

## **Book Journeys Author Interview - December 6, 2012**

**Dr. Angela Lauria with Diana Lynn, author of *Pieces of Me: Life of a Recovering Dysfunctional*.**

*"I sat down and I wrote a list of goals. I wrote a list of everything that I wanted in life. And, every day, I would look at that list, and I would do one thing towards achieving one of those goals." ~Diana Lynn*

Angela:

Well, hello, everybody, and welcome back to another episode of Book Journeys Radio. Every week on Book Journeys, we talk to authors about their first time writing a book, and our goal on the show is to help new and aspiring authors, I call them "authors in transformation," to help identify some of those gremlins that might come up as you're writing a book and come up with strategies to head them off at the pass so that you can hold your book in your hands. And with us today, from – from, hopefully, sunny ... in Washington, is Diana Lynn. Diana is the author of *Pieces of Me: Life of a Recovering Dysfunctional* – we've all got a little recovering dysfunctional within us – so, Diana, welcome to the show, and tell us a little bit about yourself and your book!

Diana:

Oh, thank you so much, thank you for having me on the show, I'm excited to be a part of the show today. My book, *Pieces of Me: Life of a Recovering Dysfunctional*, is basically a collection of short stories that I've written over the years. I have had a bunch of experiences that have happened in my life, and I started feeling like, maybe I should put these books – these little stories together and create a book. So, finally, after many years of planning and thinking about doing it, I finally decided it's time to jump in and finally write the book. It's just really stories about kinda overcoming the difficulties that we all face in life, and just to try and encourage people to move forward and not get stuck – it seems like, when something bad or difficult or challenging happens in our life, a lot of times we kinda get stuck in that moment, and I just wanna encourage people to move forward and get through each of these events that – that happen in our lives. It's just a series of stories that can try and help people move forward.

Angela:

So, Diana, I know that you are an entrepreneur and a life coach. What came first for you? Was – did you decide to write the book first, or did you become a coach and see the book as a way to help you grow your business? What was that relationship like?

Diana:

Well – what's funny is, by trade, I was a bookkeeper. I was doing bookkeeping for a lot of small businesses, and in that, I found that I was starting to do more coaching type things, I – I think there's a trust that comes when you're the bookkeeper of a business –

Angela:  
Mmm.

Diana:  
– and people started asking me for advice, and to kind of help them get through these troubles. So, really it kind of – they kind of simultaneously happened, because, originally, I – I didn't put the two together. I wrote as a hobby, I just liked writing, I – I find something so therapeutic about sitting down at the computer and just writing and crying it all out and just getting everything down, so I kinda took that as its own thing, and the coaching as its own thing. It's just recently – in 2011, I just said, "This is it." I've been talking about writing a book for ten years, and I keep saying, "Next year, next year, next year." So, in 2011, I said, "This is it, I'm gonna try and be a writer. If nothing happens, then I'll stop, but – but I'm gonna quit just talking about it, and I'm gonna do something." And when I wrote the book, then, all of a sudden, once the book was out, I put them together and said, "Oh, you know what? It's kind of the same thing!"

Angela:  
(laughs)

Diana:  
(laughs) That is very funny! (laughs) Yeah. Yeah.

Angela:  
Tell me what was the – a lot of people I coach – yeah, I coach people that wanna write a book, and a lot of them have that same story that you just said, they've been talking about it or thinking about it, or almost even knowing in their gut, at some level, that they were supposed to write a book, and there seems to be a process between knowing that and actually doing that, and it sounds like, for you, that was a decade or more. What – what pushed you over the edge, and – and why do you think you did it when you did it, not sooner or later or whatever?

Diana:  
You know, I – I sit there and I ask myself this all the time, because, at this point now, I – I'm almost kicking myself, why didn't I do it sooner? But I think everybody has the process, and – and, for me, personally, I think a lot of it was confidence.

Angela:  
Mmm.

Diana:  
I didn't – as a writer, as I'm sure many of your listeners know – it's so personal, what you write, and – and it becomes your baby, and all of a sudden, you're sharing your baby with the world, and what if the world says, "Eugh, look at your baby!" (laughs)

Angela:

That's an ugly baby you got there!

