

**Book Journeys Author Interview – May 7, 2015**  
**Dr. Angela Lauria with Julia Roberts, author of *Sex, Lies and Creativity***

*If you don't write them one at a time, none of them will be written. ~Julia Roberts*

Angela:

Well hey, everybody! We are back again at Book Journeys Radio. And this week, like every week on the show, we are talking about how to overcome the obstacles of writing your book - get it done, get it out there and get it in the world, changing lives. And our guest today is no stranger to that process. She has written three books on very different topics and she has really used the power of books throughout at least the last decade and being able to connect with people with her message at a number of levels and in some really creative and surprising ways. So I am excited to introduce to you the author of *Sex, Lies & Creativity*, Julia Roberts. So hi, Julia!

Julia:

Hi, Angela! It's fun to be here. Thanks.

Angela:

So I wanna start with your latest book, *Sex, Lies & Creativity* and why don't you tell people what is that book about and who is it for?.

Julia:

Okay, so I've always been creative. I'm sure you feel the same way but it's very hard to understand your own creativity and what it's good for, what it's not good for 'cause all you really notice or see are the places you kind of bump up against - what it's not good for, like I'm not a good artist, I'm a good writer, you know. And one thing I've often seen in the world is that there are, that girls and boys are fully creative and this came to me to one research. It definitely reinforced the research I did. But men and women are not equally produced, published, awarded. You know, their creativity is not out there and anywhere near the quantities that men's creativity ... And it's not hard to explain that. We've all seen mad men, we've seen how women have been kept down or whatever over, you know, generations and decades and centuries. But I was kinda tired of hitting that door and I wanted to see, are there other reasons that women's creativity is not getting out in the world? And are there other ways therefore possibly to enhance creativity for men and women in the workplace? Are we accidentally chilling creativity? So I did the research in what it takes to be creative and what our gender differences are. And then this book is the combination of those two and opens that discussion. Are there ways that we're accidentally chilling each other's creativity and are there ways that we could be enhancing it by having better empathy for the opposite gender?

Angela:

Hmm. Great subject. It's a great thing for a Master's study.

Julia:

So this is what this book came to be. Yes, that's true. This is my Master's research and then it is, so this is a little bit academic but it's definitely written for regular people, people who are trying to enhance creativity in the workplace, and people who are trying to enhance or

understand their own creativity at home because they're writers, or they're artists, or they're dancers, or whatever. Mhmm.

Angela:

Right, right. So with this book, who were you trying, who were you most trying to reach with this book? Why not just keep it in the academic realm? I know this was a version of your Master's thesis. Why did you want it to leave the academic realm?

Julia:

I absolutely wanted to make sure that what I went in there to learn, what I had a nagging need to know about creativity could get shared with people who have, creativity's a little compulsive. You have a need to write, you have a strong desire to do what you need to do - painting, whatever it is. So not understanding why that's not working is extremely frustrating and a lot of pain, a lot of self-doubt, a lot of self-blame. So I really wanted to make sure that what I came to understand about creativity got out into the world. And then what I came to understand about the gender differences in creativity, I think it's really important that we start to make sure that women in the workplace, and men in the workplace for that matter, do not cancel each other out and get to the place where their creativity is chilled by one another's presence. We're working more and more in teams for innovation. And then I just wanna make sure that people could really come to understand this, this, how creativity works and what we're doing that is wrecking it or boosting it.

Angela:

Awesome. So you've written a couple of other books as well I know, in the past. What were some of the lessons from your first two books that you wrote that influenced maybe some things you did differently with this book?

Julia:

So my first book was just a romp. It was a fun book I wrote about my family's trip across country. I used my children's diaries and my own. It's called *RV There Yet? A Cross Country Cautionary Tale*. And it was just funny and fun and I really wrote it for friends first and then published it in the tradition-, in the self-publishing realm bookstores. And ah, you know, since I always wanted to be an author, I also just dug into that in a promote marketing point-of-view and got myself sponsors, got put on the road by Magellan who was my big publicity sponsor, used their publicity department, got on TV twenty times, you know, hahaha. It was just like cutting my teeth.

Angela:

Amazing! I love that story.

Julia:

Haha! So it's just cutting my teeth in the book department. It was my first book and I'd said, "I'm gonna be an author. Let's figure this stuff out." So it's just on the very ... writing in my opinion. It's fun, it's funny, people love it. Then, uhm, my second book was coming up from a traditional publisher which I don't know, brought with it all sorts of different stories in my head. Haha! So I didn't do anywhere near as well promoting it, plus I didn't know where my promotion obligation was and whether it was...

