

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview - December 17, 2015

Dr. Angela Lauria with Mark J. Silverman, author of *Only 10s: Using Distraction to Get the Right Things Done*.

“it’s just fascinating how we think of time as this really fixed thing ... but, really, it’s much more elastic than I think we are led to believe.” ~Mark J. Silverman

Angela:

Well, hey you guys, I promised we would be back for one last show of the year, and we have a good one lined up for you. This is probably the best way I could think of to finish out 2015. I love it when authors on this show have a book topic that also fits so perfectly for authors in transformation who want to finish their book, and this book is probably the perfect example. Mark J. Silverman is a professional coach and consultant, and he is also the bestselling author of *Only 10s: Using Distraction to Get the Right Things Done*. Mark, thank you so much for being our guest today!

Mark:

Thank you for having me! It all started with you, so this is – this is perfect.

Angela:

N – well, ho – how fitting to be ending – ending the year of – of Book Journeys podcasts with this episode, this book is one of my favorites for so many reasons, but particularly because the ideas in this book, I think, are essential for anyone who has struggled to write a book to understand, so let’s just start off with ... the – the ground level description, tell us what *Only 10s* is about.

Mark:

So, *Only 10s*, I describe it as an anti-time-management book. It fits into the time – time management category, but it’s more about managing my attention and my energy, where – where that flows, where that’s gonna go, so instead of fighting myself. I have ADD and a lot of – a lot of successful entrepreneurs struggle with have aw – aw – a lot of things vying for their attention, whether they’re personal business or just creative, and for me, that’s ... stifled myself, g – g – it was a stumbling block to actually getting some of these ideas implemented, so the – writing the book was myself getting my Ph.D in doing the things that I wanted to accomplish, so instead of managing my time, I knew when I paid attention to certain things, they got done and they got done brilliantly, so I sl – I started to learn to manage that and follow the energy and the attention in the right places, and all of a sudden my “to do” list started getting done, and the things on my “to do” list were important to me and the people that I cared about, and that’s what the book entailed, my journey through this process.

Angela:

And so, what happened when you have to get something done, like ... your taxes or something that your energy is not flowing towards? 'Cause there are some things we have to do, right? How do you address that?

Mark:

Right. That – so, for this – that – that – if – if – if you look in the reviews, or if you look in any – anything they ever post, people say, “But I have to do this,” and the truth is, I don’t have to do anything. I talked to my - ... “I have to go to work.” No, you don’t.

Angela:

Mmm.

Mark:

You kinda wanna go to work, because you want the benefits, you want the paycheck, but you don’t have to do anything. I don’t have to pay my taxes, I just don’t want the IRS knocking on my door with – with the – with the issues. So, that’s the first thing, and it’s – ... that’s pretty basic in – in – in – in – in New Age circles to talk about that, but then, in practicality, if – if I’m thinking I have to do something, I’m coming from a victim mentality, I’m coming from a place of weakness. When I realized that I’m choosing something – when I’m choosing to go take – ... I – I – I use the example in the book that I have a s – a sick kid but I really need to go to work. Oh, my God, I have to take this kid to the doctor. And if I take one or two minutes just to work through the fact that I don’t have to take my kid to the doctor, I can let my kid die in the living room, well what I wanna do is be a good parent. I want to care for my child, it’s an empowering way to go through it, and that switch changes the energy. Now, that doesn’t change the fact that I still pay my bills, even though I have the money on the day they’re due. I haven’t changed that, just ‘cause I wrote a book about the time and energy management, I just stopped stressing about it. I know that it becomes a 10, it becomes important on the day they’re due. I get my taxes done on the 14th –

Angela:

Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Mark:

– not – not ... in December and January, and I stopped stressing about it, but it – the cool thing that I learned was, by managing the smaller things in my life and letting go of all the shoulds and all the things I did because of fear, all of a sudden my bills started getting paid ... even earlier. My p – plane reservations, which I always did in the last minute, I got done. I started freeing myself up by taking things off my list and got more of those – those quote unquote have to things done that I didn’t get done anyway.

