

## [Book Journeys](#) Author Interview - May 22, 2014

Dr. Angela Lauria with G. Brian Benson, author of *Brian's List* and also *Finding Your Voice*

*"Write it because you want to write it. Write it because it gives you joy and then let everything else take care of itself."* ~G. Brian Benson

Angela:

Well hello everybody and welcome to a surprise episode of Book Journeys Radio. So this is a... the most interesting episode of the show, we've been on for three years now and this is an episode different from any other episode I have done before. It is a surprise episode of the show. Our guest today is author and filmmaker Brian Benson and I'm so excited Brian is here and he actually emailed me because my producer did not tip me off as to who my guest is today. So usually I prepare for my interviews, I read the books of my authors, but today this is going to be me and Brian getting to know each other for the first time. I'm going in cold, but he is here and we're going to do this thing. Brian, thank you so much for joining me.

Brian:

You're welcome. No problem How are you doing today, Angela?

Angela:

I am doing great. Brian's website is: G (as in George)... It's G. Brian Benson dot com (<http://www.gbrianbenson.com/>) and he's got a couple of books here, *Finding Your Voice* and also *Brian's List*. Why don't you tell us about your books?

Brian:

Okay. Well there was *Brian's List*. That was my first book... about four years ago now and... Do you wanna hear the story about how it came about?

Angela:

Well, tell me what it's about.

Brian:

Well basically it's a whole bunch of different ways of staying in balance, and I was kind of going through some tough times when I was leaving the family business and I was really finding myself out of balance and I... being kind of a driven person, I came up with a handful of things that I knew that would get me in balance. And it really helped me. So much to that I just kind of intuitively thought that I was supposed to expand that list and make it into a book. And I've never really done much writing before at all so it just kinda, you know, it just organically happened and I ended up writing the book in about 30 days and self published it; won a couple of awards and it just pushed me in this whole new direction... [as I was leaving the family business] Kinda an interesting experience.

Angela:

Wow, that's awesome, and then your second book, *Finding Your Voice*, that just came out, right?

Brian:

Definitely. I've had a couple of ebooks in between, and yes, *Finding Your Voice* is the latest book and that's just a compilation of a bunch of different stories I've written, blogs, some inspiring poetry, inspiring quotes, and you know, I'm very proud of it and it went on to win a couple of awards too and it's been a lot of fun to share.

Angela:

Well so as my listeners know, I've created a Journey Book Process for writing a book that makes a difference. It's called The Difference Process and we teach it at The Author Incubator. We're always interested in books that make a difference in people's lives. So tell me how your books have made a difference, or what you... what kind of a difference you hoped they'd made in people?

Brian:

Well, you know, I'm sure I'm not alone when I say this but... since the books were for me, first and foremost (*chuckles*) and it is... yeah... well you know... for my own personal growth and uh... and it's been interesting as I did explore them. It's not like I really set out to write a book, but it kinda happened and I didn't even choose a topic; the topic chose me and so I just kinda feel like my purpose... It is kind of a living example for others to just, you know, step out of the comfort zone and not be afraid to really be who they really are and so I just kinda put myself out there, ahh. Because... and we all have a lot in common, and if I can do it, they can do it, we've all got stuff inside of us that wants to come out, you know, creativity... that wants to be shared and explored and so I just, uh, you know, uh, I feel like I must be very helpful, you know [everybody] wants to read my email, I've got a loyal following on my Facebook page and ah, for writing, I've been... and also kind of doing inspiring films and so they all kind of helped each other out.

Angela:

Yeah, so let's talk about your films - how your film work connects to your work as an author.

Brian:

Hmmm. It really does connect a whole lot... other than that I just try to put out good authentic stuff out into the world. My first... you know... it's interesting... A lot has happened to me in the last five years since I left the family business and... I'm from Oregon. We had a big... center, a driving range, retail store, etcetera, and ah... I started taking a couple of speech classes because I knew that I would need to be in front of people... and the book started coming out of me. Now it was this time I took this acting class and my intuition would tell me to do that and I did and I really enjoyed it and ended up getting some work and it just kind of kept building and I ended up with my first film short called *Guitar Man*, ah, about three years

ago and it was an amazing experience, it ended up getting accepted to the local film festival and it kinda opened up my world in a whole... another way as well. And... a lot of great messages in it. I've got another one that's ready to go. It's in pre-production [and we] probably start filming in about a month. It's called *Searching for Happiness* and I'm really excited about that too.

