



**CONGENIAL  
TELEGRAM  
NUMBER04**

This issue is only a year late. I made CONGENIAL TELEGRAM #3 in October 2019. This is November 2020. I meant to write #4 in November 2019, but I mean to do a lot of things.

Most people, when they pick up something unfinished, the first instinct is to make excuses, to explain why it's been so long. I've had a blog since 2002, and I know that if you search the archives, you're sure to find more than a handful of posts which do exactly that. And with those excuses come the promises to do better. The proclamation of what the future will bring.

I don't know what the future will bring, and because the current pandemic is now a year old, I know better than to promise anything in 2020.

CONGENIAL TELEGRAM is my zine about zines, my writing about writing. It was about creating the shape of it, the template and title, making a space to come back to, again and again. Fill it with words, then send it out to the people thinking about making a zine themselves. Send it back through time to my teenage self who wasn't quite ready to show the world her words.

2020 hasn't been kind to my creative practice. The muscles haven't quite atrophied, but they've grown lazy with neglect. Still, I find forgiveness. I forgive myself because a writer isn't a person who writes a thousand words of a novel every day. A writer is a person who writes. Full stop.

This year has demanded all of our attention. This year has demanded all of our energy. If you didn't write a novel during quarantine, I forgive you. If your blog hasn't been updated since 2019, I forgive. I hope you can forgive yourself.

I meant to write this zine in November 2019, but here I am, writing this zine in November 2020. That's the kind of symmetry that soothes my anxious brain. When the workings of the world click into place, I know I'm on the right path forward. I can see #5 ahead of me, and I know I'll find my way there—eventually, soon.

Though I'm starting again, I'm not starting from the beginning, as I've done too often in my past. When it's been too long away, I've been tempted to start something new, like that other project never existed. This will be the one, I tell myself. This will be the one that works.

But when I look back, over my dozens of notebooks, my years of blog archives, my back catalogue of zines, they are all the same one. They were already working; I was the one who stopped.

Coming back to CONGENIAL TELEGRAM, a full year later, I'm making no promises, setting no deadlines. Instead, I have a mantra. The word I'm repeating to myself is CONTINUE. Pick it up, and keep going. It's already good. You already know what to do. You have everything you need—including the time to write.

A friend sent me a sentence printed as a label. I'm sure it was rather random, the one she sent to me, as she was sending them out to many others at the same time. But the words I received were precisely the words I needed to read. I stuck the label to the back of my phone so I would see them every day, so I can carry them with me into 2021.

*don't let the perfect be  
the enemy of the good*

# START AGAIN!

Habits can be good. But habits also make me feel bad. They make me feel like a failure when I forget even once. I have a lifelong tendency towards perfectionism, but yoga taught me this: you can always step back on the path. It doesn't matter why you strayed. It doesn't matter how long you've been away. Decide to start again, then do it.

Find an unfinished project. I have dozens; I know you have one. Pick it up today, and set a timer for 10 minutes. Do 10 minutes on that project for a few days. Next week, do 20.

by Jess Driscoll [\[dot com\]](https://www.jessdriscoll.com) on November 18, 2020