

# don't write *that* book!

**Mike Michalowicz (00:00.000)**

So I'm pumped for today 'cause it's gonna be a spill the tea type of day.

Spill the tea, but with cognizant of how does this help authors figure out, navigate how to do things. Right? Because we're not just a spill the we're not a spill the tea type of podcast. No, we're not. We're not. But it is tea. It's just then what do we do with the tea? What does the tea teach

Exactly. R what did the tea leaves what was that thing like you used to take your tea when there was a little bit left and you pour it out? Remember reading the tea leaves? Did you ever do that as a kid? Or did I No, my mother used to do that she'd just pour it out and say, the tea leaves you're gonna have a good day today, you know.

Yes.

Are you saying you knew how? Or

**AJ Harper (00:38.912)**

Did she know but did really? She didn't have the skill? Wonder if she did. Witchy.

I don't think so. She would just make she'd make well, maybe she did, but she'd make a little witchy, a little German. I'm actually after this gonna head over to my mother. She's had a hip surgery and was combative at the hospital. So my sister called and she said, Good morning, good morning. I'm like, Hey, how are you? Did you get a good night's rest? She's like, I got zero nights rest. She left the hospital at I think whatever closing time is, so to speak, for visitors at eight thirty.

She just got back to my mother's house where she's staying. I was traveling, so she's watching my mom. And she says, right when she pulls in, the phone's ringing like constantly. It's the hospital. We need you back. Your mother's being combative. So my mother who had just had hip surgery got out of bed and was confused where she was and angry. Yeah. And then with my sister there, she seemed to be comforted, made it through the night at the hospital. Yeah. god. So zero sleep. And now she's at my mother's, so right after we're done today, I'm gonna go over.

Your sister have to stay there?

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper (01:41.27)**

Yeah. You gotta ta you gotta you gotta tag in.

Yeah, I gotta tag in. Yeah. Yeah, I feel bad for her. My sister. This episode is sponsored by page two. I've been having such great conversations. Page two simplified specifically, the imprint. I've been having such good conversations with the authors. We s we signed a new author, Peter Lang, just joined with us on our imprint. And just having such great conversations from authors who said this experience is like none other. Many are coming from a traditional background or maybe self published, but to have a

organization that's willing to collaborate with you. Mm-hmm. It's I got it's atypical. Have have you determined your publishing platform? You said, I think on our last recording date, which was maybe a week and a half ago when we sat here in studio, that you were gonna know what your publishing outlet was. Or am I misconstruing that?

No, you're not. Can you repeat I was yeah, I'm gonna go with page two. You know, I I love them. I think they're the very best top tier hybrid. I had a lot of reasons why and I was maybe not gonna be able to go ahead and do it. they're so you know, they wanted to do it, but I wasn't sure if I was gonna be able to pull it off with the schedule that they gave me.

Awesome.

**Mike Michalowicz (03:03.086)**

Meaning it was too too slow or too fast.

And

slow.

So w how were they able to accommodate that or were they able to

I just took the time. I mean I just took a couple weeks to really work it out with my team. Yeah. And figure out, okay, well what if we did do it the way they're suggesting? What would that look like? Okay. And because I wanted it to work. Yeah. I like working with them. Yeah. It's a happy place.

**Mike Michalowicz (03:33.128)**

# don't write *that* book!

Yeah, they're extraordinary people.

Yeah. And they have write a must read. Well, there's probably a hundred things I love about them, but in this instance, what I love is the com are the conversations. This is what I wanna do. And then it's a little crazy what I wanna do. I'm not actually gonna I just I gotta stop saying that word.

Crazy?

You can't really get the eighties out of me. Like I'm trying to trying so hard, but okay, let me find it's a little out there. Yeah. What I wanna do with this book. And what I like is I can have that conversation with them. And then it's like, okay. You know, and then they are gonna rise the occasion. So I also like that the conversation is, well, you decide what's best, you know, best for you. And

And the patience, I guess. I love that. You know, that it's like ideally they hope I'm gonna stay with them. Yeah. and it, you know, honestly makes sense. They send write a must read to every new person who signs. Yeah. And this next book, they're gonna wanna send Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz (04:28.046)**

Love that.

