

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview – Nov. 20, 2014

Dr. Angela Lauria with Glenys Newton, author of *Home Flown: The Laymamma's Guide to an Empty Nest*

“ Write about what you love, write about what you're passionate about and you will never be short of words.” ~Glenys Newton

Angela:

Well, hey everybody. It's another Thursday and it's another Book Journeys Radio. I am so excited you are all with us today. We are talking today with Glenys Newton. She is the author of *Home Flown: The Laymamma's Guide to an Empty Nest*. And, uhm, you're gonna hear a nice little accent because Glenys is with us today from England I believe. Are you in England, Glenys?

Glenys:

Yes, I'm all the way here. Yes...

Angela:

Well, terrific! It's nice to have a little international flavor on the show. Thank you so much for being with us. Tell us about *Home Flown*.

Glenys:

Well, I wrote this book after my son had left home. Basically, I've written all the things I'd wished I'd known at that time because I kind of thought that it was just a natural progression which of course it is. But I hadn't actually anticipated this tsunami of different feelings that would come across when he actually left home. And although, you know, he's very glad that he's making his way in the world, I also would, you know, your identity as a parent is very much tied up with being a parent and there is, you know, the loss of the person, but there's also a loss of identity at that time as well.

Angela:

Hmm. And so, who did you write the book for? What was your goal for the reader or who are you trying to help?

Glenys:

Uhm, really, I was sharing my story and I hope that my words would resonate with other mums out there to give us mums a voice.

Angela:

I love that.

Glenys:

It's about, you know, there's a lot of mums out there doing an amazing job and we should have a voice.

Angela:

So, so often people write books to their younger selves, the book that they wish they had when they went through, you know, whatever the circumstance was. What has your experience been like after going through that? Have you found a certain level of peace from writing it and have you found you're helping people in the way you wanted to?

Glenys:

Yeah, what I found was children leaving home is not an event, it's not a single event, it's a process that actually goes on for many years. And my son first left home seven years ago and he just left again actually a couple of weeks ago and in your neck of the woods, he's just, he's in Florida. And uhm, so, I think it has been very well received by people. I've had some great feedback but actually, the best feedback I've had is from people who don't have children, who said it's allowed them to be able to see their parents in a different light because when you're a parent, you naturally get to see your parents in a different way. And I think, you know, before you have children or if you don't have children, perhaps, you don't have the opportunity to see your parents in that different light and that's been really interesting. That was something I wasn't expecting.

Angela:

Yeah. That is actually very interesting. So, one of the things that we talk about in the Author Incubator with the authors I work with is that writing a book as a love letter to one specific person seems to many authors like it's a way that it's narrowing, that's narrowing your audience. And so, most of my authors have a natural inclination that they want it to be, if they were writing about empty nest syndrome, they want to write it as a guide for parents and grandparents and kids and anyone who's dealing with it and make it as wide as possible. And what I always tell people is you'll actually reach more people if you make it narrow and not even necessarily the people you were expecting to reach. So, I love that you sort of found that and really connected with people that weren't even necessarily, you know, the women you were writing the love letter to.

Glenys:

Yeah. and I do storytelling as well and one evening, I had the chance to tell a story about my son leaving home and how actually our relationship has moved on as, you know, relationships have to. They don't want to get stuck. Uhm, these three teenagers were in the audience and they were so lovely, they just came up and said, "Thank you so much. We're gonna go home and, you know, look at our parents in a different light now." And also with siblings because the relationships with siblings changes as well, doesn't it? When one leaves home and one's still left at home, they have to form their relationships in a different way, independent of their parents almost which uhm, that, I think the sibling aspect is quite often overlooked, really, in the empty nest thing.

Angela:

And was that something you covered in your book or something that's more come out in the discussions that have happened around the book?

Glenys:

Uhm it's something that's come out as I was writing the book and I was going around to people, kinda I was going around to young people and parents and grandparents, and asking their experiences and for their words of wisdom. And I guess, myself, I didn't miss my siblings when I left home and my son, I've only got one son so, that wasn't an aspect that has naturally occurred to me. You know, I just thought everybody was glad to see the back of their siblings, but clearly not! Haha! Yes, some people, you know, find it a really difficult transition. For some people, it might be the first time they've ever had a bedroom on their own and you know, had to sleep in a bedroom on their own. Uhm, you know, some people really miss, and the whole dynamics of a family change, doesn't it, if you take one person out of the equation. Like one mum was saying that, actually, she found that she didn't really get on too well with the daughter who was left behind and she felt that she actually preferred the one that had left and felt really guilty about that.