Angela:

Wait, I wanna go back to the stories, hold on. What were the stories in your head? Were they like, "I'm successful now, I have a traditional publisher so I don't have to do any of the work"? What were some of the stories?

Julia:

Well, you would think but I'm a, I'm a self-flagellator so, haha...

Angela:

I guess.

Julia:

So my stories are more like, "Oh my God, I didn't earn out of my advance. I'm horrible. I owe them. They don't wanna hear from me. I'm a failure." I didn't know that 90% of people don't earn out of their advance.

Angela:

Right.

Julia:

Uhm, I don't, that number's not scientific, I don't know. But I just, most people don't earn from their advance.

Angela:

Right. Yes.

Julia:

But I felt guilty and horrible that I hadn't earned back the advance for them. I think that was just wrong in my opinion, like I owed them that money back. Uhm, also I had incredible impostor syndrome. I was certain that like the police would be banging down my door and saying, "Who do you think you are?" You know I actually felt like hiding, hahaha.

Angela:

Aha. Wow.

Julia:

Uhm, you know, it was the authority thing, like I felt certain that whatever I said would be questioned and challenged and, you know, pushed back and I just felt like I couldn't stand. I wouldn't be able to bear that scrutiny because I am a fraud. It was my thought, you know, I am just... 'cause it was ama-... So this book was called *Motherhood to Otherhood* and it was published by Running Press which is an imprint of Perseus Books. And basically it was a very unique and original thought - the idea that if you had three pregnancies or two pregnancies in your life, you had the right to power many unpregnancies - nine months in your life when you just focus on yourself and your brainchild and you brought to it all the lessons that you learned from pregnancy. So put your feet up, say no to certain things, bring in a professional, all the things that you do naturally when you're pregnant, but you do that for yourself. That same little dedication you read every little, everything on the subject of burping or nursing or, you know, Braxton Hicks contraction, if you brought that dedication to your brainchild for nine months long, you could do it. You could have a book, you could lose the weight, you could do almost anything. Right?

Angela:  
Yeah, yeah.

Julia:  
So that was my original idea, it's not like I stole that idea from anybody but I felt like a fraud, haha, constantly, haha. It's just is what it is. So what I've really learned...

Angela:  
So was that different with *Sex, Lies & Creativity*?

Julia:  
One hundred percent. A thousand percent.

Angela:  
Okay, so let's talk about that. What changed?

Julia:  
Well, so I no longer, quote-unquote, wanted to be an author. I wanted to serve my reader. And that's a huge shift. I wanted to make sure my reader had access to this information that I didn't think other people were writing and presenting. So huge difference, right? It's not me with my little baby idea saying, "Please love me." Hahaha.

Angela:  
Sure. Mhmm. Wow.

Julia:  
It's a hundred percent turnaround, what I'm just saying. I hope this helps you.

Angela:  
Yeah, and it's interesting because when you talk about *RV There Yet?*, you had a lightness to it. Right? It was like, well, it's this fun little romp, you know, all good.

Julia:  
Yeah. Mhmm.

Angela  
But people like it, if they didn't like it, I kinda wrote it for friends and family, like you know, it was a pretty light energy when you talked about it. But when you talk about your second book, it was like all of a sudden you're a fraud when, you know, who else could've written it that was more qualified.

Julia:  
I don't know. Really I don't know. Maybe it was just 'cause I had a publisher and an agent and I was completely unsure of that relationship as to, you know, you're signing contracts and you're not sure what that means in terms of, might have I had a say without asking? Might have I had a workbook without asking? I think that had a lot to do with it. Uhm, and you know, they also, you publish, self-publish, you don't indemnify anybody. You indemnify your publisher in things that, you know, that you have the right to say this out and the other and, you know, it's just, you have no real advocate, it feels like. You don't really know what you're getting into. But all of that said,

guess there are, it's trepidacious in certain ways and all that's true but my little thank you supplied a solid 95 percent of that did. Uhm, maybe five percent of it was uncertainty of some nature that I could've gotten information about.

Angela:  
Actual.

Julia:  
And it could have just been a time of life thing.

Angela:  
So what's the advice there? If somebody does have that feeling of being a fraud or if they have any of the kind of negative feelings you talked about with your second book, if you had to do it all over again, what advice would you be giving yourself now?

Julia:  
I would say get a coach who can help you...

Angela:  
Haha!

Julia:  
I would!

Angela:  
Yeah, yeah.

