

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview - April 26, 2012

Dr. Angela Lauria with Tabitha Jayne, author of *Thriving Loss: Moving Beyond Grief to a Place of Peace, Passion and Purpose*

"We as authors write books because we want to help other people." ~Tabitha Jayne

Angela:

Well, hello everybody and welcome to another episode of Book Journeys Radio. This is Angela Lauria from Journey Grrrl Publishing and I am very excited to have with me today a grief coach from Scotland, Tabitha Jayne. Tabitha, say hi to everybody.

Tabitha:

Hellooo.

Angela:

So Tabitha's book, which she is going to talk about today is, *Thriving Loss: Moving Beyond Grief to a Place of Peace, Passion and Purpose*, and every week on Book Journeys, what we do is how authors wrote their first book, what obstacles came up for them, how they completed their book, what they've gotten out of it, what they might do differently, what advice they might give to a first-time author. But I always like to start by just hearing a little bit more about the book project itself, so Tabitha, why don't you tell us about *Thriving Loss* and why did you decide to write this book?

Tabitha:

Um, well let's start with the reason I decided to write this book. I'm very passionate... to an obviously... being a grief book... which comes from personal experience of my younger brother dying suddenly ten years ago... ten[th] year anniversary next week, and I wanted to write a book that was inspirational and it was powerful and that could help people move beyond grief, as the title says. So this book is the culmination of my work and it charts my process [which] I use when I work with clients... called The Tree of Transformation, which [has] the 7-step process using the tree as a metaphor that takes people through the five common things that every person needs in order to thrive after a loss, and the two additional aspects that you need - the prework and the postwork, to having these five aspects [stay] in place.

Angela:

So I'm just curious with the tree metaphor. Do you start with the roots and go up or the leaves and work down?

Tabitha:

No, we go start with the roots. Once you identify your tree, you go into the roots, and you start in the roots because all transformation begins in the roots.

Angela:

Fascinating. And so it sounds like this was a process that you had already been working with... uhm,, what you wrote... the topic of your book... there wasn't... Was there research that you had to do to write it or were you really kind of writing down something you had already been using?

Tabitha:

Uhm, I was... It was kind of like both, because I've been in the field of grief and loss for quite a few years so I'd already done the research, so it was kind of handy 'cause I knew where I had to go. I was like, "Oh, I need to put this person and that person, and that person [in]." I would just go back to what I've already read in building up my Tree of Transformation Process. Uhm, so it wasn't heavy on research, it was more, "Okay, this is my process and how I relate it to all the existing processes out there; how I get other people's stories [in] to illustrate what I'm talking about, which was a whole interesting aspect of writing a book that I've never ever thought about before.

Angela:

And you know another thing that comes up when I'm working as a book coach with my clients is the author wants to write a book that is a self-help or a how-to or a, you know, somewhat of an advice book like this one is, but they also want to tell their story in almost a memoir-style. Did you include aspects of your story in this book?

Tabitha:

Yes, I did. I mean... I think it's important for any self-help book that you... you start with your own personal experience, your own personal journey, so that you're building a connection and a rapport. I know many people have said to me, "Well, I want to hear some of these personal grief stories before you start telling me how to work with my own. So blended [in] my own personal stories throughout the book at the same time, so it wasn't quite a memoir, but it was self-help with aspects of my own experience coming through it.

Angela:

Was that one of the easier things for you or was that one of the harder things?

Tabitha:

Uhm. I think that was the hardest thing... or the easiest thing rather (than the hardest thing) because I talk, or I write as I talk, so sometimes it is easier to illustrate a point just by saying... this is going back to me, and this is what I did here and this allows me to springboard the point further on and develop it....

Angela:

Interesting. That's great. So, I know... 'cause we talked a little bit beforehand... I know that you actually wrote your book pretty quickly. You kinda did a... what... two months to write it when you sat down to write it?

Tabitha:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It took a long time to get to two months.

Angela:

Okay, but how long were you kind of working on it in your head before that? Before you actually sat down to write?

Tabitha:

Uhm, I... Yeah, I think the idea of the book probably took a year in my head before I actually put pen to paper. Uhm, 'cause I didn't... I knew what I wanted to write but I wasn't quite sure how I would structure it, what format to take, even what content I wanted to put in it, there were so... Yeah, it was really a year of thinking about it and then two months of writing it.

Angela:

And how did you get clear? What were some of the things that helped you get clarity?