**Mike Michalowicz (04:46.542)**

They are very much about let's do what's right for you, the author. More than I've ever experienced in any other space, including representation of other authors and so forth.

Yeah.

**AJ Harper (05:00.218)**

And we don't get any money for this. Just I hope everybody understands that we're just having a frank converse and I've been a page two fan longer than you have, but I will yes. But I also want to tell you, I think between the two of us, we are the most we are like the ones that are like

You're you're one who converted me up.

**Mike Michalowicz (05:16.077)**

Wait, what?

# don't write *that* book!

What do you guys want to do? 'Cause I'm also

Yeah yeah yeah stuff like that. And to be clear, they are sponsors of this episode. We don't receive money but

No, we don't receive a a single penny. That's true. We just say nice things.

That's a hundred.

## **Mike Michalowicz (05:29.344)**

I wanna compliment you on that power of pause. I've noticed that in many situations where there's a concept, an idea, a thought that there could be a whimsical quick answer to, but pause gives a much more educated, prudent answer. And you have a great discipline in that. That's been my Achilles heel too many times. Yeah. So I've been learning that trying to emulate it. I'm not perfect. Yeah, I've been much better.

Really? You have?

at it. and just intentionally saying just buy another day.

Yeah, because y thank you. It's not it's it's a n it's not how I've always been.

I kn I've noticed it you know, actually that's a good point. I've noticed it in particular in the last like five years.

## **AJ Harper (06:15.992)**

Yes. Okay. I'm I'm trying and I said this to you when we had our really big convo. Before I when things happen that get set me off, I try really hard to pause and ask myself, is it is this because of something that has nothing to do with this person? Am I upset because of some other issue? Is this bringing up stuff for me? What do I really ca do I really care about this?

I take time to think things.

I love that. Those are the considerations that often don't happen. You know, my wife called me out one day. She said, Is this a hill you're willing to die on? That's actually the first time I heard that phrase. And

# don't write *that* book!

I was like, it is just a hill. And th this harkens back. But I thought about how you navigate those situations has helped guide me. Yeah. yeah, for no no question. Yeah.

Yeah.

**AJ Harper (07:08.641)**

Really?

**AJ Harper (07:12.268)**

Yeah, well then I guess I just the admire thing for you has to be that you're willing to learn and listen to other people and you're you're actually really hungry for personal growth, I think. But I don't think you always were, honestly.

Totally.

**Mike Michalowicz (07:26.867)**

in different ways.

Think you were I think I saw you as a person who was hungry for say getting better in business. But I don't I don't think that you put as I think you're always putting a business spin on any personal growth lesson. Like how can I use this in my this personal growth lesson? That's great, that's fascinating. How can I then use it to make my business better? But not necessarily me.

That's just as bad.

**Mike Michalowicz (07:52.718)**

Yeah. I started reading it was it Rumi, the poet. So you know, I'm I'm more interested in human growth now than ever. I've always been interested in the self help ever since I first fell upon it when I just graduated college. The first book I read was Dale Carnegie's How to Stop Worrying and Start Living. Where I win friends. Because my employer required it and put sent me to speaking class, the Dale Carnegie class. I was like, this stuff's amazing, it works. It was nothing like experience in traditional education.

Yeah. So in that regard I've always been interested, but you're right. It has been all about kind of success orientation as opposed to human Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So we're gonna talk about well, tell me what we are

# don't write *that* book!

gonna talk about 'cause I really want you to spill the tea. I the name here, I was about to say it, but I'm like, I want you to share the name and the details and

Giving yourself an edge. Yeah.

## **AJ Harper (08:39.475)**

So I mean, just so we're clear, the reason we're doing this episode is because

Readers get mad at you. Okay.

