tend to have a prayer or meditation routine, that's a great time to do it, assuming you're not going to fall asleep during it.

Or to do something low-key like reading something that's entertaining but that you're not going to be unable to put down. A lot of my millennial patients who aren't necessarily big readers although I am trying to convert them, they'll do things like listen to podcasts and color, so it's still mentally engaging and relaxing.

James: Color?

Anne: Color. So yes, adult coloring books. I don't know if they've taken off as much in the U.K. as they have here, but yes, they're big.

James: Yeah, I mean they're here, I don't know if they are as big as they are in the States, and I have to say it is not something I've even tried yet. But you think that for some people you see it as being a part of their relaxing routine?

Anne: Yes, 'cause it can be a very mindful activity, 'cause you really do have to focus on getting the colors in the little lines, and with the adult coloring books they do tend to be very intricate designs.

It also might be pulling in some parts of the brain that you're not necessarily using the rest of the time.

James: Maybe I'll give it a go. We'll see if they have some Star Wars coloring books. I'm sure they do.

Anne: Oh yes, I'm sure.

James: What about napping? It seems to be quite trendy at the moment, napping.

Anne: I'll admit, I'm a big fan of napping. I have a nice, comfy couch in my office that will get used occasionally.

But if you're going to nap, first make sure it's not going to impact your sleep at night, and typically people will know that if they nap during the day, that they have more trouble at night.

If you do nap, try to make it less than half an hour. 15 to 20 minutes tends to be the ideal. The reason for that is that we go through different sleep stages when we sleep, whether it's daytime or nighttime.

If you're napping more than 20 to 30 minutes, you're going into deep slow-wave sleep, which is the most physically restoring sleep, and so it sounds like, well yeah, I want to do that while I nap.

The problem is, if you do that during the day, the body's kind of like, well, check, I've already done that, and so it'll be more difficult to do it at night. Not to mention, if you wake up out of that type of sleep, that's when you get the nap hangover, where you take a nap and you almost feel worse than when you went to sleep to begin with.

James: Yeah. I don't think there's any avoiding feeling a bit ropery after a nap, but if I have done it, and it has not become a routine with me, I quite

like it to, I might work on it, an hour or half an hour to an hour after the nap, that's when it comes back to me. But I don't think anybody wakes up from even a 20 minute nap feeling "bing," it's always a little bit, but that seems okay.

Anne: It will usually take me about five, 10 minutes after a 15-20 minute nap to really start feeling the benefits of it.

But you know, some people, and that's another misconception of sleep, is that people think that they don't get a good night's sleep if they don't just wake up ready to jump out of bed and tackle the day.

Some people are just never going to do that. Some people are just always going to take half an hour to an hour to really get going in the morning.

James: Not all of us are morning people. In fact, that's not a good combination of people, the one who's bright and breezy first thing in the morning, the one who needs the hour.

We have a household with a daughter who is not a morning person, so we're learning about that at the moment.

Just on the subject of napping, I have a friend who had for a period of time an extraordinarily high-pressured job, very, very intense, and he used to nap all the time. He used it in the car journey for five minutes, he would nap.

It's the only way he really got through those six or seven years of that job, and I saw it's quite a power. I don't think anyone trained him to do it, in fact it almost became knowledge because he was so exhausted all the time, but I saw the power of it in keeping him going and how the body would adapt to that.

Moving on, I know you've put a couple of workarounds that we can think about if we're trying to plan and trying to find in this modern world a way of getting these routines going, yeah?

Anne: Yes. The biggest challenge for a lot of people is that this continuing blue light, and I actually recommend discontinuing it within two hours of bedtime, just to give your brain that time to relax and recharge.

One of the workarounds that will help you to use blue light to within an hour of bedtime is something called blue light blocking glasses. These are the ones that I use at home, so people at home, these essentially look kind of like yellow grandma sunglasses, so they fit over my regular specs. I'll admit they are not sexy. The first night I wore them when my husband and I were watching television, he turned around and looked at me, he said, "Wow, don't they make those in any more attractive models?" I told him "No, turn around and watch television."

But one of the unexpected advantages is we were watching Dr. Who, and it was the episode where they're in the head of the Dalek's cavern or whatever-

James: Davros.

Anne: Yes. I remember my father complaining about television shows and movies that were set at night, or in dark places, 'cause it's so hard to see. These actually help a lot.

They can actually enhance the television-watching experience which some people are worried about. I usually recommend that people will wear them in that between two and one hour before bed.