Angela:

Right. See, this is what I love about how this translates to authors is, so many people have had “writing a book” on their “to-do” list for ... twenty years, literally. ... There are many authors I talked to that have had this as a – as an action item for decades, but it clearly wasn’t a ten, and I love the idea that, until something is at that level of priority, you just get to stop worrying about it, and I love that magical shift that, when you free yourself from feeling ... “Oh, I’m totally sucking at writing a book” or, “I really need to do my taxes, everyone else is getting their tax returns, everyone else is getting their taxes in,” ... all of that anxiety, when you let go of that you have so much more time to get that stuff done!

Mark:

... What’s interesting about that in writing a book is, I had decided to write a book, believe it or not, the day before I talked to you. You – you showed up in my life the day after I decided to write a book. But if I had decided to write a book and I decided to sit down and write a book – and it was a ten for me, I really wanted to write a book – I never would have gotten a book done. But the ten part was, I wanna write a book – I’m too scattered to ever write a book, so I’m gonna hire someone and get into a program that’s gonna give me deadlines and parameters and book ends, so that I can write a book in three months, and that’s my hack for getting my ten done. So, that’s not ... magically making myself, all of a sudden, organized and focused and Johnny-on-the-spot, I wanna do this, I’m saying “yes” to this, as Steve Chandler says, ... “The how-to isn’t the problem, it’s saying yes,” so once I said “yes,” I found you, found this program, wrote a book, done.

Angela:

Mmm. Love it. So, tell me more about this subtitle, ‘cause you talked about using distraction, what do you mean by that?

Mark:

So, a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot o – a lot of creative people, a lot of very successful people, on – on – first, in their own – between their own two years and in my head, I’ve got more ideas, more things – I’m more interested in things and fascinated by things, I love connecting with people that I can’t say I’m one thing. Doing my taxes is th – is like jail to me, so I – I – I’m – I’m gonna always look for that dopamine rush. Add to that, that I am severely ADD and I was on Ritalin until I discovered this whole – this whole new way of being that actually – my intuition and my energy and my distractions were – were the places that I really wanted to spend my time. Then, when I started to trust to that, and I started to tease out, what are the false tens, what are the things that are ... addictions or places I was running away with my attention? I started to pay attention to that, I started to trust things that I really wanted to do. So, one of this – one of the stories I tell is, I – I got this idea, back in the spring, to do – I was – I was asked to do a presentation on vulnerability and risk in cer – this past September, in front of a hundred and fifty coaches, people that I respect, from all over the world. So, I w – I was gonna do this – this

presentation, I got – I got – I got the idea that I wanted to learn to play the guitar. Now, I'm in my fifties. I don't – ... I don't know how to play the guitar, and I was gonna play the guitar and I decided I was gonna sing, and I don't sing in public. And I'm thinking to myself, "Why would I do this?" Now, it's a ten, I got a lightning bolt for that. Normally, I would ignore that, too risky, too scary, too hard, but because I live this life – wh – how does this – how does this translate to business? I'm growing a business here, what – what – does this make any sense? So I s – I trust it. So, all summer long, I learned to play the guitar, I took us on this presentation, on September 17th I get onstage and instead of telling people that they should risk, how did th – how do they go out on a limb, how should they be authentic and vulnerable, I decided to show them, and I showed them a video of me learning to play the guitar and learning to sing, and then I did it onstage, in real time – showed them I – I decided to fail in front of everybody. And out of that came business and credibility and ... part of – part of that corresponded with the launch of this book, so i – what seems like a crazy, side-track distraction, because of a – the energy behind it, turned out to actually be an exponential growth for my business.

Angela:

So, when you say it was a ten for you, how did you know, or – or – I'm gonna ask this for our listeners, how can they know, what do you look for to know if something – a real ten, or one of those ... fake-out addiction ten?

