

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 119:

### “Finishing Your Book when Life Gets in the Way”

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

Welcome back to the Don't Write That Book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper. Today we're gonna talk about when life gets in the way. And interestingly, life is happening, nothing major, but, uh, we have that podcast room that we're working on here, and there is special ceiling tile that's arriving today. So I'm running around the, the delivery guy, uh, is coming shortly, but the installer is here, and, uh, he's needed some direction <laugh>. So it just feels like the normal hassles of life, um, that can interfere with even a podcast. But on the bigger scheme, uh, life happens, big moments in life unexpectedly happen and can totally throw you off track. So I'm, I'm pumped about this episode. We're gonna talk about finishing your book even when life gets in your way. I'm joined in studio with AJ Harper, my friend, my colleague, my co-writer, AJ, I'm wickedly impressed that you've got two new books you're working on simultaneously. One blows my mind. How do you do two at once?

#### **AJ Harper:**

I did it for a long time when I was a goat, you know, I wrote That's true. Yeah. I wrote for other people. Two would've been a cake year for me.

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

What, what's the most books you ever worked on simultaneously, or at least in a year's time span

#### **AJ Harper:**

11.

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

You, how does your mind switch between one project to the other?

#### **AJ Harper:**

Honestly, I don't. I wasn't being good at life then, you know? So I did it. It, uh, I was, first of all, I was younger. I do think this is a factor because I was much, I just had a lot more mental and physical stamina. Um, also I had to, so that'll make you do it, you know, like I was supporting my family and I, I guess I didn't have to, but I, I, my biggest flaw as a ghost was saying yes, and then not setting boundaries, so that I ended up writing too many things and having, being behind on too many projects simultaneously. That was my biggest flaw. Um, I'm, I'm way better now. I don't think I'm a hundred percent cured, but I'm, I'm, I'm way, way better. I was, I had zero

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ability then, but I, I would end up in hot water. But, um, I wasn't doing a good job of being a human. Yeah. I was just, you know, I was good. I will say I was a good mom. So I, I also only wrote when my son, you know, like when he was in school or asleep.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Hmm.

**AJ Harper:**

So I was the, you know, my, my wife worked a regular job. His dad worked a regular job. We co-parent. There's no divorce. Um, most people don't know that part of my story that we decided when we decided to have a child, my wife and I, we wanted him to know his biological father. So we decided to do it together. Um, and so you would think that I would have all this time, but in fact, his dad ran a very successful business in Manhattan, and my wife had a regular job and sometimes 12 hour shifts. So, what happened, I was the, a lot of times holding it down, I also didn't wanna miss a single game, a single performance, a single parent teacher conference. And I didn't. So as a result, I think I just burn, burned myself out. So, yes, I did it, but at what cost? You know, not, and

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I think you're the, you're not part of your story, but your whole life journey is writing books and you've had life experiences. You've lost, uh, things in your life. You've, you've had illnesses. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, you've moved, you've got a new home. I remember when you were in the house, Nyack prior to the current one. Um, you have a child who moves out. Like these are just so many elements that are going on.

**AJ Harper:**

Well, and, and that everyone deals with that. But then, so there's life happening that just still happens. You know, delays, deadlines. Yeah. Little, little earthquakes. Um, but then there's big earthquakes. And I think, you know, people that happens all the time happens to my students. It happened to me where, you know, I won't get into too many details, but, you know, from 2020 on with the pan, the pandemic unleashed a hell fire situation in my personal life with just illness and mental health issues and all this stuff happening to people around me. And, um, and it just was a very long road. It was a five years of thankfully, um, better days ahead. But it's really hard when it's something big. You know, like my mom, my mom has cancer and dementia, and my mom, I had to put my mom, I was, became a caregiver during those five years. And, uh, there's all sorts of big, those are bigger earthquakes. So little earthquakes are hard enough. Um, bigger earthquakes can derail your book, and it's sometimes hard to stay the course. And then if you have to take a break, it's sometimes hard to come back. So we wanted to talk about it and honor that experience people are having.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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Yeah. So, I mean, this is the big question. Uh, there's gonna be so many elements to it, but is it really possible to stay in book writing mode all in on the book while your emotional bandwidth is just being torn out in other aspects of your life?