Julia:  
I, you know, I started training as a coach almost immediately after that book was published and that's the only way I managed to come out of that deep trough of fear and distress, you know, and guilt. I have guilt because I wrote a book for people. You know what I mean? Hahaha!

Angela:  
Haha. Yeah.

Julia:  
Can you ... the audacity of me? But uhm, hahaha.

Angela:  
You know, the one thing that I will tell you, the thing you're talking about is actually what stops so many people consciously or subconsciously from actually writing it.

Julia:  
Yes! I agree with you.

Angela:  
So the fact that you did it, that you pushed yourself through this is like incredible bravery.

Julia:  
Mhmm. Thank you.

Angela:

Uhm, but then you also sort of probably managed to keep that message from as many people as humanly possible. Hahaha!

Julia:

No fooling. Yes, I really stepped on it therefore. And this is why publishers do, I mean publishers do want you to come back for a second and third book because your first book, you know, may or may not be your best writing. That's, you know, for posterity to decide but it is not your best presence. You know, it can't be almost. You really just have to get over your little ego, fears, get out, I mean, the difference between book 2 and book 3 is really a question of ego. I don't really care if somebody questions my right or ability to write *Sex, Lies & Creativity* because that's just not why I wrote it. I didn't write it to prove myself to anybody, you know.

Angela:

Yeah. So different, so different.

Julia:

So it's enormously different. So in a rewrite of *Motherhood to Otherhood*, every change that was requested by my editor, whatever, is like, "Oh my God, should I do that ...? What does she mean? Oh she's, I don't think I might ... hate that." You know, it was just a constant dialogue. In a rewrite of *Sex, Lies & Creativity*, it was just like, "What else can I bring to them?" What else, you know what I mean, like it's so reader-focused. I was so reader-focused it really just had to do with, "Is that really ...? Do we really need that? Is this really adding to?" It's just a completely different headset and somebody would have had to have taken me by the hand and pulled me out of the dark room and walked me to the bright room and said, "Here, focus on the reader." Hahaha!

Angela:

Mhmm. Right.

Julia:

In a way that I would have believed because at that time I would have felt like, "Oh duh, shut up! Oh my God, do the readers think I'm dumb?" You know, hahaha!

Angela:

Mhmm. Right, right. ... talking like ...you just mentioned about me!

Julia:

Right! Haha! I'm gonna turn this thing into something, too. Another criticism that I'm gonna take as and lick as a wound, right?

Angela:

So...

Julia:

So you know, I think there's uhm, my book talks about this, *Sex, Lies & Creativity*, women in their fifties, and I'm in my fifties, have a new period of creativity. They just, 51 and a half is the average for menopause, and that's in perimenopause and menopause, you go from what Christiane Northrup calls alternating current to direct current. You stop having progesterone

which is sort of the needy little hormone that causes us all to worry about stupid things. And you start having constant estrogen and testosterone. And even though our testosterone drops in our old age the same as men, it's proportionally higher in our fifties than it's ever been since about age 9 or 10 whenever you started what they call menarche, the onset of menopause. At any rate, all that to say that in your fifties you do have a lightning. There is an opening, and it is a huge creative opening that is under-exploited, under-understood and not anticipated by women. They feel restless and kind of sometimes foolish because they have this new sense of "I'd like to fill in the blank". Something big.

Angela:  
Yeah, yeah.

Julia:  
And their husband wants to retire and sit on rocking chairs on the porch. We're just developmentally different at that age. And so, that's why I was saying, it's a little bit possibly about my age. I was in my forties when I wrote *Motherhood to Otherhood*. I was in my early fifties when I wrote *Sex, Lies & Creativity* so there's definitely, they call it the Mommy Veil, the lifting of the Mommy Veil. You just have a significantly less other-drivenness that's created hormonally and chemically.

Angela:  
Yeah. Mhmm. Fascinating. So let's talk for a little bit about, you've written three books, you've had ideas for others that didn't come to fruition. What do you think is the difference between a book that gets finished and sees the light of day and uhm, you know, the books that so many of us start and don't finish?

Julia:  
Mmm. I don't know that I start books and don't finish them but you know, maybe there's a laugh track somewhere going, "You're kidding me, right?" I do have a novel in the drawer. It's finished.

Angela:  
That's the one I was referring to. I guess that's finished but it's not seeing the light of day.

Julia:  
It's finished but I've carefully and considerately decided not to take that further.

Angela:  
Yeah, so what's the difference? So why? And I'm not saying that's a good or a bad thing but like, you know, when you see, I think one of those questions...