Sometimes you write stuff and readers react in a way that is negative. Yeah. And then what you do next, it's so funny we're talking about the pause. We didn't intend to talk about the pause, but what you do next is everything. Is critical. And I so our talk today is about a certain situation, but it giv the con we're just using it as context to be able to talk about how what happens when you share something through your writing.

And it doesn't get the reaction you expect. Yeah. But also to to understand what is it what does it mean when you've let you've published now what's do you get to control any you can't, right? Like you can't control the reaction. It's not even really yours anymore. Mm-hmm. it's interesting because when I w I don't think you know this, but when I was when our son was young, we had an an agent who wanted

me to do a memoir about our family. Did you know that? No.

## **Mike Michalowicz (09:50.386)**

Do tell!

Well...

It wasn't I it wasn't seeking it out, but we we had some friends in publishing because our kids honestly just 'cause our kids played together, which is a thing, you know, in this part of the country where we live, you run in you have people that you see all the time that are in publishing or film or whatever. And this friend of ours was at random house and said, I want you to meet this agent because w you know, I think this person might be interested in representing you for them a memoir about your family. So if you're just

# don't write *that* book!

Tuning in, the reason is this isn't so unusual now, but our son's twenty-one now. Our kid was probably like four at the time, four or five. We co-parent, so my wife and I decided to have an not just a like a sperm donor, we decided to have a co-parenting situation with someone that we know. And that my our son's father is actually one of my oldest friends in the world, and we decided to

raise him together. And so we just had worked out how to do that. That's the reason we moved to New York in part, but all you know, also publishing was here. But we moved into a Brooklyn brownstone where he was on the third floor and we were on the fourth floor. You didn't know that? No. Yeah, we lived he lived on the third floor and then the he was friends with the owners of the building and they convinced the guy who lived, I feel bad about this dude still on the fourth floor.

**Mike Michalowicz (11:08.2)**

I didn't know that detail.

**AJ Harper (11:21.122)**

To move out.

you

To accommodate this setup. That's so

So in the so we we moved there when our son was eleven weeks old into the fourth floor. So we and then in the morning the baby would wake up and I would call downstairs and his dad would come pick him up for half an hour and have time with him the morning. Like it was a it was a whole thing.

I love that you and your wife decide to have a baby and the consequence is some dude who had his dream brownstone gets kicked out. So, before we kick into the details of

**AJ Harper (11:50.551)**

Yeah. I mean But it is hard to get an apartment in New York.

**AJ Harper (11:58.744)**

But I wanna tell you why I told you that story. Because I chose not to do the book. Yeah. Because I knew, listen, this is relevant. I just had a feeling, what if it's good now, but what if I do write it and then

# don't write *that* book!

something goes awry in the relationships? And then now people I people know us and feel like

What how does that change the way we think about our own relationships? Because people know us intimately like that. And then what will people say if something shifts or changes? And I said no.

That's amazing to have that long term vision. To me. I particularly at that age.

You know, honestly I wasn't wrong because, you know, our son I won't want to get into it, but our son's had, you know struggles with sometimes with his dad and there's challenges there. Nothing, you know. No. No. But I mean I that's their business. Do you know what I mean? A hundred percent. So hundred percent I don't know that that experiment, that that co parenting

Yeah.

## **AJ Harper (13:13.016)**

There was there were challenges that I don't actually want to make public. Everybody's fine. But I kind of thought, what are you setting yourself up for? Are you gonna feel then compelled to have a certain kind of appearance? Like, what if you're just walking down the street? People know they've read your book and then they're looking at you and they're trying to assess you. And I don't know. It just felt like I shouldn't which isn't to say people shouldn't write their memoirs, but when your life is still in process, I

A better time to do it would be saying now. Yes. When he's a whole he's an adult. He's a grown man. Is you know. Yeah.

That's a major milestone reflection. You share something with all of your authors, and I'm gonna paraphrase in my words, as you are best positioned to write on a story once you can reflect on a story. And ma many people are in the meat, they're liter in the moment I should say and trying to write it. And you're like, that is not the time. That is not the time

Yes.