## **AJ Harper:**

Not all in, in the way, not I know Mike Michalowicz's all in way. No. Yeah. But I think, you know, you have to let that go. And you have to think about, well, what can I do? I'm not going to get keep, you know, give it up entirely. My book, write a must read, a good chunk of it I wrote on my phone or my laptop in hospitals.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Hmm.

## **AJ Harper:**

And I, uh, you know, to, all right, well, can I knock out a hundred words? Can I try and think about this framework? Can I think about this messaging? Can I just try and get a little bit written? Um, just so, 'cause I knew I just didn't want to die.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

You, I mean, this is shocking me. You, you worked on your book. You wrote your book or a book. On your phone?

## **AJ Harper:**

Parts of it. I mean, yeah, I tr uh, you can use the notes app, and I just use, I, and I also have really bad fingers. I'm always making texting mistakes. Um, but, you know, I mean, it, autocorrect is your friend in most cases there because it can do some things. But yeah, I mean, it was just to get something down. Obviously I'm editing it later, but I was getting something down. And it, it's less about hating a deadline and more about not letting the book die.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, it's so, so funny. Like, just talking about autocorrect, for me, it's my arch enemy. Um, you know, my addiction to Virginia Tech football and I, whenever I type in Virginia Tech football, I would say 20 to 30% of time at auto cracks. Two, not Virginia, but virgins and not tech teach football. I've searched for Vir Virgin's teacher football, dozens of times. Mad. Oh my God, my, I, I show my wife. I'm like, listen, I'm not perverted. I mean, not that much.

## **AJ Harper:**

She emails was exactly who you are. So,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

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So, okay, so life, life events happen. Illness loss, something happens. Um, what do you do? What, how, what's the way you respond when that moment goes down?

## **AJ Harper:**

So, first of all, I think you need to recognize that, um, outside of publishing, most people don't understand that publishing is used to this. So I think people try really hard to make these deadlines when, what they need to do. If it's a big earthquake, because I'm not talking little, I'm talking big. Um, like what happened in my, you know, I got a call in the middle of the night that my mom fell, and that's set forth. And I'm on the next day in mom playing to Minneapolis. And it wasn't just the fact that I was there for two weeks. It was that then I had to set her up in a whole new care. I became the caregiver and I became trying to, you know, get her situated. And I became the person in charge of her affairs. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Which is not a small thing, and I'm still not doing a good job of it.

## **AJ Harper:**

Um, then it also became that I needed to be visiting her, you know, more. Um, especially my stepfather passed away the year after, so now she has no visitors. So all that just ch that, that's a big earthquake. You know, you need to realize when those things happen, publishing is going to talk to you about it and it's gonna be okay. I've seen too many authors try and shoulder it, weather it, white knuckle it when the first call needs to be, hi, I've just had this major life event and I need to talk to you about my options and get them on board so they at least know what's happening with you. Because when you miss deadlines in publishing, it sets a domino effect for all their steps. But they're actually, first of all, publishing is used to authors being late. It's just what happens. It's a creative endeavor. They pad all the schedules, but they can also accommodate you if they know, you know, so you have to say, you know, uh, this happened. I don't know how it's gonna impact me yet, but I wanted to let you know. And I think a lot of offers are nervous about making that call. 'cause they think they'll lose the deal. You're not gonna lose the deal over it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

No. Conversely, you could lose a deal by not communicating it. I mean, you, it's unlikely that happened, but it could that you, you, you have a promise and you just ghost them. So publishers, it's interesting, you know, uh, when I was talking with uh, um, Noah back at Penguin, I think Portfolio was averaging 50 to 80 books a year. That's one book a week. And they're, they're banking on your book coming out on a certain point. And the second, you know, the sooner you give them advanced notice, the better.

## **AJ Harper:**

Yeah. And they can accommodate. It's not bad. It's better to just have the conversation. And then I would say the second conversation is with your team and your family, whomever is on that team, and just say, I still wanna write my book. What are some things that you can help me with

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just for this period of time? Yeah. Like, I still need a couple months. Can you handle this part, this part, this part? Can I get, can I get a break from this charity responsibility? Can I get a break from school pickup? Can I get a, can I get, what can you all have? It's temporary. It's not forever. I just, is there anything y'all can help me rally And don't we white knuckle it and we, we should be asking for help. So, and remember, it's just a short time to at least get you over the hump of completing the first draft, because after that, the other stages you can manage better.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Have you ever noticed when you white knuckled it with a book, and I assume you have, I I have, uh, you have do, does the writing degradate, degrade and have you noticed, like if you let it stand, like you have a certain quality book and there's a part of it, or parts of it that dropped because you allowed yourself to white knuckle it as opposed to realigning goals?