Tabitha:

Uhm, I think, because I was working with clients, it was incredibly helpful to go, "Okay, well I'm working with my clients, what am I doing with them?" From developing the Tree of Transformation model and working with it, it was like, well, "I want to write a book on grief? Duh!" I'd choose a process, so it was paying more attention to what was going on in the sessions with my clients, 'cause that gave me a lot of clarity and inspiration around, "Okay, well these are things that I need to be talking about and mentioning in my book. Uhm, I also went and researched about what the other books have in them... what's good practice in books and what... the structure of books... what... how would that be for me? I mean I did some training; went to a few seminars to get that information to give me the clarity on how to structure it and how to put what was in my head into a way that people can relate to on paper.

Angela:

Interesting. And now that your book... And you released your book, what, about three months ago, right?

Tabitha:

Yes, it would be about three months ago.

Angela:

Are there things now that you had a chance to put it out there and get feedback that you would change about the structure if it's developed? What do you think about process? Was it one you you'd recommend?

Tabitha:

Uhm, no I'm happy with the structure and how I laid out the chapters, I'm really happy with that. I think it's more that if there's anything I would change... I think as authors, we are always very critical and there's chapters that I'm like, "Mmm, I could have developed that content and gone deeper here to get out of that aspect, I could have done that." Or, "I could've put an extra chapter in on this." So it's more about additional content I could have put in.

Angela:

That sounds like a second book. *(laughs)*

Tabitha:

Probably. *(laughs)*

Angela:

Even more about thriving from loss. So what else... You know, one of the big things... One of my big goals is to have authors help new authors so they don't make the same mistakes. So what are some things that you wish you knew; that you wish you listened to, before you wrote the book - or that you wish you heard before you wrote the book? What do you think would have help you that most?

Tabitha:

Uhm, I think it's important to learn more about your writing style to start off with, because I've spent a lot of time.. a lot of advice says, "[It] doesn't matter. Just fight! Just go and put pen-to-paper." And I was doing this and I was right... I'm following this... you know, I'm practicing this writing, and it was a... and I looked at it and none of it was useful. What I actually found was [that] I liked to write and edit at the same time which was not necessarily recommended, but I would write it and it would... and I would leave [or go] away and come back to it. As soon as I had time, I wrote my first draft and edited it (three times) so it was a complete manuscript. So by the time I got it to my publisher, she said, "Well this is actually like the equivalent of getting that, you know, a high-quality good second draft from somebody. So that was so helpful for me. But that was discovering my writing style and honoring the way that I worked, which was completely different from a lot of the advice that was going on there. So that is something that, if I'd known earlier, I think I would've had more confidence to go with that rather than trying different avenues.

Angela:

Yes, I do love that advice. You know, one of the ways that I work with people... uhm... particularly people who are blocked is, I interview them... take a transcript of that interview as a first draft (which is a very, very muddy first draft), but which requires a lot of editing, right?

But it gives them a... what I would say... It defeats the blank page. So give them words on [a] page that they're moving around. And, [it's one of] a lot of the things that I work [on] with clients, and that is like such a huge success. They get over their writer's block; they get a first draft, the second draft, a lot faster, but occasionally, I've had clients that I've worked with that that really didn't work for them, and as a coach... sometimes, I miss it... because it's worked with so many other people, that I like, you know, I keep going kinda full speed ahead, and, I think one of the things that I've learned as a coach more is to really help my authors kind of tune into their intuition about what's working for them. There could be a great idea; there could be, you know, 90% of writers find that you should never edit as you go along, but if it works for you, it's really saying, owning... One of the things that I have people do is start putting "author" on their business card or [under] their signature line on the email, because it's really owning that *I can really do it in my own way*. I mean, I can be my kind of author; my kind of writer [in] my own way. Uhm, how about in terms of... [It] sounds like you had a great coaching business when you had your own book. Were you thinking of your book as a way to get more clients, or clients that weren't local? What was the goal for you... for your book?

Tabitha:

Uhm, there were a few goals. I mean initially, uhm, there was a personal goal, which was clarifying what I was doing in the sessions with my clients with my process, so the whole process of writing allowed me to be clear about what I was doing when I was working with clients, so that I was able to own that better, uhm, but it also had a secondary reason of... I wanted to get my message out to more people; I wanted to get more clients, and I wanted to raise my profile, and also have the added credibility of being able to see why I'm also an author as well and, here's my book.

Angela:

And so what of that has come true? Did that work out?