Diana:

Yeah, that is ugly baby! And – and so, it – it's scary! I think it is a scary thing, and what actually happened for me, is, I said, "Okay, well, I know what my problem is, I know I'm nervous to share my writing." So I went and took some classes. I went to some writing classes at just a local community college, and they teach you a few little skills on things to enhance your writing or to improve your writing, and I incorporated that, and once I started to see – okay, do you fine-tune things that you need to do as a writer – when I started incorporating that into my writing, then, all of a sudden, I started feeling a little confident, like, okay, now I know. I know I'm – I'm building some skills and some techniques to my writing that I didn't necessarily have before. Then, with that, I started going to a writers' group, and I say – I'd say you need to be careful when you join a writers' group, you wanna make sure you're getting into a group that proceeds with caution, and they're a little more kind-hearted when – when doing a critique of your writing. You can still tell somebody what to improve upon in a nicer way –

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Diana:

– so ... you end up in that right group that you feel comfortable in, and ...

Angela:

And did you experiment? Did you go into a different, couple different groups to find the right one, or did you get lucky with the first time out?

Diana:

(laughs) Well, what's funny is, the first time I went to a – a critique group, I had a woman, and – and this is – okay. I had this woman who critiqued one of my stories to the point where she took a red pen and she marked "F," the whole thing.

Angela:

...

Diana:

And she said she didn't like this, and she didn't like that, and she crossed out entire paragraphs, I mean, she was so – the whole thing was covered in red, okay? And this was the first time I had ever shared one of my stories, okay? Talk about putting somebody back, right?

Angela:  
Uh-huh.

Diana:  
And here's the funny thing about this, and this is why I say, "Tread lightly when you're going to these critique groups," because that same, exact story I had turned in to *Chicken Soup for the Soul* to see if, maybe, they would be interested in publishing it in one of their books. Now, I had turned it in to *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and then gone to this critique group, right?

Angela:  
Mm-hmm.

Diana:  
So, I thought, oh, my gosh, *Chicken Soup for the Soul's* gonna think I'm an idiot, what am I doing, I'm – I'm thinking all these bad things because of this horrible critique that I got?

Angela:  
Mm-hmm.

Diana:  
Like, a year later, I got an e-mail from *Chicken Soup for the Soul* asking if they could use that story in one of their books.

Angela:  
Wow!

Diana:  
With none of the changes she suggested. It – not one change.

Angela:  
Gosh.

Diana:  
I had submitted it before, so it's funny how this one woman, she kind of held me back, because I became full of self-doubt, and I – I just thought I didn't know what I was doing, and this is a woman who had been published before, so I assumed, well, she knows. So, I – I – I put all my books away and I actually quit writing for about a year. I quit writing. It wasn't until I got that e-mail from *Chicken Soup for the Soul* saying that they wanted my book, and that's when I went, oh, my – or, my story - that's when I went, "Okay, you know what? I need to not listen to what these other people are saying," and I just kinda need to follow my own path, and – and it really gave me confidence, getting that book accepted, and from that –

Angela:  
Yeah, that's huge.

Diana:  
Yeah, and from that point forward, that's when it was like, "Okay, I'm – I'm doing this thing, I'm gonna take it serious, and I'm really gonna give it a try, and see what I can do with my own book, with my own collection of – of stories, and – and just keep moving forward and not let somebody stop me.

Angela:  
Yeah, I think that's such a powerful, powerful lesson. I'm in the middle of publishing a book right now, and the author I'm working with got sort of similar feedback from a published author who – she admired her work, and the – the author was like, "Yeah, this is a mess, this here are the twenty ways that I'd change it before – this isn't ready to be published, what crazy publisher said that this is publishable?" And it really can set – just one person's feedback can so easily send all of us into a tailspin, and when you start to question that, it's like – Hemmingway got that feedback.

Diana:  
Mm-hmm.

Angela:  
Everyone – you are definitely not gonna make everyone happy, so it's when you can own that and say, "I have a story to tell, I have something that's gonna help – help other people!"

Diana:  
Mm-hmm.

Angela:  
With their – with their journey, and maybe it is or isn't a literary masterpiece, but that's – that's not the only goal I have here, is to satisfy every single critic out there.

Diana:  
Right.

Angela:  
So –

Diana:  
Right. And that – it's so – it's – it's so impossible, and what I've learned in some of the critique groups that – that I've gone to that have been more of a fit for me, is if – if you sent out a piece of work, and you show five people, and if one person picks out one thing, and somebody picks out another thing, you ... – you don't necessarily have to change your work,

but if you have three or more people that pick out the exact, same thing, then that's – that's something to question and say, "Hey, maybe I need to reword this, or – or format this a little bit differently." You know – so, what one person's opinion is – you can't put everything on that, you need to kind of go with the consensus, if you have a group of people saying, "Hey, this one line doesn't make sense to me." Okay, change that line, you know? (laughs)

Angela:

So, what advice would you give to people that were interested in picking a group? What would you say to look for or listen for or be careful about if someone's trying to pick a writer's group for the first time?