## **AJ Harper:**

I don't know that I'm the best person to base that on because I will always make it work. So I don't think so. But Mike, I white knuckled it on the money habit.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I know. And, and I think that's an interesting story.

## **AJ Harper:**

I literally, Mike, my wife was in the hospital very, very, very ill. We, and I got Norovirus while I was in the hos from the hospital by visiting her. Yeah. I'm, I can see myself in bed texting you, trying like, I, I'm serious. Like it that w but that's Mike. That's how I always used to be.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I, um, I'll, I'll hold it in front of the camera here. Here's the publishing deadline. So I keep these things, all scripts in front of me. This is for the money habit, and this is this little adjunct is the little tweaks and adjustments that have happened. Um, and one key thing that happened, I think what I know was our communication, but it didn't happen in the beginning. I think you were trying to white knuckle through it, but in the beginning didn't tell me where it was. And so then No,

## **AJ Harper:**

No. I did tell you where it was. In fact, we had a whole part of the problem was leading up to that event is you (Yeah.) We barely had any time together. And I.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

That's right.

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**AJ Harper:**

So we were, we were, it was just a problem because remember I kept saying, I'm not feeling this. I need help with this.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

**AJ Harper:**

Weren one of the busiest times you'd been in Yes. And you had to take all these, um, speaking gigs and you were just gone. So we ended up in a sit. So I did tell you, it's just, I don't, we were not symbiotic. Yeah. We did not have our usual check-ins. Our usual mean, we're like mind twins usually when we're writing. It just didn't happen. And we got there though. We definitely got there. But, um, and I'm proud to say that we did not meet our published, did not have to push anything back. Nothing. Um, I busted my at on making sure that that would happen. But, um, I should, I tried so hard. The thing is, you think if your person's in the hospital, you think, oh, it's only gonna be a day or two. It's cool. Right? And then it's like weeks. Um, so you kind of, you know, that's my lesson that I learned was you need to be like white flag raising, raising. Like, I don't know what's gonna happen. And I, so we did, I did tell you I wasn't keeping anything from you. It's just, we were kind of, it was kind of like a perfect storm of events.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

It was a perfect storm of events. Yeah. But I'll tell you, in communication with my wife, then I sat down and said, um, once we, I had clarity and we had clarity on what needs to be done. Like I gotta write, um, like I've never written before for these long periods. And it was funny. So I, in this office, I am right now, this is where I was doing my writing. And I said, I also have to interview you. And right outside this, there's a ch outside my home office, there's a, a chair out there. And Krista was just reading a book and I'm like, I'm gonna come out every so often and have I have clarifying questions for you. Um, and it triggered some of our best conversations. 'cause they were money questions that I, I need to get some more detail on. But she made herself highly available because I'm like, I'm not have impromptu questions to, to build out some of these stories.

**AJ Harper:**

But at the distinc--, she was supportive. And it's also like you were saying, this is this finite, this is just one period. We're just gonna bang it out. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. And she was, she was coming down with food. So I, I was writing 12 hours a days, a minimum 12 hours, like eight. I was getting up at five or six in the morning and I was going probably eight o'clock at night, day after day after day. And, uh, she's bringing down food, breakfast and she's just letting me go. Yeah. Um,

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**AJ Harper:**

So that's how I used to be all the time.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Uh, yeah. I couldn't imagine doing that day in, day out for a year.

**AJ Harper:**

I wanna be honest, like if you're the primary caregiver, um, you're really screwed. Like you can't do 12 hours. Yeah. You know, so my, my point is, I think you need to ask for help earlier. I think you also need to tell your publisher and your team as early as you can and don't, don't think that this is a failure. 'cause life is supposed to, like, we're supposed to stop for our families. We're supposed to deal with these earthquake. Like that's, you know, I, I don't know where we got off track thinking we were supposed to white knuckle through all these things. We're just human beings.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Do you, so when a life event happens of, of great significance, do you have any kind of unspoken rules? Like just still write 50 words a day to stay in contact with material? Or, or do you say, you know what, when it's time to stop, just stop for two, three months? Do you have any kind of unspoken rules?