Mark:

So, this is trial and error. This is – for me, it's an experiment. Look in the pa – what I do is, look in the past. I ran the Marine Corps marathon, this is what my coach said to me, "Mark, when you focus, you actually do incredible things, it's just you gotta pick what to focus on," and I look back and I went, "I decided to the Marine Corps marathon," I couldn't run a mile, and in eight months I trained for the Marine Corps marathon, didn't matter that my back hurt, didn't matter that my knees hurt, didn't matter that my ki – ... I had no – I didn't have the time to train for a marathon. I did it because it was a ten, and I started looking at the things, like when – when the new iPhone comes out, ... no matter what's going on in my life, I'm in line, I'm buying the iPhone, it's done. It – it – there's no question, it's done, so I started looking for things in my life like that, that whe – when I – when I put my mind to it, when – when I'm sitting there, and I put up my list to pay the bills, pay the bills, every day, it's pay the bills, pay the bills, pay the bill – but then, the day that they're due, all of a sudden it's a ten, I noticed that, when I have that fee – and I start to get to understand that feeling of when I'm got – when I'm gonna focus on things. Then I start to look at Netflix and Facebook and ... certain things that ... – that – I'll go – I'll go – I'll go shopping instead of the business things that I wanna do, or I'll – I'll have conversations with people that aren't – have nothing to do with business, and I start to notice how I feel about things and what comes to fruition, so it's an experiment, and all it takes is three or four or five days and you start to get to know when you're lying to yourself. You start to get to know what is a false distraction and what is an empowering distraction. It takes no time at all, once you're paying attention.

Angela:

Mmh, I love it. It's – ... the example I often use is that, if you – this is hard for those of us who are married, but if you're dating you can be super-busy, and if you're dating someone who's really interesting, you suddenly have all this time to see them –

Mark:

Mmm.

Angela:

– like you're free every night, when before you were really busy, ... and I think it's really interesting, ... the things that we don't wanna do, ... paying our bills or maybe there's a – a blog post you're putting off writing, or maybe there's some difficult phone call you have to make, it seems like everything but doing that can fill up the time. So, it's just fascinating how we think of time as this really fixed thing, this – ... there's twenty-four hours in a day, ... you're gonna sleep for eight and work for eight, ... there's not that much flexible time, but, really, it's much more elastic than I think we are led to believe.

Mark:

There's two painful things that happen, when – when I get people to start this experiment. One, the conf – it confronts my victimhood, that I don't have time, or that I have to do things. It really confronts that ... – you guys – you said, if I wanna go on a date, I'm going on a date, it doesn't really matter that I have something to do the next day. I'm going on that date. I start to see that I'm actually o – I've always been making choices, I've always actually only been doing my tens, it's just that the reason that they're a ten changes. Sometimes I'm not sure what they are, so that victim thing goes – goes away. And then, the other – the other painful thing is that you start to see how much "should," fear and other peoples' agendas affect your "to do" list. When I saw the things on my "to do" list and how many of them had anything to do with tho – something I wanted to do, needed to get done, or even those have – quote unquote have to things, how many of those things had something to do with somebody else, a "should" or a fear, half the – half the list just went away. And that's really do –

Angela:

Mmm.

Mark:

– to confront that.

Angela:

Yes. So – so – so, what happens, when those things come up? What em – what do most people do and how is it different if they're working with you?

Mark:

So, what – what – I – I’m a big believer in being gentle with myself and being gent – ‘cause I’ll – I’ll rebel – I rebel. I’m a kid at heart, and I think we all have ... a little teenager inside of ourselves that rebel when – when we’re ... forced into scary things, so saying “no” to someone, “No, I’m not gonna go to that PTA meeting,” or telling your boss, “You know what, I’m actually going to leave work on time today.” Setting boundaries, having difficult conversations, what I – what I counsel people to do is, try one small one. Try not doing and see how it feels. You’ll – but notice, tell the truth to yourself as you go along, you don’t even have to ask, you don’t have to change a thing, just notice. And all of a sudden, it just gets to be too painful to not say “no” –

Angela:

Mmm.

