

Writing Tips from Ellen Cassedy

www.ellencassedy.com

The Kite, the Beach Ball, and the Stone: Six Ways to Set Your Own Pace as an Author



As my publication date was approaching, I thought of my book as a kite.

If I clutched the string and ran really fast, I thought, the book would lift off and soar into the sky. Then all I'd need to do was give a little tug every now and then.

I did everything I could to give the book the best possible launch. My publisher and I sent out announcements and free copies to a long list of reviewers and “super fans.” We arranged readings, interviews, blog posts. We submitted to contests and book festivals. I created a website, Amazon and Goodreads sites, a [Facebook author page](#).

It turned out, though, that my book was not a kite. It was a beach ball. If I tapped it into the air, up it would go. But it didn't stay up. It came right back down and demanded another tap. I could keep it up, but only if I kept at it.

So I kept at it – with gusto. Month after month, I kept sending out announcements, speaking, mailing, writing, updating my site, responding to readers.

Tapping that beach ball up into the sky was exciting and rewarding. But when my old friend Vivi came to visit, she was concerned. “You need a new metaphor,” she said.

Maybe, she said, the book is neither a kite nor a beach ball. Maybe it's a stone I'm kicking down the road.

The stone won't move unless I move it. But it's up to me to decide how fast I walk, how often I kick and how hard. I can tear up the road, or I can stroll along and take in the scenery. Or first one and then the other.

As writers, we know that narration itself requires changes of pace. Sometimes we speed up the action; other times we slow it down and play out a scene minute by minute. Sometimes we keep the reader on the edge of her seat; other times we let her sit back and take a breath.

Here are six ways to set your own pace after publication:

- Think of your book as the center of a communications campaign, a vehicle for sharing yourself and your ideas.
- Don't quit! There's nothing to stop you from using the same outreach methods you used to launch the book – even a couple of years out.
- Keep your eyes and ears open for new venues, new opportunities.
- Take time to savor your successes. Bask and reflect.
- Celebrate other people's successes. Read their new books, attend their book parties, help them out by sharing the wisdom you've gained.
- Use your book as a means of finding new friends and colleagues and exploring new ideas.

It's your choice. You can speed down that road or you can saunter along. And from time to time you can sit down and breathe. Enjoy!

Ellen Cassedy is the author of *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2012). To see all of her Writing Tips, visit her website at www.ellencassedy.com.