Tabitha:

Yeah. I mean, it has all worked out. It's an interesting experience because I'm learning as I'm going through it, but writing the book is actually the easy part, uhm, which, if somebody had said that to me when I was starting out, I would've said, "Are you sure?" But that... You know, once you've got that out of the road, then it's the whole marketing and I hadn't prepared for...much effort and maintenance that goes into the whole continual marketing and the raising of awareness. But it has been very successful - I mean the feedback that I've gotten from people - I mean, I've had some of them email me and say, "I'm so grateful. This is the book that I've been waiting for to read," and when you get an email like that, you're like, wow.

Angela:

That is why we do this stuff.

Tabitha:

Exactly. That is why we do this stuff. Uhm, so it has gotten me more clients. It's raised my sensibility. It's given me the added credibility. So it has been successful in that retrospect and I'm excited about writing more books now because I've really enjoyed my writing experience.

Angela:

Yeah. Well, I always say it's a little bit of an addiction. Very few people write one book. Once you get through the first one, it just keeps going from there.

Tabitha:

Yeah. I can understand that.

Angela:

So, you mentioned marketing and uhm, and how...it sounded like, beforehand, you didn't... Did you think much about marketing before you wrote your book?

Tabitha:

Uhm. I did, uhm, think, about marketing. I've realize, not as in-depth as what I think I should have, because my head sort of expands on... I need [the] structure of the book... I need this, I need that, you know? I was building a platform at the same time. I had a limited budget, so, I did a lot of the stuff myself and there were only some stuff that I could outsource to other people and I was also the type of person... into something rather than the pre... the pre... parting of it. So, I was aware of it, but not as aware as I could have been. And if there's any advice to budding writers I would give, it's [to] take more time and... Okay, you've got a good structure for the book, before you even get the book and know what your marketing plan is even before you start writing the book, because that will then help you gain momentum, and gain clarity and gain greater results further down the line.

Angela:

So, when you were thinking about your book before, you know, before it was out, and you would think about who's going to read my book and how are they going to get your book in their hands, what do you think, if you go back to *you* before the book was done, how did you think people were going to end up with your book in their hand?

Tabitha:

Uhm...

Angela:

Like were you thinking about bookstores? Were you thinking about, you know, [how] people would find your website in the middle of the night?

Tabitha:

Yeah, I think it was a combination of how people would find my website and... I mean it was [is] on Amazon [and] I would be out there doing some online promotions. I'm also a great believer in word-of-mouth so it was a case of "who are the people that I can approach... to get word out on my book to credible people who would read my book and recommend it." Uhm, and, "where are the places..." I wasn't so fussed about bookstores... [but rather on] how to get it to hospices, for example. The book, having it as a resource in a hospice, uhm, it's going to be useful. For me, it's thinking about those places where people are going to be... who would want to read your book.

Angela:

So, basically, beforehand, you sort of had this general idea of, you know, somebody would be googling... [tell people] find me... or someone would tell a friend, "Oh, I know you're struggling with that and you should look up, you know, Thriving Loss Dot Com and go read about it. And now, when you're talking about having more of a marketing plan, it's been really like, "I need a to have a list of hospices that I'm calling to say, "How can I get a book into your hospice's gift shoppe," or something. So if we're coming from a more general... people will find me... word-of-mouth... to how exactly will they... What are the steps I need to make that happen?

Tabitha:

Yeah. Definitely. Definitely.

Angela:

Yeah, and I think... the more, you know, the more... The further along you get, the more specific you can be. And you can't be specific at the end of the process because you're not necessarily thinking about hospices, but once you, you know, for a lot of people, once they get their book in their hand, they're like, "Oh, this wasn't exactly... this is a little different than I thought it would be," so I do think, it's great advice to say, "Think about it beforehand." Imagine if you had your book done, now how are people going to find out about it?

Tabitha:

Hmm. Yeah.

Angela:

So, let's talk a little bit more about... about your process for writing a book. So, a lot of people, even with people with a specific niche and a specific business like you have, say, "I wanna write my book," but they start it and they don't finish it. But they start it and they don't... they don't finish it. They have it... You know, you kinda talked about it, [that] a year or so you were noodling about it, and a lot of my clients have been noodling for a lot longer than a year. So, what do you think? What do you think works for you in terms of actually sitting down and writing it? What was your process and why do you think you have reached that goal?