Mark:

– because too painful to – to – to ignore what you now see, and then you start to act rather than forcing myself to act.

Angela:

Mm, fascinating. Well, let’s talk a little bit about the process of writing this book, one of the things that I like to ask people is, now that your book is done, it’s out, you’re holding a copy in your hands, if you could go back in time and give advice to Mark Silverman circa six months ago or nine months ago, before you started this process, what do you wish you knew? Wha – what advice would you give yourself?

Mark:

Oh, well, if I could go back I would say, trust – trust that this is gonna happen, because I was absolutely sure I was gonna be the first person in your program to fail. There’s no qu – there’s no question, I was gonna ...

Angela:

Everyone’s afraid of that, by the way.

Mark:

Yeah. And – and ... it – being in the forum, it was nice to know that we all felt ... but I was sure I was the guy, ‘cause I couldn’t put two thoughts together So, second was, y – you gave me a developmental editor in Kate, who was just magical and brilliant, but I didn’t know how much she would be help to me. As the process went on, I was ... “Oh, my God, had I – had I really paid attention to it, and had that initial meeting with her the month before, I would have been so much ahead for myself –“

Angela:

Mmm.

Mark:

– but I didn't realize it. So tha – so – ... the team and the support there in place, now lean on them. So, I didn't understand writing, I didn't understand – go ahead.

Angela:

... I think that advice really translates to anyone, ... in your case, you had – you had Kate, but everyone has resources and I think we don't always take a stock of what's there before we jump into it, so we're not always taking advantages of the resources around us. Does that – do you think I'm right about that?

Mark:

I think you're totally right about that, ... the other thing I might have done is, I think I might have sent drafts out, I would have assembled a posse or a team earlier and sent out drafts to people to have them get their impact on it m – moreso than I did. I'm – I'm – ... again, I'm a "ready, fire, aim," person, so I'm kind of – I'm – I'm kinda happy that we just screwed this thing together, put it out, and again, the advice that you gave, as we were coming into the final edit, to everybody, when you said, "You know what? You have all written brilliant books. The message that you want to get to your readers is in your books. Now, the final edits are your own window dressing, they're for you. You've already done it." That – that really helped tremendously, that it doesn't have to be perfect, 'cause I can go back and rewrite this book ... ten more times, but the message is there, and it's done and I – I like that, that was really helpful.

Angela:

Yeah, I love that. Yeah, you could keep editing a book for as long as you want, ... there's no – there's no time that that finishes, I talk about a book that I worked on that Jackie Kennedy Onassis was the editor for, and if I gave that book to any other editor today, they would just edit it, 'cause that's what editors do, they edit. So – so, deciding to stop in advance, it's not just about knowing when to stop, it's just deciding, "This is when I'm gonna stop, 'cause I could stay at this forever and it's not – it's not making a difference, it's not out there in the world," or I love about what Seth Godin talks about "shipping your art" –

Mark:

Mmm.

Angela:

– shipping is definitely ... a huge part of what's required in order to make a difference, it's – you have to do it, you have to ship it.

Mark:

Having a ship date.

Angela:

Yeah. Mm-hm.

Mark:

Well ... you gave – the day – the day – the day we signed up, you gave us a ship date, and that ship date starts – starts coming, we – we ...

Angela:

Right quick. Exactly. Exactly. Well, let's talk about writer's block, 'cause I know that's something – ... there were times when you maybe felt challenged to write or didn't know what to say next. What – what was your experience with writer's block and how did you deal with it, maybe ho – how would you deal with it now?