There are also some filters that you can get for your devices. iPhones and iPads have something on them called night shift, and you get to it through brightness.

I recommend that you turn it all the way warm, so as yellow and warm as possible, and have it set to go on at sunset and off at sunrise.

Also, for Macs, PCs and Android devices, there's a program called F.Lux, spelled F-dot-L-U-X. It's a free program, you can download it and it will also automatically turn those screens yellow, or in the case of Mac, funky orange, at sunset.

James: We should say that most people listen to the podcast, rather than watch it, so just describe the glasses.

They're like a fairly largish pair of sunglasses, plastic frames with the yellow light. I can remember winning in a raffle years ago of night vision glasses for driving, which seemed like a random thing, but they looked actually very similar to that.

Anne: Yes, actually, these are the ones that I have are the As Seen on TV, and they're blue light blocking and night vision driving glasses.

James: Okay, and I have a pair of sports sunglasses that I use for cricket. We often play in fading light, and they're yellow lenses.

People are always amazed when I say, "Try them on," how much more light you get through them, so it's actually quite nice light as well. Good. Well there's some good, practical tips. Anne, thank you very much for that. Let's press on through. I want to ask you about the whole digital stuff. We've touched on it already, but it is something that previous generations simply didn't have to deal with.

You watch an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, and they did a little bit of taking a turn around the room and playing the harpsichord in the evening, and then sitting quietly reading, so things were a little bit easier in the 18th century.

Today, the distractions are phenomenal, aren't they?

Anne: Oh yes, definitely. I mentioned earlier the dopamine release and the rewards in these devices.

Of course, the people who manufacture them want us to be addicted to them, because then we'll continue buying them, and we'll continue using them, and soon they become indispensable. Could you imagine life without your smartphone?

James: No, but the way you're describing it is very similar to the way drug dealers operate, right?

Anne: Exactly. First half's free. We have these little devices and if you think about, not even necessarily back to the 1800s, although that might be a more ideal time, but even back to say, the 1990s.

If you recall, when we used to check our email, we had to go to the computer, sit down, dial up, and it made that lovely modem noise that some of us remember all too well. We would check our emails and we would answer them and then we would go about our day.

Now, our emails kind of check us. We are carrying around our devices. Sometimes our devices are attached to our wrists, that also give us notifications.

Yes, I deliberately got one so I'm showing you guys, it looks like a regular watch, it's actually a fitness tracker that only allows phone calls and text message notifications to come through.

James: Very sensible.

Anne: Not emails. Yes. It's hard to keep the brain in optimal productive mode if you're expecting an alert at any moment.

I heard a interview a while ago with a neurologist who says that the alerts on our phones activate that deep primitive part of the brain that used to respond with, for example, a rustling in the bushes.

And you need to respond to the rustling in the bushes, 'cause it's either something you want to eat or something that wants to eat you.

Most of the time in our email or our social media, it's not either of those things, although there are plenty of political debates to be had, if you're into that. Typically, it's "Hey, buy this thing." Or "Your package is going to be delivered tomorrow."

So what we need to do is really just start taking control of our smartphone time or our device time. On the handout, I do say smart phone management, smart phone being two words, not one, that's not a typo. One thing to do is to wait until after breakfast to look at your emails and texts and social media stuff. I'm guessing that for a lot of people, if somebody really wants to get a hold of them, they will still call, or you can try to set that expectation.

As for the rest of it, by waiting until after breakfast, you give your brain time to get really set in productive mode, rather than receptive mode.

Also, I will recommend that people turn off their alerts. My social media apps are always bugging me, it's like "Hey, turn on alerts so you'll know when such-and-such happens," and I'm like "Nope, go away."

On my smartphone, I don't even have email badges. I don't get the little red number when I get an email. I actually have to go and tap on the little icon.

James: You don't have the little dot winking at you the whole time saying "Read me, read me," you've disabled that, so you don't know whether you've got unread emails there.

Anne: I don't, no.

James: Well you could be like John Dyer who at any one time has about two and a half thousand unread emails, it just doesn't matter to him.

Anne: Right, yes, if you're not the type of person who can just ignore them.

James: That's good. And technically this same thing could be achieved for a period of time, I guess, by shifting into airplane mode.

Or there's a night icon it's called now on the iPhone at least is nighttime mode, which you can enable, which cuts out all the beeps and noises and notifications during that time, and you can set that to either be a scheduled thing, or turn it on and off manually.

Anne: Right, yeah, I actually have mine on 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., which is typically when I'm seeing patients, 'cause obviously I don't want my phone doing that then.