Diana:

With the group that I'm in now, that I – I really like, they have rules, and they tell you, up front, when you join the group, "These are the rules to the feedback that we give," and – and one of the rules is addressing things as, "I feel." "I feel like, you know, I got confused here," or something, where it's not – it's – it's just more gentle, instead of, "You didn't make sense here, you screwed this up." It's – it's all in the wording, really, and as writers, I think we can all appreciate that, but it's – a group that is a good group should have some set of rules for giving feedback, at least that's my experience, and it feels like, this group that I'm in now, it's so different than writers' groups I've gone to before, so, I would just say, do – how do they critique people, are there any rules around how they critique people? I – it – are there limits, like, we have, you can't bring more than a thousand words, 'cause you don't wanna be sitting in a critique group and listen to one person tell their story for the entire time.

Angela:

For the ... (laughs) Right.

Diana:

It's like – a level of respect for all the writers that are – that are within the group.

Angela:

Yeah, I love that, that's great advice. Okay, so let's turn a little bit to your publishing process. When did you start thinking about how you would publish? Had you already finished your manuscript before you started thinking about it, or – how did that work for you?

Diana:

I had finished the book, I – I – once I got the book finished to the point where I'm done writing, there's still the process of sending it out to be edited and getting a cover and all that good stuff, but as soon as I was done with the actual writing, I started looking into publishers and publishing, and the best way, for me, to publish – quite honestly, I – I – I was shocked at how much of – of the fee goes to a – a publisher versus you, as the writer – (laughs) So, for me, personally, I ended up going with CreateSpace, which is, I believe, affiliated with Amazon.com

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Angela:  
Mm-hmm.

Diana:  
– and I just self-published the book, I just – after doing the research, it made more sense for me, as my first book, I'm just getting out there – as a new writer, I don't have a lot of money to spend on the marketing portion yet, so it – it just made sense to go to Amazon, to go to CreateSpace, it – it's fairly simple process, you just upload your book, and then you upload your cover, and there are a few other little technical things, but it literally walks you through, step by step, and then your book is up. Your book is on Amazon.com, and it's mixed in with everybody else's book, nobody would know that my book was self-published compared to the book right next to it. The way Amazon has it set up, it's even as simple as – one of my friends or somebody could go to Amazon and they could purchase my book. They just buy one book at a time, there's no need for me, as the author, to purchase five thousand books or even five hundred books in advance, they will just do a one-by-one.

Angela:  
Mm-hmm. And how did you make some decisions about the cover or some of the marketing that goes into the publishing side of things, the back cover or, you know, things like that?

Diana:  
With the cover, I actually hired a friend of mine who does marketing, and he's been working with other book publishers, and he just had a – a good understanding and a good knowledge of – of what I needed to do for the front cover, and then, also, something as simple as – you know, on the side of the book where it has the name of your book, down the back side –

Angela:  
Uh-huh.

Diana:  
– it – it's like, even something like that, you gotta make sure that – that you're perfectly aligned, and that – that your title somehow doesn't end up on the back cover or on the front cover, there's – there's a lot of little technical things in – even the way you cut the book cover can make sure that everything lines up properly, and your USB doesn't end up in the front, you know? (laughs) ...

Angela:  
Right.

Diana:  
... There's all these technical things, so I actually hired somebody to handle the book cover and help me with that part of it.

Angela:

And if you were to think about the investment that you've made in your book, in terms of hiring people or paying for services, how much would you say that you've spent on the whole project?

Diana:

I would say it's under a couple of thousand dollars, as – as far as – I hired an editor, and then I hired somebody to design the cover, and I also had somebody that formatted the inside of the book as well, to – to make sure that looked proper.

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Diana:

So, there's little things like that. It – it wasn't more than a thou – I – I'm gonna say around fifteen hundred dollars, probably, for everything, and, quite honestly, it – it's worth every penny, and I feel like I got a screaming deal, really, with the editor and with the person that I used to do the cover, so – I think it's worth it because, if you're self-publishing, especially, nobody is looking at your book. If you have a typo, or if you have a mistake in there, you could have read that book a hundred times and gone over that same typo every single time –

Angela:

...