Mark:

So, the – the – the – the run-of-the-mill writer's block that I had was kinda helped out with you by – and – and – and the group, by just "sit down and write," just write anything, it doesn't – it doesn't matter. The – the big writer's block that I have, as a person with ADD, is that I couldn't organize it, so what you d – what you helped me with, what you – you gave us a template, and you said ... put your chapters to the template, the pages, and you ha – you had a way of writing the book. So, for me, because of – because of this – this way of – way of creative thinking – I couldn't think in a linear fashion, so you freed me up by saying, "Just write whatever you need to write and then we'll plug it in later." That helped tremendously, so I started writing chapters, or I started writing parts of chapters and then deciding, "Oh, then it belongs over here," "Oh then, it belongs –" and I would put it together like a puzzle. That was – that was – that helped m – get me through, but there day – there were days where I – just like running the marathon, I also – I take Mandalas, and Mandalas are a mediation where –

Angela:

Mmm.

Mark:

– I started, it's a great idea, I love the idea of writing Mandala, I love the idea of running a marathon, I love the idea of writing a book. Then, there's – comes a day when, "What was I thinking? This is crazy! I can't do this! There's no way I'm gonna do this." And I – I was in tears, several times, because it was just s – so hard. And in hindsight, I got through it, and it got – ... you sit down at the typewriter and you start typing and all of a sudden stuff starts coming out. I've got – one of the best chapters was, "I'm using – I'm using my book to write this book." ...

Angela:

Which is sort of meta, but talk about that.

Mark:

So – so, what I – what I started writing, I couldn't write anything, I couldn't figure out what to do. So, I sat down at the computer and I said, "Writing this book is a ten for me. All I wanted to was eat or look at Facebook or run away, somehow, I don't wanna do this," and I just started wri – typing this, and I realized, if something's a ten for me, I will go through the uncomfortableness. ... The – no matter – i – if the tay – if the – if the task is a ten, then the fear, or the block, is a nine, and I can get through it, and I'll use whatever I need, whether it be the group that you put us in, my – my editor or just sheer – ... bullishly just putting myself through it. But – I – I – I swear, th – ... the – the – the – the task of just putting my fingers on the keyboard and writing anything seems to be the best remedy for writer's block.

Angela:

... I think just literally writing, "I have writer's block right now and it's really hard for me to write, and there's nothing coming to mind, and I can't think of anything," ... if you literally just type that, you will get to your chapter.

Mark:

Mmm.

Angela:

Eventually, your chapter will come out of you.

Mark:

Yes, that's why I – I – I have all my clients journal, and ... I actually don't care if you just open the journal, write today's date and say, "Hello, journal," and close your journal.

Angela:

Mmm.

Mark:

So, ... because, inevitably, you're gonna write in your journal.

Angela:

Right. Yup, yup, it's like the old trick of, "You don't have to go to the gym, just drive to the gym."

Mark:

Mm.

Angela:

I think that's – that 's a good one. Okay, so, let's talk about what's happened since your book came out, it's been out for a few months now.

Mark:
Mm-hm.

Angela:
What – what is – so far, what’s the best thing to come out of having your own book?

Mark:
The best thing I’ve – I – I – it’s me getting a Ph.D in the subject matter is, I now trust myself to finish things. I trust myself to pick the projects and to actually get them to fruition and get them – ... to ship, where I could never trust myself before, I didn’t know what was gonna ship and what wasn’t. So, that was the biggest thing, the second biggest thing is, I get messages from every corner of Planet Earth that my book has helped transform somebody’s life. That is amazing to me, I was speaking – I was speaking in California when the book first came out, and the next morning, after I spoke onstage, ... I was getting my coffee and some guy comes running across the lobby, and he goes, “Mark! Mark! I read your book last night,” which I love – I wrote a short book so that people could read it and in an evening.

Angela:
Love that.

Mark:
“I read your book last night, I changed everything! I changed my reservations, I canceled these meetings, I changed – Ma – you – you wrote a book for messed-up people!” He used the f word, but he said, “You wrote a book for f’ed up people! Oh, my God! You wrote a book for me! This is great!” I’m ... “Can I use that as a tag line?”

Angela:
Yes!