Tabitha:

Uhm, first of all, I was getting very clear on the structure of how many chapters I was going to do for the book, what the titles of the chapters were going to be (what they were going to deal with), how to [do] a good flow, and then I gave myself a month. I was actually abroad. I was living in Spain from time to time... So I spent three weeks, pooling people, getting interviews for the stories, and then for a week... in Spain, I took myself off to the country[side] and I had to Internet, I had no phone. It was just me and the computer, and that was it. I spent a whole week just writing on it. That locked time was incredibly powerful for me, because I literally had nothing to do. I couldn't distract myself by going and checking my emails. I couldn't phone anybody. It was just me and the computer and this awareness that *I have to write this book*. So, having that space of "this week" where i would be writing, and if I get stuck, I would go for a walk; I would take a nap, or, you know, make myself a cup of tea - really relaxed and really taking care of myself and giving myself that space to write, and I wrote six chapters of the book in that week.

Angela:

Wow, awesome.

Tabitha:

Yeah.

Angela:

Do you... So a lot of people talk about writing, and you know, a thousand words a day, or writing every morning for an hour before they check their email or things like that, but it sounds like you had more of a fringe approach? Well, you wrote it in larger chunks of time, right?

Tabitha:

Yeah, I did that block and clock. It was really interesting for me, as the next five chapters took me a month to write because I had the email and the Internet and I was back home and I was working with clients and I was doing other things, so for me to actually see... this. You know, when I write another book, I will take myself away for a month, block the time out, and say, "This is the month you're going to create a book." Think of it as an extended holiday, but you're writing a book, and I won't just take a month, and create that schedule.

Angela:

I absolutely love that suggestion and I was going to ask you, for your second book, do you think you would actually, you know, go away from the Internet and sit down and write? And it sounds like you would. I think that's a great suggestion for people who may be feeling a little blocked or they don't have enough momentum, even if you can't do a month (which obviously would be nice), but even if you block out a weekend, to get kind of a, you know, like a jumpstart on things, or maybe you could write a chapter or two chapters in a weekend and feel like you're moving faster through it, uhm... Sometimes writing in a long chunk like that also gives you more of a flow and you don't have any interruptions to try and pick up and say,

“Where was I? What point was I making? What verb... tenses was I using? What was my voice... sounded like? And... books are written like that. Kinda have a nice flow to them ‘cause you’re in the thing conversation.

Tabitha:

Yeah.

Angela:

And then for... Did you make your decision for how you were going to publish your book before you started writing?

Tabitha:

I did. I’d looked into the pros and cons of getting a publisher and I was, quite frankly, too impatient. When I found out, you know, that I had to submit it and it could take up to a year and a half before I could find it in a book shelf, I thought, I don’t have a few months to wait, I want my book out now, [out] in the world, making a difference on other people, so I decided to self-publish.

Angela:

And did you do that yourself or did you work with a third party? How did you do that?

Tabitha:

I worked with a third party. I went through, I think it’s technically called assisted self-publishing. So I went to Balboa Press and they handled all the aspects of, you know, getting the ISBN numbers and doing the layout, and this and that and designing the cover, so they did all that. I just had to give them the completed manuscript and was in, I think it was two and a half months they got through it all and it was ready to actually get out on the shelf.

Angela:

That’s fantastic. So, I recommend Balboa Press to a lot of people, partly because of their relationship with Hay House. Was that something that was interesting to you?

Tabitha:

Oh, definitely. I looked to other publishing companies and I thought, well, I’m gonna self-publish. That was a huge reason, the potential that it could get picked up by Hay House if I sold enough copies of it. So that, that was what made me go for Balboa above anything else.

Angela:

Yeah. I think that’s a big plus for them, but they’re also definitely not one of the cheaper author-funded options. It’s probably, you know, a couple thousand dollar investment, at least.

Uhm. So how did you weigh that - the time versus money equation? How did you make that decision?

Tabitha:

Uhm. That's a very good question. How did I make that decision? It was just me. I went with my gut instinct and I was just like, okay. Balboa, I like this connection... The hay House link gives me this opportunity. I had the resources there, available to invest in this...

Angela:

Did you think about doing this yourself? Did you think that you needed the technical... like you didn't wanna learn to do kinda all the technical aspects?

Tabitha:

Uhm. It's interesting. I think in hindsight, [I] just know, having seen and having benefited from more research, I think I probably could have it all myself. But it was nice not to have the stress and... and to look at it and say, "Okay, I could edit this; I could check the... I could send off... and they were doing all the little bits so I could just get on with other aspects of my business. I mean that was very freeing at that moment in time. Would I do it all [by] myself the next time? I don't know. I'd have to see... if I have the time. In the greater understanding, I don't think it would be that hard to do it myself. Uhm...