Angela:

So, let's talk about the process of creating your book. So, you're going through an empty nest experience yourself. When in that process did you decide to write a book and then, how long did it take you to complete it?

Glenys:

Uhm, well, I was, up until the beginning of last year, I was working as a social worker in adoption and uhm, I'd always thought, you know, I've always really enjoyed writing. And I then came across, it's actually an American initiative, the NaNoWriMo, have you heard of it?

Angela:

Yes. Did you do your book as part of NaNoWriMo?

Glenys:

Well, I started but then I just realized that actually I function in both. So, NaNoWriMo is perfect for me and I met all these other people and it just really gave me the inspiration to get words on paper. And then, I've been thinking, "Oh, I'd really love to write a book but I need, you know, I haven't got time because I'm working and I haven't got an office and I haven't got a decent computer and if only I have all of these things and I will be able to write a book." But actually, NaNoWriMo, I did it actually on paper and pen in a café around the corner from work in my lunch hour and realized that actually, if you want to do something, you just get on and do it.

Angela:

Haha. I love that.

Glenys:

Which is quite a relief. There's a disappointment as well because there was a bit when I was thinking, "Oh, there must be some golden door I can walk through. There's a magic portal to book writing." But actually it's just a hog's log.

Angela:

You know what I find is a lot of people go to writer's workshop and read books about writing because that search itself is really satisfying and they subconsciously decide to stay stuck in that search. They don't really want a book, they want to want a book.

Glenys:

Yes. That's so true, isn't it? It's like a lead up to Christmas.

Angela:

Yeah! Oh my goodness I love that! It's exactly, oh it's gonna be Christmas soon! This is fun. Let's keep decorating!

Glenys:

Yeah, let's keep wanting it. Yeah, and I think for me, I've always had this big, ironically, a big fear of being known in any way, shape or form. And that was a big block for me of getting out there. And I had to...

Angela:

That's a big block for a lot of people, Glenys. So, why don't you talk a little bit about how you worked through that because I think that's such an important lesson for every author.

Glenys:

Oh, that's very comforting! Well, uhm, I just wrote, the first time I wrote the book, I realized I wrote what I needed to write for me. And then, I rewrote it and it was kind of edited really, and then I was starting to give it away. And then, by the fourth time I wrote it, I had given it away and that was an important thing to totally detach myself from the book coz it didn't belong to me. It belonged to everybody else out there.

Angela:

Wow!

Glenys:

And that's a long process, the thing of actually letting go of it completely took probably a year to genuinely...

Angela:

What was your, coz you've mentioned, and I should tell everybody, your website is glenysnewton.co.uk. And I'm the one with the accent here so, I'm gonna say this a little slower. It's Glenys, which is G-L-E-N-Y-S and then, Newton, N-E-W-T-O-N dot co dot uk. So, I noticed on your website, you mentioned that you're a storyteller. How did that play into writing the book and was the writing itself something that was already easy and comfortable or familiar to you because of your background as a storyteller?

Glenys:

Uhm, I think the two go hand-in-hand really, uhm, because writing a book is really another way of telling stories. And sharing a story with people with differences when you're telling a story, you have an audience there and you can see them. Uhm, when you got a book, you don't know who's reading it and if they're alright with it or not alright with it. But one of the things with stories is it's important that people remember the story and not you because, you know, it's different to acting because it's the story that's important and that you're actually giving it away generously and genuinely. And so, that process has been very helpful in terms of writing the book.

Angela:

So, talk to me about, I love storytelling, I'm a huge fan and I would love to do it someday. So I'm gonna hit you right after this interview for advice. But really with storytelling, so much of it is about finding your voice and your authentic voice because I think in storytelling, it's so obvious when you're B.S.-ing and you don't make that connection with the audience. So, you have to be really genuine in your telling. So, how did you do that in writing and do you feel like if we heard you tell a story and if we read your book, would it sound like the same person or did you have different voice when you wrote?

Glenys:

Well, people who've read it who know me say, they can hear me. At the beginning of this year, I went on a six-week residential course. It was actually called *Your Journey, Your Voice* and it's precisely what you're saying. It's about finding your voice and all the things that are stopping you, having your voice, which, you know, can be all kinds of things, as basic as being a woman, you know, which historically, a woman with a voice is not seen.

Angela:

Hasn't always gone so well for us.