Angela:

So for you what is the best thing about being an author?

Brian:

The best thing about being an author...

Angela:

Yeah.

Brian:

I think it's just... I try to be as interesting as I can. It's just another way that has allowed me to just share my authenticity and to help other people. When I was three years old I told my mom that I was committed to inspire others, and it's interesting how it kind of... yeah. And you know, it's kind of starting to come to fruition, you know, and so being an author is fantastic. It's just given me another platform to share and to reach people and to, you know, just to try to help.

Angela:

And so tell us about the process of writing your book. I know you said you wrote one book in 30 days. What's your normal process as a writer and... Do you outline your book first? What goes through the writing phase?

Brian:

Well, for me... Hmm. I only write when I feel inspired so whenever I feel like I'm pushing, I set it down and it might just be for a day; might be 3 or 4 days; might be a week. But when I do... feel like I'm pushing, I just really try to find my balance and grounding, you know. I love to hang. I do that a lot. That's when I get a lot of my ideas. I meditate, that helps me as well. Exercise has been always a part of my life, and so I just try to find balance. I just get back after finding my balance and everything usually starts to flow again. I do have... I have another published book and half of that... I've not done anything with, and that book is more than likely to be... and that I definitely hadn't an idea what I wanted to do with it. I definitely had little topics that I kinda set up and outline... I'm not definitely sure... the order of the chapters or actually what might actually become a chapter, but I just kinda let it show itself. And so I had little headings and I would write under the headings and the more I got into writing, it just kinda started to show itself and that sort of kinda find an order and... you know. Some things might end up... might have to... [be] moved up to another section and what have you, but I'm not really... I've lived my life and I've enjoyed it and just... I kinda feel like I'm a

conduit when I write so... I do have some ideas and I just kinda try to fall on those hunches and let them flesh out and show themselves.

Angela:

So, when you're writing, do you have a different schedule? Do you find you tend to write more in the morning or at night? How do you know when?

Brian:

I'm definitely a morning person and so... When I was writing... I'd definitely set up a schedule. I would... They're not open anymore, but I was living in Nevada at the time, there was a Borders bookstore that I used to go like to write at in their little cafe area, and so I would probably go for... the morning, you know from like maybe 8 to noon and just, ah, you know, do what I could... and so... definitely a morning person, for me.

Angela:

Um. And you mentioned you self-publish. Have you self-published all of your books?

Brian:

I have. Yes. I did recently did sign a... that I wasn't so happy about, so they are going to be involved in the process...

Angela:

Well, let's talk about the books that you've had self-published. What advice could you give people about self-publishing? What's worked for you particularly well? What, you know, do you wish you knew before you started?

Brian:

Sure. If I could do it all over again... I mean, I'm kinda one of those people [who] if I'd have an idea I'd just go... and just let it happen. My very first book, when it came out, I think it was just before Amazon created CreateSpace... and so, unfortunately, that, my second book... it was a very nice... My first one... I just... you know, putting all the pieces by myself. I'm not an editor... I found a layout person; I found a printer and I ended up ordering 2,000 copies. I didn't know any better. You know I'm glad. It's all good. I sold them. But it was kind of a big step and kind of a big financial plunge to do that but my other book, *Finding Your Voice*... was via CreateSpace. It really made it so much easier and, you know, you can..... everything... of course... [what] you need, you know, the workshops you're doing, the talks you're giving and so it was a lot easier going with that around... It was a lot cheaper. So, you know, If I could do it all over again, ahhh... A lot of folks I notice now, are using KickStarter, Indiegogo, and some of those other self-funding programs to raise the money to kinda take care of that initial cost of layout, and editor, and cover artist, what have you, and I would love to have done that instead of...

Angela:

Yeah. We're hearing a lot more of those sorts of campaigns.

Brian:

Well, you know seeing other people are utilizing this, I think it would've helped a lot in sales as well. Somehow there's just that anticipation... people coming out to pour in more support. I think that would've helped. I mean I'm sold. I'm happy that I self-published, but, I think that would have been a great way to go.