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper (14:09.762)**

And it should be pretty far in your rear view, I think. Yeah. I really do. But I mean, that's just me. I'm one person. Maybe there's other people who feel differently. So in if you're a millennial and you're, you know, we're Gen X. Mm-hmm. We're not a confessional by nature generation. We're not the people who are gonna I mean, there's exceptions to us, right? But most of us are not confessing and journaling on social media until

Right? Look at your face. You can't even imagine. No. No. the generation after us.

What was that?

One your books like a go like a ghost. One the generation after us totally comfortable with blogging about their lives in intimate detail, which brings us to Lindy West.

Yeah, it was like a ghost.

**Mike Michalowicz (15:04.62)**

Yeah, okay. Good transition. What is going on?

Okay. So, Lindy West, if you don't know who she is. I don't. I'm not surprised. She's like a millennial feminist icon. Did I actually? She she wrote for Jezebel, which I didn't read her column in Jezebel, but she also wrote a book called Shri!ll, which became a TV show. And I watched that TV show. and then she's written she writes on

Did you know of her prior to the story breaking?

**AJ Harper (15:35.352)**

that's a memoir of her life, but she also will write on, say, pop culture and she's she's done some great stuff, but you know, I'm not of that generation, and I don't think I was I definitely was not keyed in to how she was helping shape millennial women and their views on relationships and men and themselves and so forth. So she had a massive impact.

on quite a lot of women. I'm not saying all millennial women's no generalizations here. Okay. Sh one of the things she was known for was calling out the behavior. Like if there was a bad behavior among men, like boyfriends or whatever, calling it out, naming it, naming guys who were

# don't write *that* book!

being actually naming guys who were behaving badly or maybe really badly. no, I can't because this is what I learned.

And let me tell you how I learned about this. I learned this from, you know, I go on these road trips up to the lake. Yeah, totally. And I just have Yeah. This is why. So I put in my notes app a podcast like a playlist of podcasts I want to listen to when I'm on the road because I really only listen when I'm driving. And this there was one that came across my feed about this. And it's like, I'm gonna see what's going on with that. And I learned through this podcast that this is part of what she

did. So I can't actually speak to examples, but it would be like if a if a dude was harassing you or right, instead of what say our generation would do, which is maybe talk about the harassment but not name the person, she'd be like, Name the person. Which actually, yes. Like why do you get to, you know, why do you get off on this? Like you why do you get to be no one knows about you when you're being a total dick? Mm-hmm. Okay. Mm-hmm.

Thanks.

## **AJ Harper (17:34.38)**

So different generation. Yeah. This is all for context because here's what happened. In March, she released a new memoir called *Adult Braces*, which is one of the best titles I've such a good title. She b apparently, so she's been married for a while, and I have not read *Adult Braces*, everybody, just so we're really clear. But

Sajigo.

## **AJ Harper (18:04.224)**

Apparently, her husband cheated on her and then told her that the only way that they could stay in the marriage was for her to accept this polyamorous situation. Okay. Then she goes on a road trip to sort of figure out what she wants to do, and in the end, decides to agree to it. So all these readers kind of went, I'm gonna.

Ape you know what? Like they just wouldn't

Yeah, because it sounds like she's calling people out on music.

# don't write *that* book!

Saying bad behavior. Yeah. And then she's acquiescing to this bad behavior and saying, This is actually I'm happy in this situation. So now she's part of this correct three person relationship.

D did she reframe it as that's not bad behavior? I mean, there's a way to frame that to say

## **AJ Harper (18:55.682)**

Well, I haven't read Adult Braces. Yeah.

curious if you had any perspective on that. I I wonder how she defended that. Because there's gonna be this cognitive dissidence if you accept that. So there's gotta be some kind of resolution in her mind.

the dissonance, I think, is what is the problem? I think all these readers who have followed her and loved her and were waiting for this memoir, and she's a great writer, have we like, what the hell, Lindy? That's basically what happened, right? What what's going on? How you're this is the opposite of what you've been talking about. So there was a lot of chatter.

of.

