

Daniel Hall Presents



Episode 123

## How to Write Your Book Even If You Have Disabilities

With Nina G.

Hello! Welcome to this very special edition of the RealFastResults.com podcast! Today, we are really, really excited to have Nina G. on deck. There are a variety of reasons for her to be presenting. Nina is a stand-up comedian from the San Francisco Bay Area, but what makes her different is that she is also a stuttering stand-up comedian. She's a disability activist, a storyteller, a children's book author, and an educator as well. All around, she's a lot of fun, and she uses humor to help people confront and understand social justice issues, such as disability, diversity, and equity.

When she isn't performing at comedy clubs, like the Punch Line San Francisco or the Laugh Factory, she is playing colleges or presenting as a keynote speaker to children with disabilities. She also trains professionals, and she is part of a comedy troupe called The Comedians with Disabilities Act, which brings laughter and awareness to audiences of all ages across the country.

Nina is the author of a children's book about learning disabilities, titled [\*Once Upon an Accommodation\*](#). **This book helps children and adults advocate for their rights as a person with a disability.** Additionally, she had a one-person show called *Going Beyond Inspirational*, and it was a comical exploration about growing up with learning and speech disabilities. It debuted in 2015, and it was featured on San Francisco Local Affiliate. Also, in 2015, she was part of the first compilation released by comedians with disabilities, which was created by Nina's comedy troop, The Comedians with Disabilities Act. Obviously, we are glad to have Nina on the show. Welcome Nina...

# Promise: Writing Techniques Everyone Can Use

Thank you so much for having me! What I want people to get out of this is... If you have a learning disability, the written word doesn't always feel accessible to you. I have ways that I have dealt with it. You have ways that you've dealt with it. I think it's important for people to know how to access being a writer.

**The other part, for people that don't have a learning disability, is that the things that work for us work for everybody!** They work for people that have English as a second language and are trying to write. These are things that we all can do, and they are based off of the dyslexic experience, so I think people would learn a lot from our writing process. So, regardless of whether you have a disability or not, what you're going to learn today to help you in your writing process. If, in fact, you are frustrated with some sort of disability, and you do want to get a book out, or a writing project completed, then what we are going to cover today is going to be really spot-on for you.

## About *Once Upon an Accommodation*

**So, the story itself is about a student, Matt, who finds out that he has a learning disability from a psychologist that he meets with.** He's just going through the process of acceptance and discovering what an accommodation is. He's also learning how to advocate, and he's figuring out that when you have a learning disability, you are part of a bigger community. It's a community of disability activists that are blind, or deaf, or use wheelchairs. These are all people who have been advocating for a long time.

I've seen so many books for kids that have LD (learning disabilities), and they are all text. It's all text! **It drives me crazy because we need visuals!** My friend, Mean Dave, who is a comedian in the Bay Area, he illustrated my book. They are simple illustrations, but they really explain the words too. Then, I'm working on my second book, which will be out in the summertime. That's called *Stutterer Interrupted*, and it's more of a traditional memoir. So, there aren't any of Mean Dave's pictures in it

## Nina's Writing Process

**I think one of the main things that you have to do, when you have a learning disability, is to go with your brain.** I don't know what your experience is like, but for me, sometimes I can write, and I can type everything out, and it just flows, and it's great, and it's wonderful. Other times, I can't get a word out, and also, there are times when I feel organized, and I can get it all out, and it's there. So, I really feel like you have to go with your brain. **If you feel like you need to write that day, then write. If you feel like you need to work on organization or editing instead, go with your brain.**

Last night, I outlined a, kind of, white paper that I'm trying to write, and I used a program called [Inspiration](#). You can get a free copy, or a trial copy, of it at [Inspiration.com](#). It's good for Mac and PC. If you want to buy it, it's like \$80 or \$60. It's awesome! **It's mind-mapping software, so it maps everything out.** I was able to create this great, big mind map. **Then, there's this little button on the corner, and you push it, and the software turns your mind map into an outline!** You can export this into Word.

You can also put pictures on it. So, if you want to just express it as a picture first, there's that. There's lots of little, itty bitty tools on it too. That helps with the organization, because now, what I'm going to do is go bubble by bubble and try to convert that into a more traditional thought, in order to write. I try to write like that. Another thing I like to do is... Um, I did a PowerPoint on this same topic, that I'm trying to write about. It's a guide for colleges, to put on events. That's because I go to a lot of colleges, and sometimes there are just two people in the audience. So, I want to give them some guidance there.

I did a PowerPoint once, and what I was going to do was to use that PowerPoint to voice it into [Temi](#). **In case you don't know, [Temi.com](#) is a great artificial intelligence service that's online.** It's web-based. You can upload audio and/or video, and you can convert that into a text-based that you can actually edit in the software. And, you can listen to it, and you can edit as you go. Also, it's cheap. It costs like \$0.10 a minute, and it only takes about 4 or 5 minutes for it to convert an hour's worth of material.