Diana:

– you just won't see it, and it gets to the point where, when you've written a book, you practically have the book memorized, so, half the time, I don't even think I'm reading the lines, so I'm not seeing it as clearly, but when you hire an editor, that's specifically what they're there to do, so they will catch, and – and she did, I thought that I had edited this a million times, I had taken it to my critique group and they had edited it, and there were still little things where, I would try and say the word, "then," and I'd put "them."

Angela:

Uh-huh!

Diana:

Just the little things where the word's not even wrong, so it's not like you're – it's not finding a wrong word, it's the right wo – it's just the wrong word, you know what I mean, it's the right word.

Angela:

Right.

Diana:

There are things like that that an editor will pick up that you might not pick up because you've read it so many times.

Angela:

For sure. Okay, so, let's talk about your outcome. Tell me when you published your book, when did it go live?

Diana:

It went out July 19<sup>th</sup>.

Angela:

Okay, so you're, I guess, not quite six months in. What – what have the last five months – what have they been like, in terms of your book? What are some of the reactions you've gotten, where have you share your book, tell me about that.

Diana:

I would say – it – it's kind of a funny little thing, because, of course, you hope to instantly sell two million books and to be on *Oprah* and to be on *Ellen* and all that kinda – (laughs) – stuff, you know?

Angela:

Uh-huh!

Diana:

That – that doesn't actually happen instantly, and – so, it's kinda been a process, I – I think, as a new writer, I just want everything to happen now, and I – I just wanna look and see that I've sold five hundred copies today, and – and that's not necessarily happening, but I think where I'm getting my most joy is, I've had people come back and make comments about particular stories within the book. I had one woman tell me that one of the stories changed her life.

Angela:

Hmm.

Diana:

It changed her whole view on how she was approaching a certain subject. And, to me – I can't think of anything better. ...

Angela:

Yeah, that's – that's what it's about.

Diana:

Yeah. There – there is, of course, yeah, that would be great, to make some money on the book, but the feedback from the people, that's been the thing that has given me the most joy. So – you just never know, and somebody might pick up your book, and – and what's funny is that it's the people that I least expect are the ones that say, "Wow! This has really changed my thinking, or my view, or –" whatever it – it might be, and, for me, that's kind of priceless.

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Diana:

And – the book – the book is doing well, I'm – I'm still selling copies, and it's – it's still going, and I just – I love it, it's so much fun, I'm – I'm already getting the thoughts for book number two, and what – what to do next, but, really, the reward ...

Angela:

How are people finding your book? Are they just finding it on their own on Amazon, or have you heard any interesting ways people have found it?

Diana:

People are going on Amazon, I'm on Facebook and I'll go on there and tell them, I – I have it in a few bookstores, now, so some people are able to go to a few bookstores around my area and purchase the book, and that was just a matter of me literally just walking in with my book, asking these people if they would be interested in having a book from a local author. There's a lot of bookstores that are interested and will take books from a local author.

Angela:

And there are these independent book – bookstores, or are they like your local Barnes and Noble kind of thing?

Diana:

I – I haven't tried a Barnes and Noble, I actually heard Barnes and Noble won't take the – the local, but – it – there are independent bookstores that are just – some are real small, there are a couple that are – are bigger bookstores here, but again, I think they're independent bookstores.

Angela:

Got it. And – have you done – do you do any speaking, or any online promotion of your book, or other ways you have promoted the book or launched the book that have led people to you?

Diana:

No – the – I – I've only done some networking events – I go to networking events all the time, and I've been promoting my book through there. I haven't done any speaking engagements,

specifically for the book, at this point, sometimes I do speaking, but I don't necessarily – I haven't incorporated the book into that, yet. But, really, it's just Facebook and going out and talking to people, and now, it's getting to be getting to be a little bit of word of mouth, friends will tell friends, and then they'll go ahead and – and purchase the book.

Angela:

That's nice. So, how about personally and emotionally for you, how do you feel – do you feel like an author, do you introduce yourself differently? Has being an author changed anything for you in your personal life, internal life?

Diana:

What's funny is, I – I don't think I'm quite there, in the sense of viewing myself as an author. I don't – I guess I don't know what I think an author should be – maybe somebody who's famous and on Oprah, maybe that's somebody whom I'd go, "Oh, they're an author." But, for me, I get – I get nervous, and I still say, "Yeah, I've written this book," and people say, "Oh, this is Diana, she's an author!" And every time, I just go, "Oh, jeez," you know! (laughs)

Angela:

Well –

Diana:

I love it! It's so funny ... I think that might – for me, that's gonna take a little while to get used to, but now that I've got this book out, I feel like, I – I – sure! I am! I should be able to say that, and feel confident in saying that, I have a book out, and I've sold some books, and I'm working on book number two, so maybe it's getting to be that time where it's okay to say that out loud.