**AJ Harper:**

It's, it's rough because if it's you, you know, like I can remember I had, um, they, they thought I had a TIA while I was, which is a trans ischemic attack. And I probably mispronounce that, but it's like, um,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Is that the mini stroke?

**AJ Harper:**

Yes. They thought had that, and I was in the hospital overnight and I was, I was felt fine. Once they had me up in a room on my laptop out I was working on Write A Must Read. And I probably was working on one of yearbooks too, probably at the same time at my laptop in the hospital bed. I felt fine. I wasn't white knuckling. I, it turns out, um, by the way, I, last year, after years of tests, they finally said, yeah, that was a complicated migraine. It wasn't a TIA 'cause they couldn't find anything reason they couldn't find nothing. So I, I'm grateful for that. But at the time, I think the reason it happened is just there was so much light, so many, I had too many big earthquakes happening simultaneously, as you know. And so that just took a toll on me.

**AJ Harper:**

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But I was writing probably your book, I'm guessing, I'm guessing it was probably either Get Different or Revised Clockwork in, um, in the hospital with my laptop. Happily just like <inaudible>, you know, because, 'cause I grabbed my laptop baby, like, oh, we're going to the hospital. Okay. Laptop. Like, you know, because I know how I, at that point, I didn't know how long it was gonna be there with my wife or my son. And this time it was me. So, so it's like, or actually it was kind of like, this is great. Nobody's gonna bother me <laugh>,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I should do more of these

## **AJ Harper:**

TIAs. No. But anyway, the point being, you know, I wrote during that all those little, all those little and big earthquakes, five years, I did write five books. Four of them were yours and one of them was mine. And, um, so you can do it and you do it by, to answer your question, circling back, just what are some little things you can do. So give up, give up the feeling that it's, you're gonna feel dialed in. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Give up the feeling that it's gonna feel like a strong through line and, and, and that it's all gonna make sense and just try and get a little bit of words done. I call it a teeny tiny prescription.

## **AJ Harper:**

So I'll make myself do at least 50 or a hundred words a day no matter what, and it can be on my phone. Hmm. And then I also don't care if I'm writing an order. I don't care if it's any good. Uh, I think you have to give up the feeling of being in the zone. That's probably not gonna happen when you have these, these earthquake times and you just have to let it go and say, I'm not gonna be in the zone, but I could write about that research study. I'm not gonna be in the zone, but I could finish that story. I'm not gonna be in the zone, but I can do these action steps. I can knock that out. And you just start looking at what's easy for me to knock out that doesn't require a lot of creative bandwidth and see what you can get done anyway, is what you need to do.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

It's very similar to exercise. And the rule is just do the bare minimum as opposed to allowing a skip day. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And that keeps you going. Um, it's funny, I, I was talking with someone who's like, I'm really trying to exercise. I'm struggling with it. And I said, if you do just one pushup, and that's all you do in the entire day, is, is a pushup a form of exercise? And she said, yeah. I said, then allow yourself to acknowledge small movement as exercise. And I'm hearing the same thing with books is if you just write 50 words, you are writing, you're still creating for the book. Yeah. An analogy you've used, and I want to explore this is you, you call this a giant puzzle. What, what do you mean by that?

## **AJ Harper:**

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So if you think of a book as a puzzle, until you have an outline, it's a puzzle with no picture. And then once you have the picture, now you're just filling in all the pieces. And I don't know about you. I, first of all, I love doing puzzles. I'm talking jigsaw here. By the way, just so we're clear, my mother's always correcting me on this. She always saying, you don't do, you do jigsaw puzzles? <laugh> don't do the puzzles. I do. Where hers are all like cryptogram crossword puzzles. No, they're like insane. Oh yes. Puzzles. I don't do that stuff. So I, when I make, uh, do a jigsaw puzzle, I do the edges first. I have my picture, but then I'll do the easiest thing. Oh, here all the, there's just this purple lamppost. Let me find all the pieces that are purple. That could be the lamppost.