Angela:

Right, I guess it's weighing, kind of, convenience and cost. Like, you can do it yourself, but are you gonna do it as well and how much of your time do you want to spend on it, and I think that's a decision that people who are self-publishing should really ask themselves, because it's definitely, you know, it's definitely easier to outsource it, for sure.

Tabitha:

Yeah, yeah, and I'm... as my business gets busier and busier, I appreciate the outsourcing aspects a lot... to speed everything up. So it's, you know, if the speed is out... outsourcing is definitely far more effective than teaching yourself.

Angela:

Uh huh. For sure. So you didn't work with an agent. You just worked directly with the publisher.

Tabitha:

Yup.

Angela:

And you had... Did you have a single point of contact at Balboa that took care of kinda all the various aspects of publishing and distribution and all that?

Tabitha:

Uhm, I think I had about two contacts, because there was one contact when it was going through the editing process and I had another contact for the book cover design, so I had two contacts, but they were both very, very efficient; very friendly and kept me up-to-date and posted with what was going on.

Angela:

And then how about now? How often will you get like, royalty reports, or do you have a dashboard you can log into to see how sales are going? How do you get visibility into that?

Tabitha:

Uhm, they do actually have a dashboard. It wasn't working the last time I went on which was a couple of months ago, and I made the decision to say that I will wait, uhm, until the royalties come in which I think, if I remember correctly, the royalties are due in next month. Uhm, partly because I thought my most important mission and goal with this book is getting my message out there. It's not my making money and selling copies. So, I didn't want, initially to get caught up in only sales results (sorry that's bad English), and so many copies or I sold great... I can get too excited or too complacent, or I can get... because I had not sold enough, so let's just go and do what you said we were going to do; know that's it getting out there making a difference and then a few months down the line, reevaluate and move on to the next part of the process... how you are going to continue selling copies of the book.

Angela:

Very nice. I love that philosophy. And obviously, you told that great story about getting an email: This is the book I've been waiting for. I think it's you know, a few of those emails is worth one sales report, you know, easily, multiple times over.

Tabitha:

Exactly. I mean, we as authors write books because we want to help other people. So when somebody takes the time to write and email and tell you how it's helped them or tell you about something such as the interactions that they've done because they've read your book, how it's inspired them. Those are the things that would make you want to keep going - not sales reports.

Angela:

Mmm. Beautiful. Okay, so in our last few minutes, I always ask people this question. It's the last question, and basically that is... about the... as you're thinking back on this process, what has surprised you the most? What was different than you expected? It could be good or bad, but what... how was it different than you thought it would be?

Tabitha:

Uhm. How was it different? I would actually say it's a lot easier than I actually thought it would be. Uhm. I think we have an idea in our head that writing a book, it can be so difficult and so challenging, but once I got past all the, the... wondering how I was going to do it and actually got into the flow of writing, it came really easily, naturally, and sometimes I took all that I've got written and... oh, my God... that's just come out for me... that's too good, but, you know, having to finally written something, I would just go, "Wow! Just can't believe that I've written that... book." So that's what surprises me the most.

Angela:

I think that's absolutely beautiful, and, uhm, I also think that you've done a great job of talking about how the book is a great part of your business and that it's helped you in terms of clients and credibility, but as a book... you know, a lot of people think that the book is going to become their business; they're gonna suddenly become, you know, the author or the best-selling author, then that becomes the heart of your business. But really, it's a... you know, a way of supporting your business, but it doesn't become the main business.

Tabitha:

Yeah. Most definitely.

Angela:

Yeah. So, I think that's great. So, I've loved talking to you, and know there are people on the call who have been listening to this (recording) and the show and they have been motivated by what you said about writing your book, but there may also be people who are interested in getting your book and they can do that at Thriving Loss dotcom (<http://thrivingloss.com/book/>). It's also on Amazon. Tabitha Jayne - *Thriving Loss: Moving Beyond Grief to a Place of Peace, Passion and Purpose*. So thank you very much Tabitha and I'll be following you online.

Tabitha:

Thank you very much Angela. It's been such a pleasure speaking with you and hopefully inspiring a lot of people to get pen to paper to get their books out there too.

Angela:

Yay! Ok great. Thank you.

Tabitha:

Okay. Bye bye.