

MATTMCWILLIAMS

Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

Who Says You Can't?

If you are like almost everyone I know, there is something you've always wanted to do, but someone talked you out of it. Someone told you that you're not talented enough. Someone told you that you're too old or too young. Too slow, too stupid, or too poor. And now, you're left wondering what might have been. Now what?

Catherine Lanigan was like that. All throughout her young life, she considered herself a talented writer. Her teachers told she was gifted and maybe that she could make it someday as a writer.

So she entered college full of hope. She even registered for a senior level class in creative writing taught by a visiting professor from Harvard. When she wrote her very first short story for the class, the professor asked to see her.

He was the prototypical college English professor. He was 6' 6" tall, wore tweed coat with elbow patches and the horn-rimmed glasses. He also had the smug look of a tenured English professor (sorry if that is you, but I had three such professors in college and they all had a smug look).

Crushing the Dream

"Frankly, Miss Lanigan," he began. "You're writing stinks."

He went on to berate her writing ability. He tore apart everything about her story.

According to Catherine, he told her that she was "fortunate" that he caught her in time. He said that her parents were wasting their money and that she needed to change her major. He then made a deal with her. Since she wanted to graduate with honors, he agreed to give her a B in the class if she promised one thing...

...to never write again.

She took the bargain and vowed never to write again. As she stood on the rooftop of her dorm that night, she burned her manuscript and declared that she would never again believe in dreams. "I will only deal with reality," she said to herself.

My "Secret Dream"

Fourteen years later, everything changed, though. She noticed a group of writers one day at a hotel pool and approached them.

"I really admire what you do," she said. "My secret dream was to be a writer."

One of the writers replied with something so simple and yet so profound. "Is that right? Because if you wanted to be a writer, you would be a writer."

That's the thing...writers write. Singers sing. Speakers speak. Inventors invent. But *someone* told Catherine that she couldn't be a writer...and she believed him.

She told this man that someone important told her that she had no talent, that she could never write.

"Who told you you can't?" the man asked.

She told him the story of the tweed-coated professor. After hearing her story, he gave her his card and told her to call him if she ever wrote anything.

When she told him that she wouldn't write again, he said, "Oh yes, you will."

She thought it over and decided that what one man said did not determine her destiny. It was just *his opinion*. So she wrote a book. She decided not to listen to that professor's voice anymore.

When she sent it to the writer she met at the pool, he gave it to his agent, who told Catherine that she was "startingly talented." She signed a contract and since then has written more than 40 books, including *Romancing the Stone* and *Jewel of the Nile*.

The sad part is that she lost 14 years of living out her dream because she listened to one person's opinion. Have you ever done that?

There Will Always be Naysayers, Critics, and Dreamkillers

There will always be people telling you that you can't do something. That you can't live your dream. That you don't have the talent, the pedigree, the education, the connections, or the money. Those people are small-minded and not worth a moment of your time.

[shareable]Dreamkillers, critics, and naysayers are small-minded and not worth a moment of your time.[/shareable]

Often, those people will be the ones closest to you.

In the movie, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Will Smith's character, Chris Gardner tells his young son not to dream too big and think he can play professional basketball. He tells him what people have and will tell you.

In effect, he says: "Don't dream. Don't set your sights too high. Stick to what you know."

Thankfully, he realizes how harmful his words are and...well, I'll let the clip show you:

[youtube id="2aXM9dAOzkQ"]

Silence the Voices

Who told you that you can't do something?

Who told you that you don't have the skills, the background, the education, or the resources to live your dream? Who told you that?

It's time to silence those voices. Don't ever let someone tell you that you can't do something. With the right training, dedication, persistence, and hard work you can do anything that you set your mind to do.

[shareable]Don't ever let someone tell you that you can't do something.[/shareable]

Don't let anyone talk you out of your dreams or your calling.

For 14 years Catherine Lanigan made a choice. She *chose* to believe that professor and it she lost 14 years of a prolific and profitable career.

What you choose to believe is *your* choice. You decide. Make the choice today to believe that you can, to silence the voices that say you can't, and to take the next step to being everything you are called to be.

[reminder]What (or whose) voice is holding you back from pursuing your dream?[/reminder]