## **AJ Harper (19:34.614)**

And then she was profiled in Slate by Satch Satchi Cool. And I yeah, I did read it. I read the profile. She went and interviewed Lindy West at her home and then wrote this big article about the memoir, as one does when they have a book release, right? You're a famous writer and people are gonna profile you.

Hehehe

That the her she was not happy, her husband was not happy, and the third person, the other woman, was not happy, and wrote this journalist some really challenging letters. And then the journal journalist Sachi Kool published the husband's email to her. And

I found out about it because Sachi Cool went on this podcast and we'll put the podcast and the links to the articles in the show notes here. It just started to get super messy. Super messy. I wonder what

I I don't understand the legal elements of this. Like can I if I write you a private message, does that mean it can be posted publicly?

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper (20:44.174)**

I didn't know that. Yeah, I mean, watch out. So then there was a Substack post that so Lindy West is also on Substack and she posted a kind of a an about the article and she posted this not great and it's gone. The Substack post is gone. You can't even find it in the archive. I looked. But then the husband started commenting.

Yeah, it's right.

With underneath other like sub commenting underneath readers' comments. So what I'm trying to get at here is this is a whole hot mess. Your readers have loved you for a long time. Now they don't understand what's happening and they have opinions about it. That's their right to have those opinions, actually. You decided that you're gonna make your living off of sharing your life while it's in process. Yeah.

Yeah.

And people are reacting because they think you're basically living your life as the antithesis of what you were encouraging them, how then now I don't know if that's true or not. I mean, a lot of people are saying eventually we're gonna get a memoir where she talks about her divorce. It seems that way.

I don't know. That's her business. But the reason we're talking about this today is what is the appropriate response when you have when your book maybe blows up in a way that is the opposite of what you thought?

And there's another ex kind of sub question to this is if you get a review that you don't like, how do you manage that? It sounds totally mismanaged.

Well so we're now okay, so so what she what Satchi cool was she's a journalist. She didn't write a review. She did a profile. She went to Lindy West's house and she talked about, but she brought up, you know, some of the things. it sounds like the husband is has been a little bit annoyed also about how he's being portrayed. Yeah. So that's the other issue is people in your life might la might not like ho.

**Mike Michalowicz (22:43.83)**

I see.

# don't write *that* book!

## **AJ Harper (22:51.124)**

Things shake out. But you can't you can't control these things. I mean you the only option is for you to not write it at all. So you can't say, I'm gonna share my life, but I also don't want you to s respond in this way to me sharing my life.

Yeah. It kind of reminds me a little bit of a celebrity divorce where the celebrity benefits from all this public exposure and then when they go through a divorce or some kind of personal situation they say we we asked for f complete privacy.

Maybe, but I mean it would I think it I think that would apply more if they wrote about if they're if they had a reality show about their marriage. Or they wrote about it or something. But if it's just a celebrity with a spouse that you don't really ever see, they should be allowed to handle their stuff. But this is a person who's writing about their lives.

That's a that's a great point.

## **Mike Michalowicz (23:46.316)**

Yeah, so they're they're financially and benefiting from exposing their life. Correct. And now someone else exposing their life. Yes. But not in a way they want it to be

So the readers are like, What the hell, Lindy? And I don't think that she expected that kind of reaction. I can't s I'm speculating. I'm speculating. What we're talking about today is then what do you do?

Yeah, so w what what what's your instinct? What do you do?

So there's two things. You did mention the review thing. So let's let's make sure we don't forget to talk about that 'cause that's a different situation. Yeah. But if peop if readers are having cause there's so much chatter, there's a whole New York Times article about how the internet went cr I was about to say that C word again. That I know you don't think it matters, but I'm trying to be real. No, I mean I know you th think it I don't know. I don't know what you think. The internet just exploded.