## **AJ Harper:**

Lemme just put that part together. Yeah. I don't know how it's gonna connect to the whole rest of anything, but I can make the purple lamppost. And this summer I did, this past summer, I did one, it took me almost all summer on women who make history and all these rebel rosing women. And I just went through and just did one. Oh, I can do her hair. I can do all the hair that's this color. You know? And just, it took me forever, but eventually got the whole thing done. And that's kind of how it is, is instead of trying to make, I'm writing my big book now, change your mindset too. I'm just gonna do purple lamppost and that. I'm just doing that. I'll sort it out later because then you'll be so glad when you do finally be able to, you can dial in again. You can have longer stretches. Your mi your nervous system calms down. You're not, everything's sort of settling a little. You'll be so glad. 'cause all those little 50 words here, a hundred words there, lamppost, wig, whatever there. Now you've got, oh, I got all my sections. I can pull that together. And it's much easier to get back on the horse.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

There's a Chevy Chase movie, is it Funny Farm where he's an author.

## **AJ Harper:**

Oh God, I love that movie. It's so under, it's so underappreciated.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I agree. I agree. And I, I think he has his writing.

## **AJ Harper:**

They wanna sell their house. Yes. And the whole town conspires with them to be a cute town, even though they're technically not. And it's so funny.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. 'cause they wanted them out.

## **AJ Harper:**

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Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And I think, I think Chevy Chevy has a, um, writing nook.

**AJ Harper:**

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

So my question is, I think I have an anchored spot. I write here in the office. I have a second spot, which is airplanes. And the way it's set up, do you have tech tools or tips of offering flexibility so you don't have to be anchored to a spot? 'cause life events can pull you out of your spot.

**AJ Harper:**

Oh, that's a real, yes. That's so good. Because, um, you have, you have to get all, uh, be flexible. You don't have to say, okay, I don't have to be at my desk. So I make sure that I have, um, both Google Docs and um, um, Microsoft Doc and Dropbox. I have all those apps on my phone, so I can, I've actually edited stuff. I've edited your stuff on my phone. <laugh>, I've first That's amazing. I've looked at your comments. I, yeah, yeah. I mean, I wouldn't do a copy edit on the phone. Don't do that. But, you know, while we're, um, so I open my phone and I can use those apps. So make sure you have, um, the Google Docs app, the, there's a Dropbox app. I have word docs and, and spreadsheet in separate apps. And so, um, it goes to my cloud, um, et cetera. And then I can edit accordingly if I need you on my phone. You could do an iPad too, that's gonna give you, um, I mean you travel with an iPad and a keyboard, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you could invest in that. But if you don't wanna do that, you can, uh, your phone can work in the pinch just to keep, just to keep things alive. And you know what else I'm gonna say? If you can't write at all, you can read. So,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, that's a great one.

**AJ Harper:**

You know, you read what you already wrote, read a research study, read someone else's book on the topic. Just keep it alive. Even if you don't have the creative bandwidth to write something yourself. Keep your interest in the topic alive.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. You could do interviews, you could interview people. Totally. Um, you, you could listen to this podcast. I, I just to stay in the, to some way keep a toe in the water. Um, and you also

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about you, you mentioned building your platform during this time. You could be building it anyway. I wonder if, I mean, this is too personal. Um, recording our own journey through that life event and telling us how it's impacting us. I, I, I know from my perspective, from my experience as some of my readers appreciate hearing the journey behind the scenes as a book is being produced as my life is happening. I think it makes me as an author more accessible, more real. When I share my father was passing and I was working on my book. Um,

**AJ Harper:**

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

So, okay, we're both Gen X. I think we handle this stuff the same way. You are not likely to hear either of us talk about it in the moment it's happening.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Generally not. No. Oh. But, but, but capturing it in the moment and then reflecting on it as, you know,

**AJ Harper:**

I think that's fine too. Um, I do, I do hesitate in sharing it live, you know, kind of thing in the moment. I think we need some distance to be able to process it. But, um, there's so many ways to keep it alive. I think, you know, I have a writing sprint community and we meet at nine and 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM Eastern Monday through Friday. I don't know of any other writing sprint community that has so many sprint during the week. <laugh>.