Mark:
... I loved it, he was free. He was free, keep that, and that’s what happens, everybody – not everybody, but all these messages that come in from all over the place, ... say, “Mark, you’ve finally freed me up. You hear – you – you understand what it’s like, and I can stop fighting.” It’s so – a – and that’s so satisfying, that this book made a difference in one person’s life, now I think it’s thousands of peoples’ lives.

Angela:
That’s pretty amazing right? And what’s –

Mark:
It’s very cool. ... Walking – by the way, walking around, handing someone a book that you wrote, or signing a book, ... signing – signing your book, which, to me, seems like a little thing,

and handing it to someone and someone going, “(gasp) Thank you!” is so cool. I feel like Stephen King.

Angela:

Yeah, it – it’s really cool, but I also feel ... – and – and tell me if you’ve had this experience but I feel like, when you talk about how writing this book gave you a Ph.D in your own process, when you talk about that moment of signing your own book copy, I also think something changes in you, that you have more space for your clients, that you show up in a bigger way, that you embody ... the next version of yourself.

Mark:

That – I – I – I agree with that, because – it would – it – so – I – I don’t believe that people need to write a book to have credibility in their field.

Angela:

I agree.

Mark:

I don’t – I – I – I think a lot of people ... stuck in coaching, in whatever they do, think “I gotta write a book so people would take me seriously,” so I – I really caution people there. But now, having written a book, and having written a book that – that actually makes a difference to a – to a – to an audience, there is a – it’s not – the word “credibility,” but – but there’s an expa – I – I think the word “expansive” is what – what you just said.

Angela:

Mmm. Yes.

Mark:

There’s – there’s – there’s something there that just ... goes – I’ve – ... it opens a door. I actually believe I got two new clients just from the book, and I charge a lot of money, so the – the book has paid for itself.

Angela:

That’s awesome, I love to hear that. So – so, what – what has opened up for you? Is there something, now that the book is out, that is an obvious “What’s next” that’s shown up for you, a way you’re changing and growing, either personally or professionally?

Mark:

That’s a – that’s a – that’s an interesting one, ‘cause a lot of opportunities coming my way because of the book. There – there’s – there’s – I wrote the book, as you told me, for a specific person, I used to write the book for one person. Now, there’s a – there’s an addendum I’d like to write that – that uses it specifically for sales –

Angela:
Mmm.

Mark:

– only tens for sales ... but it's not a ten for me yet, ... so I'm – I'm – I'm curious, ten people I've gotten contacted with, "Why don't you do an Only 10s journal and notepad, and we could market this stuff and you could make a million bucks doing this?" Not ...

Angela:

I love it! So, how – I was gonna say, how will you know what to do next?

Mark:

So, no – none of that is – none of that is manifesting for myself as something I wanna do, but the interested – thing that has manifested is, in the past several weeks, I've been contacted by people all over the world to do podcasts like this, and – and to talk about this message, so I'm talking to more and more people. What I love in my business, I don't know that I wanna be the – the "getting things done," or the "getting the right things done" guy, like David Allen, and start my own movement in that. What I want – what I like to do is, I want – I like my coaching business, I like my one-on-one coaching, I like helping transform peoples' lives so they can go out and transform the world. That's my thing. This book has given me an opportunity to talk to so many more people and free them up, and – and – and – and grow my own ... – a lot of my colleagues are giving away this book, which is really fun. So, that's what I – i – it's expanding me that way, whether or not I – I do a program for this, or whether I really exploit it to the max, I don't know, and – but I have the opportunity. I have a tool, now, that I could go ... I wanna make money, I can do that.

Angela:

All right, if you want to get in on this, you wanna go to Amazon and buy the book *Only 10s*, and you can also head over to www.marksilverman.com, and "mark" is with a "k," m-a-r-k-j-silverman.com, Mark, thank you so much for being such an amazing guest.

Mark:

Thank you An – thank you for – thank you for having me write a book, Angela, it was just as great.

Angela:

Fantastic. Well, that's it for us for 2015, we look forward to being back with Book Journeys next year!