Glenys:

Not really. You know women who rant out there, you know, we're not seen particularly kindly always, and or even something as basic as growing up in a small house where you can't

really have too much of a voice because it becomes chaotic and just really looking at all those things that stop you from having a voice in order to be able to come out to come out with a genuine, your genuine voice, which is, uhm you know, it was a real journey. Lovely. And then, more recently, uhm, I won The Moth storytelling thing which came...

Angela:

You did! I love The Moth! Wow!

Glenys:

I know. It came to England for the first time in September and I told the first story on English soil.

Angela:

You were the very first person out there at the very first Moth in the UK and then, you ended up winning. That's amazing!

Glenys:

Yes. It was a competition that was run through the Guardian Newspaper here. And then, the prize was to be the first Moth person.

Angela:

That's awesome.

Glenys:

It was very, very exciting.

Angela:

So, when you were working on your book, did you have a vision that it would be complete or was it more about the process of writing it?

Glenys:

The first kind of six months, eight months was about writing it. And then, there was a point at which I could write by August, it will be completed and in print. And that was my goal.

Angela:

And so, let's talk about that period when you were deciding how to publish it. Tell us how you published it and how you made that decision.

Glenys:

Well, uhm, well I've researched massively with different agents and publishers and I mean, it's not particularly easy and I got rejected by more people than I care for women more.

Angela:

I believe it's about your honor.

Glenys:

Yeah. It's like your self-esteem really hanging by a thread at a certain point and, you know, it's already quite a solitary activity, writing, and somebody who is quite happy to sit on their own for hours on end writing is generally not a person who's happy to jump up and down about it. So you know, it's quite, uhm, you know, it's different. You have to have lots of different hats on. But then, I was down in Dorset and just at a friend's house and doing a little writing workshop. And this woman sat next to me and she said, "Oh, you know, you're a writer. I think you should see my publisher who is just a mile down the road." And I went to see him the next day and he's just a one-man band and it went from there. Yeah.

Angela:

Wow! So, what were you looking for? What made you say yes to working with him instead of continuing your search?

Glenys:

Uhm, I think he was somebody who would let me do what I wanted to do. I knew the, I wanted the voice to remain authentic. So it's not necessarily a huge marketing success and lots of publishers are obviously looking for what sells the best, you know, which is understandable. But I want...

Angela:

That's how they make their money.

Glenys:

Well, exactly. Yeah. But I wanted it to remain as my voice and he was quite happy to just let me do my own thing. So, uhm, so it just seemed, it seemed right, you know. So I just went with it.

Angela:

Yeah. And did you work with other people in the process of producing your book? Did you have an editor or readers or anybody else who gave you advice along the way?

Glenys:

I have this very lovely friend who I go horse-riding with and she is just like Mrs. Pedantic with grammar and everything. She kind of does it as a job, you know, writing documents. And she read it and edited it three times, I think. Bless her. So, uhm, big thanks to her because no matter how many times you write it and read it and read it again, which is actually quite dull when you know exactly what's coming next. And yes, so she was a massive help.

Angela:

So, let's talk about this because, especially someone who, ah you know, this isn't the first thing you've written and gotten feedback. The idea of critique. So, there are writer's circles, or there are other friends you could have shared the story with and the type of feedback you got could have been, let's say, less constructive. How do you know when to share your writing and who to share it with and how do you know when somebody is maybe gonna derail you with their feedback and how do you deal with that feedback?

Glenys:

Yeah. That's very true. Well, you have to trust your instincts. I gave it to my son to read who is my best critic. He's very honest but I know he'd be very honest and also very kind and he's the person that knows me the best. Uhm, I also gave it to read to somebody who doesn't have children, so they would be looking at it impartially. And then my friend that did the editing, she just you know, is very, uhm you know, very business-like. But you're right. It's difficult because one person's words can just completely knock you off And not just, you know, that's one person's opinion. It is difficult but I mean, nobody's gonna, not everybody's gonna agree, you know, I myself might read this two years down the line and not agree with it because people's opinion change, does it?

Angela:

Right. Well, the other thing I say is I say editors edit. And so if you ask someone to review your work and give you a critique or edit it, whether it's a friend or an editor, they're going to give you feedback which you may or may not want. Uhm, the people are, they're trying to add value and like you said, if somebody handed you this in three years and said, "Edit it," you'll definitely have to. You'd be like, "Why would I ever say that? That's ridiculous! Cross that old section out." It's such a tender time when you're writing and when you're not confident that you are ready to be seen in the way that you need to be as an author that you can get knocked off your feet. What advice would you give to someone who, you know, has shared their writing wherever, and gotten feedback that made them think I'm not good enough to do this?