Angela:

So, tell us about some of the people that you either hired or worked with on this process. Did you work with an editor? Did you work with a designer? What did you do yourself and what did you outsource?

Brian:

I outsourced pretty much everything. I hired an editor, I hired a layout person, I hired a cover designer, and with the first book I hired a printer. But for the second [one], *Finding Your Voice*... Yeah, those are the things that I hired.

Angela:

And so how did you find these people and what would you recommend that people look for in an editor, in a designer (interior/layout). What sort of things should people be looking for?

Brian;

Hmmm. That's a great question. You know... [Oh] boy... 'cuz I was very lucky. The people I found were all friends of friends of my... in Oregon. So they kind of steered me towards them and I was very happy with the work that they did. you know, obviously, you want to find somebody that has a good track record, that you can work with and understands your material, and... you know, obviously, you want to find somebody that's affordable. You know, you don't wanna skimp on those things, but somebody that fits your budget, and somebody that just enjoys, you know their energy... somebody you enjoy working with and communicating with 'cuz you obviously will be having some phone calls and email exchanges and stuff like that and ah... you know,.. and it's funny... You know I feel like I'm a pretty creative person and so I always kinda tend to wanna have my finger a little bit in the creative process and luckily for me I got somebody who was willing to work with me on that, and ah, yeah... yeah...

Angela:

And so that... Obviously one of the big advantages of publishing, as opposed to working with a publisher, you get more say in the details. Was that part of why you went with self-publishing or what were kind of the pros and cons for you?

Brian:

You know, for me it wasn't even a question of trying to go the other way, I was just kinda new in the business - new as an author and I really didn't know the business and didn't really look forward to maybe sending out a hundred... letters, so I just followed my intuition and did it myself, and you know, I'm glad I did. It was good, and I think that, uh... You know, I've paved the groundwork with much... a couple of books and one thing that I'm doing that helped me basically find this literary agent. Soon other connections, I've made without having to lift a finger and so that was really nice. I think everything that's happened for me in my instance is kind of happened like it's supposed to be. You know, everybody's different and you just kinda have to listen to your gut - you know, pay attention to what other people are doing by listening to your gut and... do what feels right.

Angela:

So, I've talked to people a lot about what their hopes are for their book before they write it. So I'm kind of curious what were your hopes for having a book and have those dreams come true? Does it look different than you thought it would?

Brian:

Uhm. Great question. Well, of course everybody wants to be on Oprah. For me, you know, my first book came out and... I had no idea, you know, it was kind of a ride that I was on. I was just letting it take me. The thing is, when I was on this ride and when it won... Best Self Help. It was the winner of on the the Self Help category about... I think it was the Next Generation New Book awards and it just had it like... maybe gave me a little bit of (initially) a false sense of hope about what was potentially possible. But it was all, looking back, it wasn't perfect. You know everybody wants to have a bestseller, but for me it was just all part of my growth and all part of my... You know, I... It's all part of kinda [what's] guiding me in the evolution of what I am right now and it's a time [when] I thought I might have wanted to be different, but it's all perfect and I really was so...

Angela:

So I will blow this up a little. I'm onto something to blow this up because I think that... I know you're not a woman, but women do this thing where we don't tell other women just how bad pregnancy is. I think we're afraid, like every room is... Then there's like, "You know, it worked out perfectly. The baby's healthy... I'm healthy... It was hard... But you are sugar-coating this story a little, so I wanna give... I wanna... this... for me, 'cause Book Journeys Radio is all about helping authors in transformation to get across the goal line and one of the things that I think holds people back from getting there is, you know, that they're afraid of... there are so many things that they're afraid of. They don't really know what it's going to be like; they're afraid of exposing themselves; they want to tell their story but they're afraid to be seen. There's a lot of things that stop people, and sometimes it's logistics. Literally, sometimes I tell people... I've had clients that come to me with manuscripts completely done and they just couldn't figure out, "How do I get an editor? How do I, you know, how do I get somebody at Random House to publish my book, 'cause they didn't know what the options were, that were

out there. But, one of the things that I hear consistently from people when they're being honest with me is... you know, they wrote a book essentially thinking, *Because I'm writing it, lots of people will read it, or because it's good lots of people will read it.*

Brian:

Sure. Sure, and I've definitely felt that as well but everything I've told you before, you know, before you wanted to blow this up, is true though. I mean I really was just leaving the family business and I had no idea what I was gonna do with my life and this book came through in the last 3 or 4 months that I was there and so it was just kind of... it was my shift. And so I was just kind of going along for the ride. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life.