No, no, I'm not saying it doesn't matter.

## **Mike Michalowicz (24:41.858)**

# don't write *that* book!

Went ape mad.

Eight mad. That's probably not good.

Probably not good either. No. Do apes get mad?

I think so. It was it was just an onslaught. It was just a lot. So there's a whole we'll put a link to too. There's a New York Times article or about that. But at any rate

Ca can I say that shows how vested people are in the story though. If they go ape mad, that that also shows that that her story was was infecting or affecting their life to the point where they see value and they feel compromised in some capacity.

## **AJ Harper (25:17.74)**

Mike, what if you you have a lot of super fans who are religious about Prophet First, for example. They live it's their lifestyle. Yes. Okay. What if you all of a sudden wrote a book that was the antithesis of that? That was like, I was, you know, like I don't know what it would

See. Why is it I never did this? I never believed in it.

Or yes. Or some I don't know. I don't know what the equivalent would be because it's kinda different, but people would be very upset. People would be talking and chatting and blogging and going on podcasts about and that's what happened. Yeah. People are on their sub stacks, their blogs, their Twitter feeds, they're everywhere saying, What the hell, Lindy West? So you gotta let that be. You can't interject. That's the the the the that's for readers.

You put the book out, yeah. How they react to it is is not for you. You're not you're not to engage with them about it in that way.

May I say that my observation of people is the more righteous someone is, the more there's something in there. The the more likely there's something that they're using that righteousness to hide or squash. I think I shared the story there's someone in our general community that was lambasting a woman who was getting a divorce for how she was behaving, and ends up he's doing all these crazy things behind the scene, like like illegal behavior.

# don't write *that* book!

## **AJ Harper (26:46.526)**

You didn't chase with me, what are you talking about

I haven't shared this with you? No. Dude. so friends once removed. Okay. They get divorced. And

in your neighbors like in your social I thought I was trying to I thought you said you our community as in the

Community social community.

## **Mike Michalowicz (27:04.73)**

Publishing. no no no no no I got you. No, no, in the so in my social community. Okay. And toward the end, the marriage was already splintered and over. So at least one of them when the partner starts dating. The the woman does. And the guy may have been too, I know. Another person in the community, like a literal neighbor, starts lambasting her saying you you you you're you're filthy things about her

my god. Horrible.

and very righteous about it and doing going community boards and stuff like is not something we should see in our neighborhood. Yeah, just insane. Fast forward months later, there are police at his door for going into people's bedrooms, women's bedrooms, and taking their clothing. Yeah, and and other weird stuff. What I found is the more righteous someone is about something, inevitably the

Dude.

## **Mike Michalowicz (28:01.186)**

The more black and white they are, there is something behind that. They're trying to dissuade themselves from their own behavior. Now, of course, is not always the case, and I'm I'm not trying to play psychologists here, but I just see it over and over. And so it almost feels like what I'm hearing of this story is that she came off cross so opinionated, so I'll call people out that maybe she was hiding this for a long time and was using it.

I d I don't I don't think no no no. I don't think she was I think it's mostly the husband who's been doing most of the reacting. I think she has done some. I don't think she's been righteous. Okay. I just don't think

# don't write *that* book!

she thought people were gonna react that way. And so then they're engaging after the fact. Yeah. And that's the part that you you need to not do. You really need to not do that. You need to not engage after the fact.

The conversation isn't for you anymore and this is a hard thing. You could put a statement out I think that's but then you but then you gotta just let it go because you cannot control the way other people see it.

Yeah.

## **Mike Michalowicz (29:09.07)**

They're pouring kerosene on the fire. They they keep this conversation alive. Wouldn't the next thing

You're keeping it alive, that's one thing, but also I think we fundamentally this is back up. The book is not yours anymore. Okay, so you're deciding I'm gonna put this book out. I'm gonna tell this part of my story, but I don't want anybody, but if somebody th perceives it in a certain way that I don't feel is true, I then want to engage with them about that. I no, that's people are gonna take it as they take it.