Julia:  
It's a good thing. It taught me how to write a novel.

Angela:  
Okay.

Julia:  
I'm listening.

Angela:

I think one of the things that stops people is that they don't know if it's good enough. Like how do I know if it's good enough to publish?

Julia:

Well, in this case I shopped it. I took it to graduate level, writing programs. I've had good and what I consider reasonable feedback. I can see the work that it would take and I decided I had to write a different novel.

Angela:

Aaah. Okay.

Julia:

And that's just a conscious and good decisions, a solid decision. And it was an easy decision because a novel becomes really who you are for awhile. Uhm, I mean consider when you read a novel, sometimes you hang up, I was gonna say, you finished the last page and you think, "Ah, they're not gonna be in my life anymore. You know, so and so's not gonna call." You know, hahaha! Well, when you write a novel, they live in your house with you, you know. So because of the big deal but like I said, I felt like I wrote that novel, it taught me how to write novels, I probably kind of liked parts of it, but I've seriously decided to try, just to put it away. That was only a couple years ago uhm, and I was gonna do. But it did prove to me I can write a novel and that's enough for that, for that particular thing.

Angela:

That's success. That's awesome.

Julia:

Yeah:

Angela:

So you've written non-fiction, you've written academic work, you've written a novel, you've written a memoir-style book. What for you is your favorite, what's your favorite genre to work in and how would you say they're different? What do you think the characteristics are of the different genres you've written in?

Julia:

Well, so most memoirs are uhm, most memoirs are really like choking down some huge trauma kind of thing. So I don't, I can't write that, actually I don't have it in me 'cause my memoir's a funny memoir and I love that. I would say, and my novel's a funny novel. I feel that that's where I belong, writing funny, whether that were TV episodes, uhm, you know, a novel or memoir. For me it would always be sort of the arch, funny look at humankind, you know. So that's where I think I belong, you know. And, you know, so *Sex, Lies & Creativity* has a casual tone. It's definitely I write like I talk but I'm handling a serious subject so it's not funny at all but it definitely has that casual accessible tone that could turn funny if it were a different topic, you know, a different subject matter.

Angela:

Yeah. So how do you, so you have this connection with kind of humor. How do you know that's right for you? What are some of the signs that people can look for? 'Cause what a lot of people listening to the show, a lot of people I work with, they have three or four ideas for books.



They've got an idea for a novel, an idea for a memoir, they wanna write a self-help book, they have an idea for a spiritual book, they're putting together a deck of cards like a divination deck, and so many different projects. And I feel you're a little like that.

Julia:

Hahaha! Of course I'm like that! That's why I'm laughing.

Angela:

And I don't mean that in a bad way because you get the projects done. I mean you've done so many different things.

Julia:

Well, I'll say this. People say writer's block and everybody thinks of staring at a blank page and can't come up with the words. I don't know why that's what people think of when they say writer's block because to my mind, way more people have the kind of writer's block that you're talking about - way too many ideas, no ability to choose, and no willingness to focus on one and if you don't write them one at a time, none of them will be written. Period.

Angela:

Okay, well then everybody stop and write that down. Haha! If you don't write them one at a time, none of them will be written. It's gonna be the title of the blog post about this episode. Ah, how did you learn that? Did you have a teacher? How did you learn that lesson 'cause you seem to really live that?

Julia:

So a little bit, uhm, so I went and I got my Masters in Creativity. It is the most awesome Masters that exists in my personal opinion, haha. And one of the main concepts when you look at creativity from a scientific point of view is that you have to separate divergent thinking from convergent thinking. Divergent is when you come up with a hundred ideas, you're diverging, you're all over the place, and convergent is when you're selecting, funnelling, you know, getting narrower. Right? So there's all sorts of assessments, one of which I actually give in my, it's called the Creative Selfie and I give this assessment that helps you see what kind of thinker you are - divergent or convergent and then the many sub-sections of that. Well, here's what I learned about myself. I am convergently challenged. I could not converge. I was running in a circle because I always had new ideas and it was really easy to hop to another idea, much easier than, for instance, finishing the one I was working on.

Angela:

Finishing something? Yeah.

Julia:

When something got a little hard, it was real easy for me to go, "This one's important too. I'll do it."

Angela:

Right.

Julia:

So I was convergently challenged. When I learned to converge, and so many people have commented on this to me in the last couple of years, when I learned tools to help me converge

and I learned the value of converging, I started to stop going in circles and started going in a straight line and doing things sort of one after the other. My energy's enormously different now that I've not only learned to converge but learned the value of converging.

