

STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus n. an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,
used by the ancients for writing

LEMONS TO LEMONADE Sweet Success

by Nina Durfee

As a writer, I try to shy away from trite cliches, but this month's title exactly expresses my experience in the past month.

I loved developing the Conscious Planner 2008 (see details on my home page, www.lifesculpt.net), designed with a size and framework that works for my style of organizing time, adorned with a beautiful cover designed by my artist friend, Sheila Earhart, and enhanced with questions and tools to clarify intentions and inspire and motivate action in alignment with business and personal desires. I enjoyed the creative aspect. I was blessed with the generous technical labors of my coaching colleague, Anna Goldsworthy, to alleviate my pages-in-order conundrum. I felt excitement as I held the final proof in my hand after much editing, input from friends and colleagues, and working against the deadline of time incumbent in calendar production.

In an effort to git 'r done pronto – already well into November – I rushed the proof to the printer and noticed in that moment that the date didn't appear on the cover. "We can fix that," the printer assured me, and performed a re-do on the spot. I looked at the proof, made certain the title was aligned, the date was right, it didn't interfere with the flow of the cover art, and declared it a wrap. I ordered 100, and only after they were all printed did I notice that in the re-do process, the printer misspelled the word "conscious." Right on the cover!

What I felt (as I leaned over the toilet) was a combination of embarrassment, failure, dismay, anger, frustration, self-doubt and defeat. I prepared myself to revoke my claim to be a writer's coach, envisioned all my business cards and brochures flying into the landfill right behind 100 misprinted planners, my stomach lurching more vehemently with the vision.

Some placating thoughts came to mind. "Don't judge a book by its cover." "Failure is just another word for opportunity." "The cover is busy, maybe no one will notice."

Lurch.

What were my options?

I could run back and yell at the printer. Technically it was their fault. But would it move me forward to engage in that confrontation and demand a re-do at this late date? What core values were at play for me?

Honesty and integrity: I must accept my responsibility for not checking the spelling when they showed me the proof.

Environmental harmony: I can't just toss all that paper into a landfill.

Live from the inside out, not the outside in: For each of us, it's what's inside that counts. A blemish or wart on the face of a friend in no way diminishes the depth of individual being. The same holds true of my Planner, by golly!

There was nothing left for me but to make lemonade from these very sour lemons. One of my own Guiding Principles is to not take myself too seriously. I could choose anger and frustration, or I could enjoy the cosmic joke. I had been handed a perfect opportunity to put my own Guiding Principle into play.

So, I choose to flaunt the error! It's humbling, but it 's not the end of the world. The blemish of misspelling doesn't take away from the beauty of the cover or the profundity and usefulness of the content. It simply makes it unique!

Yes, I'm embarrassed. But I'm willing to forgive myself this mistake. In an effort to lighten the mood for myself and those who purchase my Planner, I'm personally inscribing each and every one of them as follows:

"Thank you for enjoying this Special Limited Edition, like a rare stamp, more precious for its misprinted title! One of my own Guiding Principles is, 'Don't take yourself too seriously.' Don't ya love the cosmic irony!"

When I tell people the story, they laugh. They appreciate my vulnerability and connect with my human-ness. It keeps me real. And they buy my Planners in spite of the flaw!

My Guiding Principle serves me well. The lesson for me is to love myself and to be honest. I feel empowered and at choice. It adds sweetness to the bitter lemon of imperfection. I'm good with that.

What Guiding Principle moves you forward?