Mmm.

## **AJ Harper (29:42.528)**

And if you look at the context of her whole body of work, it's understandable why some people would be frustrated with her. And some people have been more like concerned for her, you know? What are you like, are you okay? Yeah. You know? the you wouldn't the Lindy West we know wouldn't have tolerated that. Right? And so what are you saying to us now? Yeah. And and I think that probably struck a nerve, right? And the dude who was

Interesting.

Cheating on her and ultimately telling her the only way I'm staying in this marriage is if Well, they c don't call it that when it's a poly when you agree to polyamory, I guess, but it's not my bag, but No. One isn't one is one is enough. Right. yeah, it's not f it's not for me. But I mean I don't really understand how it works, but I do know that when they make an agreement it's not considered

I can keep cheating.

# don't write *that* book!

**Mike Michalowicz (30:29.934)**

Yeah.

Hey!

**AJ Harper (30:42.094)**

Treating, but still it f it seems like a little bit of coercion, you know. Feels that way. Well, yeah, it's like almost like blackmail like either this or that. Like Yeah. And so if your readers are used to you saying, This is like stand up for yourself and you know, this kind of behavior is not okay. Yeah. And then you're allowing that behavior, then you really don't have a leg to stand on if they start to say, What the hell? Yeah. So you need to let them just have their conversations.

Yes, okay. So let them have their conversation. How do you handle this journalist? I mean, i if if a journalist writes something that you consider scathing, d do you have any rights? Could I at least call the journalist and say, Hey, that that was hurtful do you get a preview of these jo these

Let them have their conversations.

You have no preview. You are l you're going to have media attention. Okay. So you have no no. I mean you could you can email and have a nice exchange, you know. I don't I think Lindy West's response in the links we'll in the show notes we'll put also the link to 'cause 'cause in the in the podcast episode I listened to, they went they broke down the whole reaction. You gotta listen to the podcast episode because it breaks down the whole saga.

Any way of navigating it?

Okay. I think she was more measured, but the husband took offense to more. Yeah. Of course. Come on. Yeah. Yeah. So but I just want every you know, our re our listeners to think about this. I mean, I I have so many authors who are nervous about putting themselves out there. And I you can never be sure how people are gonna react to things. You can't.

Yeah, of course.

# don't write *that* book!

You you have to let them react is what I'm trying to say. 'Cause it's not it's not for you anymore.

I can guarantee one way to never get a reaction is never to write, never take that risk. And that's my fear is someone will say, Well, the only way I can assure that I'll never be criticized or get feedback that I don't want to hear is by not writing in the first place. I think that's the ultimate shame.

Yeah. I mean, I think, you know, this is just my personal opinion, like I said at the top. You know, I there's something about when you have hindsight, you're gonna and not being in the middle of things. I mean, I guess she had a little hindsight because it's ha you know, but I don't think she had enough distance. There's something about sharing all these aspects of your life in real time. some people it goes okay for them, but I've been thinking about even like Liz Gilbert. She wrote

Eat pray love. Yeah. And in that she had split from her husband. And then she meets this new guy and then ends up getting married to him. And then there's another book about that. And then there's a book about the nother relationship. And she splits from him. And so it's like just chronicling. Mm. I don't know. I this is just me. This is just probably a controversial opinion, but

When your life is for everyone else's consumption, or when your life is that's how you make your income. I don't know. That freaks me out. Yeah, I mean there's the great Nora Efron, may she rest in peace, who wrote what is the first novel she wrote? Daniel.

**Mike Michalowicz (33:56.446)**

The sword has two edges.

I'm gonna say it's like a dad joke, eat more, pray more, love more.

No, it's Nora Efron. She wrote When Harry Meant Sally and Sleepless and Sapnail. No, this is the Paramenopausal Brain. What I what is the first one? It's was and it became a movie too with Meryl Streep and Jack Nicholson. look it up.