Angela:

Yeah, I think it is, girl!

Diana:

(laughs)

Angela:

So, here's the thing, I – we, at this point in the interview, like to take some time for you to imagine that you are alone with one of our listeners, and they're telling you that they really want to write a book, but they can't seem to make time, they can't seem to get it done, they get worried that they're gonna be seen in a way that might make them uncomfortable, and all their little gremlin thoughts are coming up, and I would love for you to talk directly to someone like this and give some advice as someone who's gotten themselves through that by .... What advice would you leave people with who want to write a book, but maybe you're getting stopped in some way?

Diana:

I – it sounds so simple, but I’m just gonna say this, just do it. Just do it, just take the time to write something out, and I know people say they – they don’t have enough time, but – but there’s always time, it – it’s a matter of priority. If you make it a priority to say, “Hey, I’m just gonna write fifteen minutes a day,” you know, just – just get going, once you give yourself that time to say, “Okay, I’m gonna turn on a little timer and I’m gonna write for fifteen minutes, and when that timer dings, I – I’ll stop.” At least, you’ve started the process, and maybe when that timer dings, you’re flowing, and you wanna keep going. So, I would say, just find the time, make the time, make it a priority, and I – I think the most important thing that happened to me, for me, was to go get some classes, go take a class, get some background. Take a class at a local community college, join a writers’ group, become a part of the industry that you want to be in. I think, once you start getting comfortable, and you start building your craft, and you find somebody fine-tune points of becoming a writer, a little more confidence will come out, and then you’ll be willing to share your stories a little bit more. It – it’s movement. You have to do something towards following this goal and this dream, and if you do that, you’d be surprised at how quickly you will unfold and end up with a book.

Angela:

Yeah, I think that’s true, so much of it is momentum and forward motion and – and also just being really clear on what you want, and when you find that there’s something that’s inconsistent, like, “I want a book, but I don’t want my mom to read it,” (laughs) is to kinda take the – take the time to do that work on the obstacles and remove those obstacles, identify – don’t be afraid of them, identify them and remove them, so you can get back to the business of writing. I think people try to push through them instead of taking some time to – to kind of process what’s stopping them.

Diana:

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Angela:

So – well that – I think that is just very helpful advice. Why don’t you take just one last minute and tell us one of the stories in your book that just – just, on your gut, makes you think this is a story that might help these listeners? I’m sure there’s lots of great stories in your book.

Diana:

He’s – you know, it – it’s funny that you say that, ‘cause I was just looking through my book last night and going, “Okay, if I had to pick one story –“

Angela:

Aaah!

Diana:

“– as my favorite story, or one that sticks out, what would it be,” but it’s so hard when every story be – becomes your baby, they’re all important. But I think one of my favorite stories within the book that I think stands out here was – the whole reason I wrote this book in the first place was my very first story, was about me. I was pregnant when I was eighteen years old, and I ended up dropping out of high school to raise the baby. And as the baby started to get a little older, I started realizing, I need to have more. I need to have a better life, so this child could have a better life. So, with that, I sat down and I wrote a list of goals. I wrote a list of everything that I wanted in life. And, every day, I would look at that list, and I would do one thing towards achieving one of those goals.

Angela:

Wow.

Diana:

So – i – it finally got to the point where I – I went back to school and I graduated, and I ended up building a successful business, self-employed, and life – life over time, it’s not instant – life over time, I ended up achieving every goal that was on that list –

Angela;

Wow.

Diana:

– that I wrote when I was a kid, so I – I would just say, to somebody who’s out there right now, get out there, make your list, figure out everything you have to do to achieve your goals, and just, every day, just do one thing. Just do one thing, you’re continually moving forward. Just do one thing, and before you know it, you’re gonna achieve that goal.

Angela:

Fantastic. Well, that’s a wonderful way to end this show. Diana, what website can people go to if they wanna learn more about you?

Diana:

If they wanna learn more, they can go to [www.recoveringdysfunctional.com](http://www.recoveringdysfunctional.com).

Angela:

Terrific. Well, thanks, everybody, that was Book Journeys Radio, we’ll be back next week.

Diana:

Thank you.

Angela:

‘Bye!

