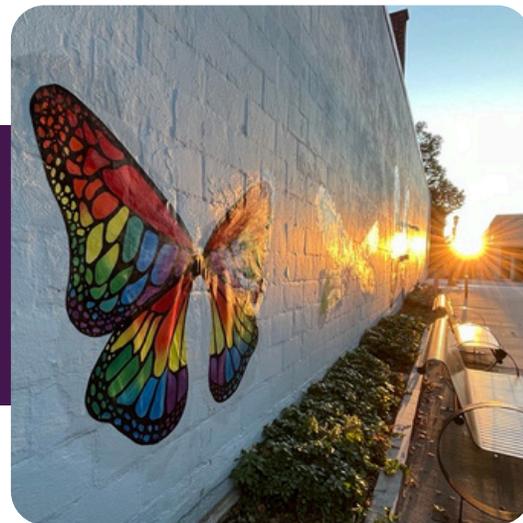


Survivor Storytellers

Workshopping Practices



A writing workshop should:

- Make you feel like a writer and assure you that others see you as a writer, too!
- Leave you knowing that the other workshopers want to see your work succeed.
- Give you direction forward — either edits, expansions, new ideas, or feeling like you're ready to submit for publication.

A writing workshop should never make you feel:

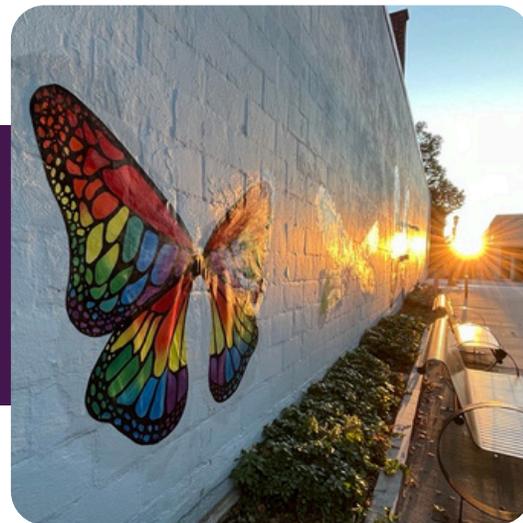
- “Less than”
- Like you should give up
- You wish you hadn't shared

Workshoppers, when listening and responding to other people's writing, you should:

- Never state an opinion as fact.
 - This means saying things like “The title is bad” is not helpful. You want to give writers feedback that can offer a way forward if they want it. So about a title, better options might be: “There was a line in the story that I think might make a great title” or “I was surprised by how the story unfolded, because the title made me expect something different.” Ground your feedback in your experience as a reader.
- Listen closely. Feel free to jot down when there is something you really like – even if it's just a word or a phrase.
- Think about the story as a whole, but also give feedback about sentence structure and word choices. Writing is all about those small details, and writers love knowing that we've noticed them!
 - **Exception:** Avoid line editing (correcting grammar and punctuation). That comes later!

Survivor Storytellers

Workshopping Practices



Workshop process:

Group:

- Before starting, let's check in and say how we're feeling today. How's our level of energy, emotional health, etc. Keep that in mind as you're workshopping.
- When listening, check in with your body. Are you feeling emotions activate? Are you noticing a racing heart, tight fists, or shoulder tension? Pay attention to how stories are affecting you, and let's normalize taking a break between readings and shaking it off before we continue.

Writers, before you read your selection, let us know:

- Are there trigger warnings we should be aware of?
- What is the general idea of the complete piece?
 - What is your story about? Is there additional meaning you're hoping to include that you want us to look for? Like is your story about a mom and daughter dealing with the husband/father's abuse, but you also want people to see the strength in female relationships?
- Is there anything we should know before listening that isn't included?
 - **Example:** If you're reading one page from later in the story, you might tell us some info to get us up to speed, like: "The main characters you'll see here are Martha and Ginny. They're sisters, dealing with their family's estate, and there's a big disagreement about a certain chair their dad loved. The part you'll hear is where they finally blow up and tell each other what they're feeling."
- What kind of feedback do you **want**?
 - **Example:** "I'm unsure about the dialogue between these two people, so I'd love to hear if it's sounding realistic to people."
- What kind of feedback do you **NOT want**?
 - **Example:** "Parts of this story are grounded in real events, so I don't want feedback about whether or not it feels too depressing or unrealistic."

Writers, while reading aloud:

- Don't apologize if you stumble on a word or if you read a passage you're not happy with. Keep going!
- Resist the urge to explain something more. If you're reading aloud and you feel like something's missing, that's your sign to jot it down in a note for future editing!
- Let yourself pause to take a breath, take a sip of water, etc. We're here for you, and we're not in a rush

Survivor Storytellers

Workshopping Practices



Workshop process:

Listeners:

- Note a writer's preference for feedback dos and don'ts, and honor those preferences.
- It is OK to jot down notes while listening if you have a thought you want to be sure to remember.
- Listen however is comfy for you. Some people like to close their eyes – some don't. Just focus on listening and giving quiet space to the reader.
- When giving feedback, talk about “the narrator” or “the character” rather than giving feedback that talks about “you” or “your mother.” This helps us focus our feedback on the writing (story arc, character development) and not feeling like we're critiquing a person themselves.
 - **Example:** “I don't understand why the narrator does this here” is better feedback than “Why did you do this?”
- We'll be using a “Critical Response Process” model for our workshops – see the attached how-to!