Angela:

Okay, other people listening to the show may be convergently challenged. You've mentioned this Creative Selfie assessment. How do we all go do that right now? So we can multicast with listening to the podcast.

Julia:

It's at [decodingcreativity.com](http://decodingcreativity.com). So decoding D-E-C-O-D-I-N-G [creativity.com/creativeselfie](http://creativity.com/creativeselfie). And it's actually three assessments but there's one in there that's specifically about your style, the other's about your degree of creativity, and it's, those are academic level 60-year-old scientifically sound assessments so you come out understanding who you are creatively. It's a really different world when you know. It's like a fish being aware of water. What you take for granted about yourself you can suddenly see, and go, "Oh, okay. So that's water." Hahaha!

Angela:

Hahaha. Aahh!

Julia:

"I know what to do with that." You know what I'm saying? It was enormous for me anyway and that's why again, this being very reader-oriented, in this case, client-oriented. I want people to have this understanding. I care about shifting the minds of talented, creative people because I want their voice to be elevated. I want them to take up more space in the world. I care about that dialogue elevating because so many of us creative people get activated and get out there. You have the same wonderful sort of bent in your philosophy. The idea of helping writers get out there is a large part of what drives you I, tell me where I'm wrong.

Angela:

Well, here's the thing. It's not changing anyone's life in your head. And so, you know, I am a huge fan of imperfect action and I know how trapped in perfectionism that people get. And so my goal is to get those ideas out there and changing lives as opposed to in your head waiting to be perfect where they can in some future that's never coming change a life. So uhm, so yeah...

Julia:

Mhmm. So you have the same thing, like raising the volume on people who care to make a difference, in your case more.

Angela:

Yeah. Exactly.

Julia:

Me, raising the volume on people who think really weird. I like just creative people and I just wanna help that, raise that volume, raise their power level in their own lives. Right. So...

Angela:

So what, especially someone who is creative and I love the idea of people who are listening to the show and maybe have an idea that they feel like is weird or different or other people won't get, ah, maybe something that they have created or invented that they really wanna get out

there but it's a little different. What's the advice that you would give to them to get their book done but also really to get through the thinking about what it is? How do you marry your quirks and your originality and your weirdnesses with an audience?

Julia:

Well, that is, you know, that is not an easy answer but it's not a hard answer either. There are ways forward where you can figure out where you have your strengths and your preferences where you gain energy and where you kind of lose energy and start complaining or stalling or, you were talking about somebody being a perfectionism, perfectionist. That's really never been my problem. I'm imperfect action too. I'm not a perfectionist. However, that is someone's problem. That's where they fall down each time, right? So if they always fall down there, this, these assessment ... show that that's where they fall down but they always have a place where they shine too. So one of the things you wanna do is figure out: a) where you always fall down and might need some tools or collaboration or help like a coach or something, and b) where your real genius work is because you're way above average on that, in that territory. You're way above the mean. And so that means that if you had two projects and one were in that territory that gives you energy that you have a real brilliance for and the other was not, my advice would be to choose the one that's within your energy field because that's usually where you have something truly unique to offer. So many of us have these ideas that we think, quote-unquote, will sell or quote-unquote, are, you know, big ideas, or important ideas like because somehow they fit in society in a way that we value instead of our quirky, weird ideas that we think are little or small or whatever. But the ... with the message is like my gal because that person has an important that they don't get is important. They probably, they don't see it everywhere else so they don't know that that's the message that is really important. So that's why I was talking about these assessments. Sometimes just seeing that this is your territory will help you understand and this is your work. This is why the work is important and valuable, you know.

Angela:

That is so powerful. Julia Roberts is the author of *Sex, Lies, & Creativity*. She is a creative process expert and coach. You can find her at [decodingcreativity.com](http://decodingcreativity.com), [decodingcreativity.com](http://decodingcreativity.com). And you can find her Creative Selfie there as well that we talked about. I hope everybody goes and does that. Find your special magic. Get a copy of Julia's book which is fantastic. Julia, thank you so much for being our guest today.

Julia:

Oh, so much fun, Angela. I always love talking to you.

Angela:

I love talking to you too, Julia. Thanks again.

Julia:

Okay, bye-bye.

Angela:

And before we go, one quick message. This week's episode of *^PageUp^* is *How To Structure a Book*. Check that out at [authorincubator.com/6](http://authorincubator.com/6) and we will meet you back here for *Book Journeys* next week. Changing the world, one book at a time.