James: That seems sensible. I realize how much of this I'm doing wrong, between checking emails before breakfast, that's a terrible habit that I have. First thing I'll do, come down here, do a little bit of work, then go and have breakfast.

I need to have a better routine in the morning. I'm going to do better in the future.

Anne: I would guess probably a lot of your viewers and listeners roll over and look at their phones for the emails and the social media first thing. At least you do have a little bit of a space.

James: This stuff is important, right, getting small changes to your routine will start to make a difference to your alert levels.



Ultimately we want to be good creative people and turn out good quality work, and so there is a direct correlation, right, between getting this right and the type of levels of alertness you're gonna have when you're creating.

Anne: Right, yes, our brains were not designed to do two things at once. If the brain is always alert and listening for something to happen, it is really hard for it to do productive, creative things.

James: We're always told that women can multitask and men can't. That's another myth, is it?

Anne: It is a myth. The more we study multitasking, the more you find it's really not the most efficient way of doing things.

For example, you're more likely to miss something and then make more mistakes, and then end up actually being more frustrated and behind than you were when you started.

James: Something else you mentioned in the notes, which I found interesting, was about being aware of your alert levels for different types of creative work.

Anne: A lot of people have a morning writing routine and they don't really know why, they just know it's easier to create in the morning.

Part of that reason is because that's when their brain is still shifting out of sleep, your inner editor is somewhat asleep, or that's how it feels for me, and so actually less alert equals more creative.

On the other hand, if you're going to be doing things for marketing, or if you're doing more analytical work like editing, then aiming for a more alert time during the day would be more advantageous.

For example, I tend to draft in the morning and then edit in the evenings. Ideally, I would edit during the middle of the day, 'cause that's really my peak alertness time, but of course, I'm doing that other job.

It's really being familiar with your own mind and your own preferences, and aiming for your alert versus not so alert times for these things.

James: So you think that during the less alert times our brains are potentially more open to abstract thoughts, and our more alert times they want to do more practical things, hence your leaning towards drafting, coming up with stories, and notes, when you're less alert, but editing when you're alert.

Anne: Yes, there's actually a lot of research that when people are less alert, they are better at insight-type questions.

The types of questions that really require you to make that creative leap. Whereas during more alert times, they're better at the analytical stuff.

James: Okay. That must explain why John Dyer is so creative, 'cause he's never alert.

There's something that you mentioned about procrastination, which is on the handout, but I think we'll need a bit of explanation from you, because I didn't grasp it first time.

What are you getting at when you talk about fear, and what was it, I can't remember the exact phrase now, fear and avoidance?

Anne: Right, so if you think about it, procrastination is you're putting off doing something that you need to do. We do it for different reasons, but it all comes down to fear and avoidance.

There are different types that manifest themselves. For example, a lot of people are familiar with impostor syndrome, or that feeling that you are going to get caught out at any moment, that you actually really don't know what you're doing or you're not really a good writer, or your stories are awful. Eventually somebody's going to figure this out.

If you have that kind of fear, you're of course going to have a harder time writing, and it's everybody. I think one of the main examples that I've read about is Maya Angelou. As accomplished and awarded as she is, she's talked about having this problem.

Then, there's also perfectionism or fear of being not perfect. If you think about it before you write a book, you have this concept in your head, of it's going to be this perfect, amazing story. The characters are all going to be round and engaging and the plot's going to have all these amazing twists to it.

And then you sit down to write it and of course, first drafts don't meet anywhere near our expectations. We tend to put it off because it's really hard to look at that first draft and be like, "Wow. That's really not what I was trying for."

You get closer to what you're trying for in the edits, but sometimes that first step is really hard. Or let's say you have a first draft and you really don't want to see how much it sucks, and so then you put off editing.

Then there's also boredom. Some of what we do as writers, we don't really like doing. I actually kind of like marketing, certain types of it. A lot of people don't, and so they'll put off the marketing parts of things just because they just don't want to do it, or it highlights skills that they don't have yet that they're going to have to put forth effort to learn.

Honestly, that's kinda like me with landing pages. I still haven't figured them out yet.

And then finally, there is resistance. And there was this great little book that came out several years ago called [The War of Art](#), and it's by Steven Pressfield, who wrote *The Legend of Bagger Vance*.

It's a really, really good book, 'cause he really focuses in on this anti-creative force that is in everybody, and it also happens when people engage in behavior change.

