



Communications Digest

Telling stories of how small businesses succeed and give back to our community. Let me tell your story!

Welcome Mid-January!

With hope that a reprieve of warm weather will arrive on Tuesday, after this recent deep freeze, I'm delighted to sit in my warm office, while penning this issue of "Communications Digest."

In last month's issue, I reprinted a timely "holiday survival guide" from the American Hospice Foundation, for those of us who find the holiday season less than a "ho-ho-ho" time.

And from "Word Nerd's Corner," I turned to etymologist Bryan Garner to clarify the confusing case of "harebrained" (correct) versus "hairbrained" (incorrect).

In *this month's issue*, from my reading on entrepreneurial well-being, I feature an article on self-compassion and suffering that may help those of us seeking more creativity and abundance and less emotional pain in life.

And in "Word Nerd's Corner," I visit the case of "decision-making" and "decision-making process."

Enjoy these first few weeks of this new year, 2018! May it be a bright and contented year ahead, for you.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

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Article One: On Entrepreneurial Well-Being: Self-Compassion for our Suffering (with Kristin Neff and Bodhipaksa)

No one likes to start a new year by thinking about pain. And yet, throughout the recent holiday season, I found myself drawn intently into books on meditation, mindfulness and suffering—concepts that affect our minds, as we do creative work. As a new year is ushered in, it is tempting to *ruminate*—what the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines as the process of “think[ing] deeply about something.”

But in a context of meditation and mindfulness, "rumination" takes on a more troubling meaning. It evokes the nursing of obsessive worries and getting lost in depressive and anxious thoughts that detract from one's contentment, peace and happiness.

Rumination can yield terrible emotional (and then creative) blocks, as we set forth to start new projects or look to complete old ones. Can you think of times when you faced the pain of an emotional block and how much you suffered from it?

In her 2011 study, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*, American psychologist Kristin Neff says that suffering occurs when reality does not match our wants and desires. Given that such discordance is a common (almost daily) reality, we all feel suffering. It is part of being human.

She cites her Chinese Buddhist mentor, Shinzen Young, as asserting that [**“suffering = pain x resistance”**]. We all suffer, but we can make our suffering more manageable if we do not resist the pain behind it. Feel the pain, Neff writes; know what it's about; and it will dissipate.

While contemplating this insight, I happened also to read a complementary meditation by the Buddhist monk, Bodhipaksa (over the Wildmind LLC meditation website). He stresses that when we suffer, if we can find compassion for ourselves (what Neff centres her book on), that self-compassion allows us to see ourselves as part of a greater whole with others.

Rumination allows our individual “thinking acts to amplify our suffering,” Bodhipaksa says. We obsess over thoughts like “I’m worried about this, I don’t like that, No one cares about me or considers my feelings,” and so on.

“ ‘I’ thoughts reinforce our sense of aloneness. We see ourselves as broken, as worse than others and therefore separate from [them],” Bodhipaksa says. By contrast, when we offer ourselves compassion (by a process of meditation and self-talk) we see that our “individual sufferings are . . . shared by others and [are] part of the difficulties we all have in being human.” Such “we thinking” connects us to others and enables us to view our individual sufferings as “part of the difficulties we all have in being human” (Bodhipaksa).

We do not suffer alone.

Neff’s theories of self-compassion argue that it can be cultivated and consists of “kindness meeting suffering,” that we offer to ourselves, and then can extend to others.

As we enter a new calendar year, do you find yourself ruminating on aspects of your entrepreneurial life or work? If we cultivate self-compassion when we feel pain (instead of resisting the pain that only amplifies our suffering), our self-focused rumination will give way to calm, “decreasing our tendency to freak out, and increasing our happiness” (Bodhipaksa).

Do you agree with these insights on self-compassion? How might you offer compassion to yourself, as you start the new year?

Please share your thoughts (on the “contact” page of my website). I will discuss this concept further, in future writing.

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WORD NERD'S CORNER

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The case of "**decision-making**" with Bryan Garner . . .

American etymologist Bryan Garner writes that the term "**decision-making**" is a generic noun for "deciding." It can be "useful in some contexts," he remarks, but tends to be "much overworked in modern prose--especially in the redundant BUREAUCRATESE *decision-making process*"(emphasis Garner).

He says that such uses are business jargon and are inflated ways of saying "*deciding*: after all, when one makes decisions, one decides" (emphasis Garner).

If the jargon doesn't irritate us enough, he observes that "decision-making" is now "frequently spelled as one word, even by the U.S. Supreme Court, in a pattern similar to the American uses of "budgetmaking" and "policymaking."

The bulky and awkward nature of such compounds point to jargon: Garner recommends using a "simple hyphen" to side-step the problem.

Have you lately noticed bureaucratic jargon (e.g. "decision-making process") in texts that you read?

Please share your word bugbears with me through the "contact" page of my website (www.elizabethshih.com).

I'd be delighted to address them in an upcoming issue.

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SHOP NEWS

Particular thanks this month to colleagues and friends

Very special thanks to Silvia Martini, Chair of the Board at SaskWater Corporation, Principal at Martini Consulting and Vice-President of Interlink Research Inc., for sharing generously of her ideas during a recent coffee meeting. As I plan my next writing project and simply contemplate writerly existence, Silvia inspired me to think about life as a journey through the planting and harvesting of one's own garden (spirit, mind and body), that one may (and sometimes may not) share with others.

So many warm and vibrant insights shared on a cold January day: thank you, Silvia!

Thanks also to fellow women entrepreneurs of "GroYourBiz" Saskatoon, who share insights on and potential solutions for entrepreneurial challenges. Special thanks this month to Susan Gallagher of Soul Paper for hosting our highly creative Christmas gathering in December!

And thank you (in no particular order) to fellow women of the Freelancers' Roundtable Group, including Ashleigh Mattern, future convenor Julie Barnes, Katherine Duncombe, Leanne Bellamy, Katee Pederson and Ashlyn George. The friendship we share simultaneously allows us to think

through contemporary communications and marketing issues.

ABOUT US

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has provided B2B marketing and communications services on the Prairies and across Canada.

Do you need help telling your story of an entrepreneur or company?

Please contact me through my website, via the CASL-compliant email form, on the right-hand side of each page (www.elizabethshih.com).

After I have received your permission, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

I specialize in entrepreneurial storytelling, chronicling the success stories of small businesses that give back to the community.

For more information, please visit my website for more information (www.elizabethshih.com).