

## ‘Hello ... my name is Eileen ... and I’m ... an ellipsis abuser ...’

By Eileen Burmeister  
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*Going cold turkey on National Punctuation Day*

I know it’s wrong to use it in such a way, and I know that’s it’s become a crutch, but I must admit that I’ve been having an illegitimate love affair with the ellipsis for years now. Surely, I thought, I could find a support group among the many writers who have been similarly led down this particular primrose path of pauses, but alas ... none existed.

Not to be dissuaded, I set out and started my own support group called “Ellipsis ... Anonymous.” I invited everyone to my house at 2000 W. Maple ... a place, I must confess, I bought for the address alone ... and I served M&Ms in batches of three.

However the people who showed up tended to trail off midway through their stories or stopped abruptly before staring off into space, which seemed appropriate but really stymied the healing process. It was ... daunting.

I found myself wandering the streets that night, talking to myself, binging on one story after another without end, drinking deep from the nectar of incomplete thoughts until ... I hit rock bottom.

It had gotten to the point where I couldn’t pause for breath in my prose without automatically hitting dot-dot-dot. I was ravenous ... a wild animal on the prowl for a pregnant pause, a thoughtful moment or a half-baked idea so I could swoop in and get my fix. I was putting ellipses where commas would suffice ... ellipses when em dashes would do the trick ... ellipses when a yada-yada-yada would convey the same idea. It was all too much, and I collapsed under the pressure.

I woke up the next morning in the gutter outside a Barnes & Noble, gripping my beat-up copy of “Love is...” poems and staring in the face of one harsh reality ... I needed help.

I got up out of the gutter, flipped open my laptop and started writing ... hair of the dog and all that jazz. What I was after was a mantra to get me through the tough spots,

those times where it's just so ... tempting to use that one, single punctuation, albeit incorrectly. I needed a higher power to see me through, and ... amazingly ... this little beauty fell out of the sky like a penny ... or coin ... from Heaven:

“God grant me the serenity  
To accept the proper uses for the ellipsis;  
Courage to use it when I should and deny myself when I shouldn't;  
And the wisdom to know the difference.”

Doesn't it seem appropriate, then, that today, National Punctuation Day, would be my quit day? I have decided to go cold turkey. No more ellipses for me. I'm clean and sober starting now of course that means I can't use any punctuation for fear that the pause in and of itself would throw me headlong into a full blown relapse from which I might never recover until I could once again use my beloved and reliable ellipsis just saying the word makes this all the more harder until I simply ... break ... down.

They say that admitting the problem is half the battle, and I'm counting on that to be true. But right now, I have an inexplicable desire to learn Morse code and eat M&Ms. And besides, as my friend Scarlett once said ... “Tomorrow is another day.”

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