So for example, I often tell my patients, when you're trying to establish new healthy behaviors like better sleep or healthier eating, you're going to often find that it will get a little bit worse before it gets better. That's resistance at play.

Our bodies and our minds don't want to change what we're doing, 'cause even if we're not happy, we get comfortable.

That also occurs with writing. You might want to write this wonderful, perfect book, but there's this opposing force against it, and this concept of resistance has been getting a lot more press lately. It's been really interesting.

James: Yeah, it is really interesting. I wonder what's behind it in terms of our human makeup. Why we do have this nagging doubt that can be overwhelming?

You could have been speaking directly to me when you described it, and I'm sure that would be the same for a lot of the listeners. It stops you working. It's one of the reasons I'm so slow at my book. I'll be quite honest about that, is this feeling that it's not good enough. It's a difficult thing.

Anne: Yes, definitely. Actually I got the idea to contact you guys about being a resource for this topic from hearing you talk about some of your

difficulties in earlier podcasts, that yes, I think it comes out of maybe the more primitive part of the brain.

Again, because if you think about it, back in the day, humans had to band together for survival. Individual success was maybe even detrimental to survival, because if somebody's going off and doing their own thing, as wonderful as it is, they're still not playing as part of the team.

To gather their food, bring down the buffalo, to defend the village, whatever it is. I think it's probably one of those old holdovers for lack of a better term.

James: Yeah. There's always some logic isn't there, when you go back to when we were hunter-gathering out there in the field. Okay.

You talked about imposter syndrome, perfectionism, boredom, and resistance. How do we solve this then, Anne?

Anne: Ah. Yes, that is the big question, isn't it?

James: And I really need to know the answer.

Anne: Excellent. So the first thing to do is to accept it. Look, we're writers. We're gonna procrastinate. We're gonna have these problems.

The issue comes in in that the more we beat ourselves up for it, it's actually not going to motivate us, it's going to make us do it more, because then you're piling feelings of failure on top of feelings of failure, which of course is about as un motivating as you can get. So just accept, okay, you're going to procrastinate.

Then there's also the question of habit versus discipline. A lot of people will look at me and say, "Wow, you must be really disciplined to do all that you do."

And honestly, a) my impostor syndrome says “Yeah, I really don’t do that much,” and b) discipline is kind of a dirty word, because it’s a word that puts a lot of pressure on us.

So the thing to do is actually to establish habits, and they don’t necessarily need to be every day habits.

You hear that you should write every day, well for some of us like me, with really busy day jobs, that’s just not possible.

It’s getting to the habit that “Okay, when I go through this sequence of things, this is when it’s time to write.”

I know you have the certain kind of music that you like to listen to when you write, so that’s probably a signal that engages that habit. Some people do find it useful to write at the same time every single day or in the same place, or sometimes even wearing the same things.

Some people have their writing socks. It’s establishing habits, which once you’ve really established a good habit, it feels weird if you don’t do it, which can then be really motivating.

Then there’s also structured procrastination.

James: Wow.

Anne: Yes. Make it work for you. This is actually a method that I was using before I figured out what the name of it was, and there is a reference on the pdf, and it’s this really nice little short book called [The Art of Procrastination](#) by John Perry. He’s at Stanford.

It’s essentially tricking your brain. Let’s say there’s something you really need to do, but you’ve been procrastinating on it.

What you need to do is figure out something else that you really need to do, that you want to procrastinate more, and then you'll use that one task that you really need to do to procrastinate the other task.

You just need to tell yourself that that other task is more important. I will give writing groups talks on procrastination and I'll often give out copies of this book, and somebody told me afterwards that it helped her son get through his high school project and her to get through her thesis to use this method. And I was like, "Wow, that's brilliant. I wish I could have come up with it."

James: It reminds me when we talk about this that we think we're in control of our minds. We are to an extent, obviously, we use our minds to make choices, but they need to be treated as almost like a muscle on your arms. You want a big bicep, you don't will it to be big, you do a load of stuff that's gonna make your bicep big, but we don't really take that same thing, the attitude toward our brains, but we need to.

We need to think about how we're developing it, how we're looking after it, how we're doing things to almost trick it into working for us.

Anne: Exactly. There's actually a concept of the giving in muscle versus the resisting giving in muscle.

Judith Beck, who's a very famous cognitive therapist uses that in her program for helping people stick to their diets. Every time you give in, you're strengthening the wrong kind of muscle.

That also prompts the thought of "Hey, let's give ourselves credit for when we do meet our goals." We do engage in these behaviors.