Angela:

The way I would talk about this with my clients is, "You really... for, you know, whatever reason you were able to be an open channel to your inner author." When your book came out... there is a right book to write at a certain time and have you... You know, maybe you could write a great book on the history of the Jack-O-Lantern but if it wasn't the time to write that book, it would have felt like... you know... You could do it. You're a smart guy, you can figure it out but it's so hard. But when you're tapping the book you're supposed to write, it comes out...

Brian:

Well, right...

Angela:

Then making...

Brian:

I didn't even know that I wanted to write a book until I had it. But... Well, some of the dark things. I mean you wanted me to... You know for me, definitely, you know, when it came out, I thought it was good. It, you know, got a little recognition and some other people say that it was alright, then, I probably... My hopes... elevated and you know, I tried to do those things. I did write some query letters to publishing houses and send the book along in the hopes that they would wanna pick it up and I got a lot of "thank you, but no, thank yous." Uhm... You know,

Angela:

By the way, that's something that a lot of people don't know. That's a great way... but I know it didn't work for you at that time... but a great way to get picked up. I used to self-publish and then have some successes like from awards or sales and then go to an agent or a publisher. A lot of people don't realize that's a great way to do it.

Brian:

Cool.

Angela:

Yeah.

Brian:

You know... so I didn't know any better and uh... You know... so... I definitely had some disappointments along the way. I mean I thought it was going to be easier than it was and I know everybody does until they go through it themselves. Ah, you know, and I've been actually picked up. I had an agent about, uh, three or four years ago about a year after my first book came out... The person who brought me on, ended up leaving and I got passed on to the owner of the company and the energy was not the same and, you know, I really wasn't ready either and so I ended up getting dropped and that was disappointing but it uh... I'm a big believer in "when one door closes another one opens" and about a week later, it was when I went to an acting class and started kinda dabbling in that, kinda finding some creativity and some other way... to do what I feel I was there do and so... I truly believe everything I've gone through... it kind of made me who I am and had allowed me to kind of continue and move forward and have the proper doors opened and such. So... so yeah I definitely had some disappointments and some self-expectations that were... that got knocked down.  
(chuckles)

Angela:

So what do you think... So we're talking about expectations. So you were giving advice to a friend who was just starting their book and they're praying for their Oprah appearance and their New York Times bestseller, What advice would you give them about balancing big dream and then also how to set expectations?

Brian:

Well, expectations aren't a big killer for us in all kinds of... different parts of our lives. You know, if we can... I'm a big believer in "trying to live in the moment" and stuff... If people can just... If they can do the book for the right reasons... I think a lot of people go in just thinking they have the next big novel, etcetera, etcetera... You gotta believe in yourself, so I'm not saying don't believe in yourself, but just write it from your heart. Write it because you wanna write it. Write it because it gives you joy and let everything else take care of itself. If you go in trying to do it in a certain way because you feel like it needs to be that way, then it's not going to be... It's not gonna have the proper flow to it or energy. You know what I mean? The heart...

Angela:

Yeah... the energy that goes into a book is the energy that comes out of it. I'll use an example... I love this book, so this isn't actually negative but I'll use as an example, Tim Ferris's *The 4-hour Workweek*. Have you ever read that book?

Brian:

I'm familiar, but I have not.

Angela:

Okay, well this is for you and anyone who's listening... Read any page. Uhm, 'cause he's just the perfect example of this... Read any page from a sample on Amazon and his energy in writing that book, which was clearly, "I have to write the most important book of all time..." and it is a very important book. The book has sold millions of copies. This book is definitely very important and it's this, absolutely, like frantic energy, like "All the ideas in here are the best ideas in the world and you have to take them." And I... love the book! But I... two pages in, I'm absolutely exhausted. I'm like, "Really, do I have to do all this stuff right now?" And it's the best... it's the clearest example, for me, of how, for better or for worse, the energy that goes into the book is what's gonna come out. So think about just how you want your readers to feel because it's not just the words on the page. The books have energy to them.

