

JESSICA HANDLER

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WORKSHOPS By Jessica Handler

“Jessica Handler is one of the only authors we know who can make you laugh and cry with the same sentence.” - Charis Books & More, the nation’s oldest independent feminist bookstore, Atlanta, GA

Jessica Handler is the author of *Braving the Fire: A Guide to Writing About Grief and Loss* and *Invisible Sisters: A Memoir*. With an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Queens University (Charlotte, NC) and a B.S. in Communication from Emerson College (Boston, MA), Jessica has served in faculty and guest instructor roles at a number of colleges and universities in the Atlanta area.

Jessica has been invited to teach workshops all across the country, including the Oxford Nonfiction Conference, the Iowa Summer Writing Program and Grub Street Writers’ Conference.

Jessica teaches relaxed, friendly workshops focused on the craft of writing well about grief and trauma. Beginners encouraged! Jessica can customize each workshop to the group’s needs. What follows are some of the workshops she can facilitate:

Writing the Tough Stuff

Everyone experiences personal difficulty at some point in their lives. We may find that we want to write about loss, grief, or trauma with the notion that getting it down on paper will be cathartic. This lecture will present strategies for strong literary writing, and discuss cross-disciplinary research in creating trauma narratives. Participants will leave with take-home generative writing exercises.

Looking Back, Moving Forward

A well-written memoir about grief or loss demonstrates that the writer has moved forward enough to look back. But how does a writer’s “back” shape his or her “forward?” If we intend to write well about our loss, ‘looking back’ on positive and negative experiences involves more than just capturing slippery memory on the page. Looking back creates forward motion in the story. In this workshop, participants will discuss examples from classic memoir, and generate new material from writing prompts generated by the workshop. Participants will receive a reading list for further exploration and take-home prompts.

There’s More Than “Me” in Memoir

A good memoir tells your story, but in order to capture your reader’s heart and imagination, the very best memoirs place the author’s personal story within the beauty and tragedy of the larger world. In this workshop, you will learn ways to develop your memoir so that it resonates not only with you and yours, but with readers everywhere. Open to writers of all levels.

WORKSHOPS, CONT'D

Creating Powerful Prose After Grief or Trauma

Robert Frost wrote “no tears for the writer, no tears for the reader,” but what are a prose writers’ tools for bringing emotionally difficult material to the page and moving through trauma to create powerful work? In the first half of this day-long workshop, we will examine leading examples of grief writing and undertake writing exercises to learn ways to confront tears, find joy, and meet on the page the little known continuation of Frost’s quote: “No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader.”

In the second half, we will convene for a facilitated, craft-focused discussion of our writing. Participants will gain strategies for writing about trauma in pursuit of insight, a sense of wholeness, and connection to readers. Open to writers at all levels, in all genres. (Please submit three to five pages of fiction or nonfiction prose in advance of the group meeting.)

Research Materials You Didn’t Know You Had

Some of the most powerful, effective research tools for fiction and nonfiction aren’t found in libraries, historical societies, or on the Web, but in our daily lives. This workshop will lead writers of all levels and genres through techniques for building scene and characters using informal research material we can find in our attics and junk drawers, including yearbooks, family recipes, and casual hometown field trips. We will read examples from prominent memoirs, and lead a discussion about methods for organizing, understanding, and examining research you can easily find in your own lives.

WHAT WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING

“This was the first course that helped me understand the components of a good memoir...Jessica is approachable, very knowledgeable, and supportive.” - Debbie S.

"I [was] looking for the scenes and stories in my life." Cherry Z.

BOOK JESSICA FOR AN UPCOMING WORKSHOP

Interested in booking Jessica for a writers’ workshop or speaking engagement? She’s available for in-person visits as well as by Skype. [Email jessicahandler@comcast.net](mailto:jessicahandler@comcast.net).