Give yourself credit for when you sit down and you write those thousand words or however many you're trying to get every day. We often beat ourselves up for not doing what we haven't done, but we don't do the opposite, and reinforce ourselves for accomplishing things.

James: Because we're full of crushing self-doubt.

Anne: Exactly. Yes, 'cause if we accomplish something, the self doubt ways ""Oh, well that mast have just been an accident.""

James: Exactly, exactly. Anne, we've been talking for 40 minutes, this has been brilliant. We're gonna have to bring it to a wrap-up at this point, but you've put together this superb pdf as I say.

I'm gonna give out the link for people to download it in just a moment, and at the end of it, you've got a list of resources, settled on the books you're referred to are there. I know you're also out the moment, you've got your new book coming out on this subject.

I know you're going to do the little thing where people can get a sneak peek of that, yeah?

Anne: Correct, so I'm currently in the process of writing a book for people who like to accomplish a lot of things but their sleep gets in the way. I'm going to be giving away the first few chapters, both to help people and also looking for feedback if they don't mind, and you can find it at my web site, it's [www.sleepyintheatl.com/bettersleep](http://www.sleepyintheatl.com/bettersleep). The link will also be on the pdf.

James: Yep, we'll put it on the pdf, and I'll mention it again in a moment when Mark and I wrap up this podcast.

Anne, thank you so much indeed, we have been trusting you. You're a doctor, you've been subliminally flashing that message at us on your mug through the podcast.

Anne: Trust me, I'm the doctor?



James: If you're watching the video, you can see. There's also possibly a white leopard or a bulldog over your left shoulder, which is all.

Anne: All right, yes, that is fine. Yes, and actually, backwards, and a Dalek.

James: Ah yes, a big Doctor Who fan, that's becoming clear. There you go, many reasons to watch this episode on our YouTube channel as well as listen to it.

Anne, thank you so much indeed, it's been really interesting, and definitely usable material, so let's all keep each other honest now, starting preventing some of these things and see what a difference it makes to our productivity.

Anne: Thank you James, it's been a real pleasure.

James: Yeah, good stuff from Anne. We all need some professional help in various areas of our life, whether it's getting some building work done on your house, or thinking about the way that you sleep and you perform.

Mark: Yeah, absolutely. Sleep is very important, obviously, stating the bleeding obvious there, but anything that we can get to improve amount of sleep that we get and also the quality of sleep that we get is obviously going to be very, very useful.

You're right, especially important for creative people, how you need their brains to be functioning at our high level. I don't feel like my brain's functioning anywhere near the high level at the moment, so I'll be getting that pdf for you for sure.

James: Yeah, so the pdf if you want it, which is Brain Hacks to Help You Sleep. It's been put together by Anne and also an email that we sent out that will deliver the pdf.

We'll give you a link to sign up to Anne's list and get the first three chapters of her new book on sleep free of charge. We'll send it out to you.

So if you just go onto [selfpublishingformula.com/sleep](https://selfpublishingformula.com/sleep), nice easy one, [selfpublishingformula.com/sleep](https://selfpublishingformula.com/sleep), and you can get that pdf with you heard me referring to in the interview, which is hacks to get better sleep patterns, and better productivity.

We've got more recording to do today, so we need to get that mug filled with coffee.

Mark: We do, yes, absolutely. Double espresso. Triple espresso.

James: I'm not sure that's on the hack, actually.

Mark: Alcohol.

James: Pdf. I mean, alcohol's definitely not on it. We should also say we went out for dinner last night.

Mark: We did. That's true.

James: A nice couple of carafes of wine, which doesn't help you sleep, I don't think.

Mark: Probably not, no. I didn't have any wine. I can't use that excuse. It was gin for me.

James: Lager shandy.

Mark: Yes.

James: The waitress told on you.

Mark: Did she?

James: We said, "What is he drinking?" She said a lager shandy, which is like very weak beer. So there you go. We can't all be men.

Mark: I'm a professional. I knew we were recording today.

James: Are you still drunk, Dawson?

Mark: A little bit, yeah.

James: Okay. Thank you very much indeed for listening today. I don't think we're great examples to the sleep Anne was talking about, but the pdf will help us all, hopefully, sort ourselves out. [Selfpublishingformula.com/sleep](http://Selfpublishingformula.com/sleep), and we'll see you next week.

Speaker 1: You've been listening to the Self Publishing Formula podcast. Visit us at [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com) for more information, show notes, and links on today's topics. You can also sign up for our free video series on using Facebook ads to grow your mailing list. If you've enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. We'll see you next time.