**AJ Harper:**

And some people who have sprint communities have looked at me like, I'm bonkers. Like, what are you doing with 10 hours? Well, for this reason, Mike, because people sometimes just come 'cause life is lifing and they just need to be in the, in the room. And they might not, they might not even be writing. I've got people who come into sprints and they're driving. You're not writing while you're driving. They just wanna be in the room and with people. So, you know, the main message is it's not a bad thing if it takes longer and you need to ask for help and give yourself grace and then do the very tiniest thing you think you can do. If not every day, then maybe even just a couple times a week to just check in and keep it alive. Because getting back on the horse after a long hiatus is actually very difficult.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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Agreed. Do you have ways to protect your limited bandwidth during these life events?

**AJ Harper:**

Um, well again, asking, you know, asking for help. Um, I cut things. There's a lot of stuff that in a crisis, you think about it. If you had, if you had to go, like I mentioned, my mom fell and I had to go to Minneapolis, pretty amazing how quickly I was able to clear my schedule. Yeah. Right. So you can actually do it. You can actually do it. You just don't always, we think it has to be an absolute emergency for us to do it. So go through and just be ruthless and say, I I absolutely, I can come back to this. I don't, I can come back to this responsibility. Let me cut everything. See who can help me. You need as much more time than you think. You have to get a lot of open space. The other thing is, what are some things that can calm your nervous system down? There's a lot about that right now. Um, for example, it's not a bad thing if during this time you find yourself watching reruns of your favorite show. They've shown that if you watch something, you already know what happens. That it actually calms your nervous system. 'cause you can predict what's happening next. That's actually a tool X movement. Um,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

Um, meditation if you can, or just quiet nature. Anything you can get little pockets. So you can reset that a little bit because that is deeply connected to your creative bandwidth.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Krista, when it came to, uh, show re runs Murder, She Wrote, she watched every single one.

**AJ Harper:**

Of course she does. She loves the, um, she loves the true crime, you know, did she know, by the way, that reminds me, this is off topic, but I have to tell you.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

Did she, did you know that Laura Stone was on one of your wife's favorite podcast, which is, um, what's the big murder one?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, The Murderinos. Um, My Favorite Murder.

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**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. Laura was on,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

She was on it as a guest.

**AJ Harper:**

Uh, she did, they have this thing. Now I, I'm not a listener. So they have this thing called my Hometown in every episode where a person that's local gets up and tells a,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

oh, that's great.

**AJ Harper:**

And they, and Laura made it on to the show about the time she helped the feds take down this polygamous cult.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh my God. She, if if find out the episode from Laura, if you would, we gotta share on this. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

I've shared it with people before on my mailing list. 'cause I was so excited for Laura's, our

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Krista will lose her mind over that.

**AJ Harper:**

Send it to you so Krista can listen

**Mike Michalowicz:**

In some ways. I, I protect my own bandwidth is I I've gotten dry on news. This goes back now five or six years, perhaps more. Uh, I noticed that it would trigger so much worry and concern that it was consuming this recurring story in my head. On the flip side, we were talking about today, I have this ignorance about world events and that's a challenge. Um, but the mental health for me has been an exponential benefit. Um, so how to navigate that is a, is a challenge I'm facing now. But I also dropped off social media about a year ago. Um, I don't go on Facebook, Instagram, I don't consume any of that stuff anymore. I do post on it through my team. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I don't consume it. I had this awareness. I was on TikTok about a year, year and a half ago looking at, um, how to just guitar techniques and tricks.

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## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I scrolled for three hours and I just remember looking at the clock. I'm like, three hours disappeared. And I didn't pick up the guitar <laugh> once. And I'm like, okay, this, this is not for me. Um, so I decided to, to go cold on it. I also have, um, an awareness of myself that I struggle with moderation. So once I consume anything, a cup of coffee, it can be a bigger cup of coffee, chocolate chip cookies. It could be more of them news or doom scrolling. It can, the more i'll, I don't get satiated, so I'm like, for me, it's better just to cut it out fully.

## **AJ Harper:**

Yeah. I, and I gave you a good source so you could track, track your news and not feel insane. So I gave Oh, exactly.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, exactly.