It's amazing! For me, because of my speech disability, I was afraid that it would come out weird, and it would be "DA-DA-DA-DA," [laughs] and all of that, but it was pretty good. When I was at a Toastmasters meeting, I recorded myself, and I wanted to turn this into an article that I had wanted to write for years and years. And, I was like, "Okay, I want to do a speech on it, and then I'm going to Temi it. Then, maybe I'll have it. I haven't even looked at that, but at least it's there. I know that I'm part of the way done."

## Are There Any Other Tools That You Use?

So, Temi is super-good. **Also, I sometimes use Google Docs with my phone. I'll have it on my computer so that I can see it, and then I'll have it on my phone, which will be in my hand.** If you push the little microphone on your phone, you can dictate into that. So, I talk into the phone, and then it goes onto the computer so that I can see it, big, while I am dictating.

It's pretty simple, actually. It's just the Google Docs app, and just the way that you might dictate a message to your wife or something, this is pushing the button and dictating it onto your phone. But, in real time, it also pops up on your desktop, so that you can see it. This, I think, helps me a lot, that I can see what I am saying. You can dictate this through your regular, old iPhone keyboard.

Again, I pull it up on Google Docs, and I will pull up the same file on my computer. You know how you can share a document on there, and it shows who is writing it? It will say that on the screens, so that you're the one interacting there. How cool is that, right? You can change the

font and the reading environment to fit you as well, and that helps a lot. Also, for those of us that might have a really great verbal vocabulary, but not when we have to spell it, all we have to do is push that mic on our phone, and it will spell out all of the big words that we want to say.

## Can You Tell Me More About Your Process?

After I write something, the next phase would be for me to put it into a screen reader. Depending on your platform, there are all kinds of screen readers. Um, iPhones have a thing where you can shade it, and you can read it out loud. That is kind of clunky, so it's not my favorite. On iPhones and iPads, I use a program called VoiceStream, which is awesome. You just plug in whatever you want it to read in there, and it reads it. On my Mac, I have a program called Text to Speech, and that's a simple screen reader, but then, they have more advanced ones, like [Kurzweil](#).

[Kurzweil](#) is kind of like the "Cadillac" of these programs. It has all of the bells and whistles that you could possibly want. You can highlight, and you can extract those highlights into different things. There are different colors. There are voice notes on there, too, and you can leave them by clicking on a sentence. If you have a really important point, and you want to leave a note about how you wanted to do something, for instance, there's lots of flexibility there. That helps me because I can hear what I wrote, so that I can do a better job of editing. But, also, when I'm researching, and I am reading, these are the tools that I use.

I'm a member of a website called [LearningAlly.org](#). It is designed for people who are blind, and dyslexic, and have other disabilities. **You can access all kinds of books on there. I read ten books over the summer, and I didn't have to pay for them.** I did have to pay for the membership, but I didn't have to pay for the individual books. I download them, and I read them. When I read without an accommodation, I read at 110 words a minute. Once I was reading about *Gilligan's Island*, and I read that the castaways were "standard on the island". And, "I was like, standard on the island, what's that mean?" I went through this whole thing, and of course, found out the word was "stranded". So, it saves time too, because it's more accurate.

**So, I use what I hear to more accurately edit what you have once it's on paper, and I use it to make sure that I didn't leave out any words, or in case I mistook a word and put something else in.** Last night I was writing evaluation, and instead, I put in elevation or something. Like, just those weird, dyslexic things you do. So, I can hear that. If I had just looked at it, I would have never caught that. It's just like when I confused "standard," and "stranded". These are words that look alike. I'm not going to catch that when I look at it, but I do when I hear it.

There's three parts to the process right now, but there are two other things there. One is that I give it to a final editor who looks at it and really helps me. Sometimes this person helps me to rewrite it, and sometimes they help me with the spelling and things that I didn't get. I really want it to be as perfect as possible. The other part is the emotional part. When you are told your whole life that you're not a good writer, or that you're not very smart... I went to Catholic

school for 7 ½, and I got some dents to my self-esteem there. You have to fight those emotional parts too.

## What Do You Do after You Get it Back from the Editor?

Then, I go back through it a few more times with the screen reader to make sure that it's really what I want and that I didn't... You know, if they change any words, I want to make sure that it's truly my own voice and things like that. Then I publish it.

## Where Can I Get Nina's Current Book?

My current book? All of the information is on my website. It is [NinaGComedian.com](http://NinaGComedian.com). There is a tab there for the book. [Once Upon an Accommodation is sold on Amazon](#). It was a CreateSpace book. So, you can find it on Amazon, and it's also on BookShare.org. So, if you become a member there, you can read it for free.

## Is There Anything You Want to Add?

Yeah. You know, for me... The disability is there, and I don't think we ever overcome the disability. What we overcome is the internalized stigmas that we take in. It's like, sometimes I feel like I am a box of Arm & Hammer™ in the fridge, and I've just soaked in all of the icky-ness throughout my experiences in school. **You have to fight that stuff! And, the writing part will become easier once you know that you have a voice and that voice needs to be heard. With the right accommodations, and with the right strategies, I think a lot more writers that have learning disabilities can start to emerge.**

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