Brian:

Absolutely. Absolutely. So for me I would just tell people [to] just do it if you want to do it. Don't feel... don't do it because you feel like it's gonna open up some door and... something. I mean do it if that's... you know... if they're in conjunction. Ah, you know, I tried to do some things after my book came out. Ah, you know... either one way or... to that. You know, ran into walls and did things that didn't feel intuitively right. Yeah, I saw what other people were doing and so I felt like I needed to do that. It was just a waste of time and energy, you know. So they were all wonderful lessons that I needed to learn. But make sure you are doing it for the right reasons and because you want to do it and it gives you joy and all would be well. And even if it doesn't sell any copies you would have had an amazing experience and you can feel proud about it - your product. And you know, as we learn, [and] as we've written books, books aren't really the money makers, it's the stuff that maybe comes from them, like the speaking engagement, potentially, or whatever. You know what I mean? Or the other doors that open and... So that doesn't mean that books can't make money but, ah, we all have dreams that it's going to be a million seller and... easy street.

Angela:

So what are some of the things that you have done or experienced? People you've met? What are some of the things you've experienced because you have a book... because you are an author?

Brian:

Wow. Well, I'm lucky I've had a lot of adventures. Interesting things I've done in my life, I think altogether they kind of make people take pause and say, "Oh, well I wanna know a little bit more about this guy. So for me the books have, you know, ah, definitely, you know, got me in shows like yours, doing a lot of radio interviews, ah, you know... I haven't done any lately. I've been in LA now for... I'm not sure, 10 months ago, but you can do, you know, a fair number of workshops, Ah, they've... You know they've just... They've opened doors for me, you know, just because people see the body of work that I've done and... You know, even if the book's not great, a book does give somebody credibility. You know what I mean?

Angela:

That's pretty amazing, isn't it?

Brian:

It is.<sup>3</sup> And you know... some the things I've done that have given me credibility, so I'm just utilizing that...

Angela:

Do you find that people react to you differently as an author than they did as, you know, whatever your job was before?

Brian:

Yeah. I did not... Yeah, you know, I had really not that much time back in Oregon. I've been on... I've lived in other places for the last five years ever since that happened so I don't come into contact with a whole lot of people that knew me like that before but that's why some people... Well, you know, you hear it most of the time, and I'm sure you've heard this, "Wow, I wanna write a book, too! I have this book inside of me... I'm working on one." You know it's just, ah... I hear that a lot. And so I think for me, you know, one of the nice things that, you know, with all the folks that I, you know, friends on Facebook, your followers, etcetera, I think it gives them the belief that they can do it themselves, you know. They kinda... everything. That's definitely... I feel like... I can see a lot of the folks that I know have done things, and it's like, after I kind of started doing some of this stuff, whatever. They wrote a book personally, or what-have-you that I know that just... maybe witnessing what I had been doing kinda got them going.

Angela:

So, yeah. We got just a minute left. So any final parting words of advice that you would give people? Maybe like people you'd meet at a party who say, "I've always wanted to write a book?"

Brian:

You know I just tell people to do it.... Just do it for the right reasons if it brings you joy and if anything else comes up, it's fantastic, but... That's amazing, you know. Listen to your intuition. It never lies. It's God, The Source of the Universe, whatever you wanna call it, coming through

and it's part of my entire life and it's always led me right, you know, so listen to your intuition and just have fun. We're not here to struggle and cry, and, you know, be miserable.  
[SILENCE] Oop, hello? Angela?

Angela:

Well, Brian. Sorry about that. We got disconnected for a second. G. Brian Benson dot com (<http://www.gbrianbenson.com/>) is where you can learn more about Brian's books. Brian, thank you so much for being with us today.

Brian:

Well, my pleasure. Thank you Angela.

Angela:

And we will be back next time on Book Journeys Radio. My name is Dr. Angela Lauria, founder of The Author Incubator and creator of The Difference Process for writing a book that matters and we're here every week, changing the world one book at a time.