## **AJ Harper:**

So you can ask somebody, Hey, is it, can you connect me to a place where I can learn about the news without losing my, you know what? Also I wanna add, I think getting out of gossip and squabbles and family stuff. That's a big one. Yeah. Just, just tell people I'm off grid. Like, consider me even though I'm not in the woods. Consider me in the woods. Yeah. And you can't reach me to tell me about this family, whether Aunt Joan should bring the casserole this year or not. Like, I don't all listen. I, I know it sounds small, but it, when you're in a bigger earthquake, it all adds up and you don't want your attention pulled from calming yourself down enough to get to work and handling the crisis that you're in, which is actually more important than the book.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, one, one of the greatest little hacks ever for me, for kind of breaking a pattern when a life event happened, uh, and getting stuck in a doom spiral. Krista has said, just go for a walk. Because I get so intense trying to push my way through. She's like, just go for a walk and five minutes is okay. And, uh, we lived in a home where it had a block where I could walk around. It was literally a five minute loop. It was so therapeutic. Um, a five minute break is significant and is, I think the worst thing to do, which I had the propensity to do, was try to power through mm-hmm <affirmative>. And that's not necessarily a good thing.

## **AJ Harper:**

The last thing for me is music works great for me. Music that, yeah. Music that I know, like right now, I'm, I'm listening to, um, old Stevie Wonder. I'm listening to Delight Superstitious. I'm listening to, um, just some stuff that always made me feel good in the past, much like those reruns. And the other thing I do for myself is humor. As I can. If I can just get a little laugh, just a little laugh, I can go, just go on YouTube and watch a blooper reel. Just anything, just a small

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something that also helps. So, but the main thing I reason we wanted to talk about it is, I, I don't want you to quit.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Right. Right.

**AJ Harper:**

You know, just don't quit it. It's okay. If it takes longer, publishing will wait for you. It, I know you think it won't, but it will. Publishing is used to it, I promise.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

When you're writers, people who subscribe to your retreats, go to your marathon, your sprint marathon, those folks, they go through life events. You've have some retreats coming up. Does that ever get discussed? When are those retreats? And does stuff like that gets discussed too? Is it just about the process?

**AJ Harper:**

Oh gosh. The, the retreats are, are very, are intimate and of course Okay. Things like that come up. Yes. Okay. They're in June, July, and August. You can go to [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com) to see, uh, which retreats have space available at the time this airs. Um, and then I love riding Sprint Marathon for the, because you know, what's happened is a lot of people who have gotten off the horse, they use a marathon and they get back on. Mm. Because it's just a fun day. So that's the other thing is it's a group and it's much easier to get inspired when there's over a hundred people sitting there writing, writing away and having fun and being silly, but also being serious about publishing is a so, you know, you need to get back on the horse. March 21st. We're doing free write in Sprint Marathon. Um, if you, if you, um, check the show notes or message [hello@ajharper.com](mailto:hello@ajharper.com) for more info.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Hello. At [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com). For more info, make sure you visit her site. Make sure you get her book write a must read. I got a brand new book out there called *The Money Habit*. If you are an author, aspiring author, or established, uh, if you're in any career, honestly, you gotta be able to manage your money. And, uh, I'm really proud of what AJ and I produced. There's a copy of the book. She has it on the screen.

**AJ Harper:**

Did you notice how it looks with clock? Look at this with clockwork.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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Uh, yeah, you gotta show the dead center on the screen. 'cause we're on a split screen, so I don't if you can grab clockwork and put it right next.

**AJ Harper:**

I've got 'em all both up. Did you, did you well, no.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, look at that. The colors. Yeah. And that was, uh, Peter's work. Um, he intentionally did that. He pulled colors from existing books.

**AJ Harper:**

I mean, it's from this book.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Yeah. But he went through the whole catalog of books we've done and made sure that they were, um, they worked in concert thematically. So if you are willing, uh, if you're interested, check it out. The Money Habit, it's at your favorite retailer. Why don't you get two books at once that and write a must read. Um, if you already have them, here's the bold, crazy ask. Get a copy of each of those books and gift 'em to someone else. That would be so of service to me in aj. Um, the greatest way to get exposure to books is have people purchasing books. I know it's a big ask, um, but hopefully, uh, if you're willing to do it, I want you to know how much it's serving us. Um, you can go to [dw.tb.podcast.com](http://dw.tb.podcast.com) to get all of our free materials. AJ's produced a, uh, a cornucopia of great stuff that's up there. Also, you can email us at [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com). Our show producer, Adayla is monitoring that. Give us, uh, show suggestions, share us with us, your own experiences. We want to give you shout outs on future episodes. Aj, you wanna do the close? I always do it and I think it'll be so nice in your voice.

**AJ Harper:**

Just remember, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.