Glenys:

Ah well, anybody is good enough to do it because everybody has a story to tell no matter what. Everybody, and everybody should have the time and the right to tell their story and that is what generally people are interested in, are people's stories because it's very inspiring. And there is no such thing as not good enough. You know there might be those who are less inclined to the written word but they'd know that anyway, wouldn't they? Because generally, if you're really, really not gifted in an area, then you wouldn't enjoy it.

Angela:

You're probably not gonna want to do it. Right. If you feel you're being called and a burning desire to write a book, you're writing is probably perfectly fine. We can get you there.

Glenys:

Yeah, because I don't have a burning desire to do painting because I'm really, really awful at it.

Angela:
Totally.

Yeah, or, you know, I wouldn't have a burning desire to sit and write a physics paper because I'm really awful at that too. So, I think you just trust your gut instinct and if you really enjoy something it's because you're good at it. And you know, that genuine love of something, even if it's not perfect, is inspiring to other people.

Angela:

So, for so many people, especially at the beginning of their book journey, it's all about getting the story out, getting the book written. It's all about writing and editing and maybe even, you know, figuring out publishing and are you gonna self-publish or trying to find an agent. And all of that drama feels like it's going to be over the day your book is released and magically, millions of people are reading it. It always going exactly that way. So, let's talk about what happened after your book was released and maybe some of the lessons learned about how to get the message out.

Glenys:

Well. In the same way that I haven't anticipated how complicated and multi-layered it would be when my son left home, I really hadn't anticipated how exhausting it would be to do all the marketing thing. You know, if I was to go around and talk to people on a one to one, I think I'd be absolutely fine, I thought, you know. But it's really difficult, you know, once you've gone, once you've exhausted your family and your friends, you have to reach a wider audience and I would recommend to anybody, to just hook up with other groups of people to give advice, you know, on Facebook and other social networks and anything. People are really, really happy to give advice and to help and support on the days you put your head on your hands and just chuck your book in the bin. They're really happy to do that. And I myself have passed on different stuff to people. I have approached local places and it's really, I'm still learning, very, very much still learning.

Angela:

So, what is something that, for you, has come out of the experience of being an author since your book has happened, something that has happened in your life that you think wouldn't have happened if you didn't publish this book?

Glenys:

I think if I'm perfectly honest, I feel like I've been brave enough to step into my true self. I'm actually doing what I always wanted to do and dreamt that I could do but to me, it was like, you know, other people write books. You know, you run your finger along the spines of the books in the bookshop, looking at its name going, "Oh no, but it's other people." But it's not.

It's everybody. And it's just hard work but it's thoroughly enjoyable and I feel like, I actually got to the point where I didn't have a choice whether to follow that or not because if you don't follow your gut instinct, life becomes like hosepipes with pins in it and it just stops the flow. And actually, you can even become unwell as well with it and that's what I feel like. I feel like I've had the courage to step into my true self. That would not make me rich but it feels better.

Angela:

Yeah. That is so powerful. And the alternative might have made you poor.

Glenys:

Yeah. I think both of them are gonna make me poor but ...

Angela:

Haha! The writers' chat! So, we got about a minute left and I just want to give you the opportunity to share with people who are maybe where you were before you started your book. They've gone through something and they really want to share it with people but maybe don't know where to start or haven't been brave enough. What advice would you give them about writing a book? What would you say to them?

Glenys:

The first thing you have to do is just put pen to paper and start writing. Write about what you love, write about what you're passionate about and you will never be short of words because it was just, it's like, I'm blocking a dam. I mean it's so exciting and whether it goes anywhere or it doesn't go anywhere, it doesn't matter. The point is you're following your dreams and if you're following your dreams, you're actually making the world a much better place to be in.

Angela:

Ah! I love that! I want to have you back every week, Glenys. This has been such an amazing conversation.

Glenys:

I can't believe half an hour has gone.

Angela:

I know. It was so fast. Glenys Newton is the author of *Home Flown: The Laymamma's Guide to an Empty Nest*. Glenys, I hope it's not the last *Laymama's Guide*. I think there are more books in there. I can hear them coming out already.

Glenys:

Oh, thank you! Yes, I hope so. Once ah, yes, get this one going and I'll sit in the winter and write another one.

Angela:

Yes, it sounds wonderful. Well, we will be back next week on Book Journeys Radio where we're changing the world one book at a time.