Really? Okay. Do you want me to look it real quick?

oops.

# don't write *that* book!

No, God, I know it. It's on my bookshelf. I've read it.

It says lists by author. Gosh, this is gonna be Aging? No. It's a category. Love, loss, and what I wore.

No

## **AJ Harper (34:43.852)**

No, it's her first novel. Okay. It's a novel based on her div relationship.

I remember nothing and other reflections. I feel mad about my neck.

This is fun listening to us Google. That's a memoir. Heartburn. Okay. Okay. So here's the thing. Shnora Efron, there's a documentary which I recommend everybody watch called Everything Is Copy. And so she okay. So she believed that. Like whatever is happening and that she sees, experiences, whatever, is her per prerogative to make copy for herself.

And the documentary actually explores what are the what's to follow her son, her ex-husband talk about it. And Heartburn was about her divorce. And God, I love love Nora Efron so much. my gosh. And I do question like, how much are you what's happening that you're putting this out there? Again, I'm not judging, but I do think.

from that.

## **Mike Michalowicz (35:35.327)**

Hmm.

AJ Harper (35:50.476)

Maybe this is the pause, you know. We need to figure out is this it is this right for me to publish this? And also, am I ready for whatever comes? You have to be ready for whatever comes. That you know your truth, and it doesn't matter if readers, so maybe Lindy West is telling saying, Yes, I'm good with this now. Okay, she's in this new polyamorous thing, she seems happy. Who are we to say? But also.

It's she has to let be accept the fact that people are just gonna say what they're gonna say. And you, if you're gonna share your life, need to realize that there could be fallout from these things. From the people in

# don't write *that* book!

your life, your immediate family, it could be from readers. And the only response is to let them have their reactions to it.

that. Yeah, so what I heard is if you make your life a public affair and profit from it, you're making all of your life a public affair. and the other thing is be very cautious about writing in real time. Let's I want to talk about reviews and handling those just briefly. I know we

yeah, because I have a I have a an example of a worst case scenario that actually happened.

then we'll dig into that. Before we do, I want to thank you for writing Write a Must Read that has countless reviews on all the major distribution platforms. So if any of our listeners are listening right now and haven't purchased your book yet, get it. Pri chances are by now you've purchased that book. So here's my big ask for our audience is please do a review, an honest review for Write A Must Read.

## **AJ Harper (37:26.252)**

How would I love that?

Yeah, I I think you did that for me once. You were asked your audience to do an honest review for the money habit and it it made a measurable impact. It had a measurable impact. Yeah. Yeah. So I asked the same of our audience, write a honest review of Write a Must Read. So talking about reviews. Yeah. Lays one on me. What

Yeah, we got you a bunch of reviews that day.

People really can't and you and I have actually argued about this in the past. Do you remember this? Okay. But when you get a negative review, how do you respond?

No. I I don't know what's coming, so

## **Mike Michalowicz (37:55.628)**

Yeah, so there's typically two ways. I think if I do res I do choose to respond in certain circumstances with absolute professionalism because I think the reader is looking for who's the oddball here, who's the one that is is out of control and who's the professional. So I think I write a professional measured response. and or I'll do a no response.

# don't write *that* book!

Mm. No response. Every time.

Is it you zero respond? You say never respond.

Never ever ever ever respond to reviews. That's okay. Yes. Because you're gonna say a professional measured response, but it might sound like something else to the person who left the review. So first of all, it's everyone needs to understand re reviews are not for you. You feel like they're for you because you're looking.

So tell me.

## **AJ Harper (38:53.314)**

How many did I get? What are they saying? I'm gonna tell you right now, I am grateful for all the reviews, but I'm not sitting there combing through all these reviews. Okay. Reviews are for readers. Reviews are for readers. They are. They're for other readers, okay? And it's their own social community and it's not yours.

Well let tell you and your measured response could easily be misconstrued. Easily. Could be. And there's a hu there's a very strong belief among book reviewers that those are not for authors. And when authors go into book review spaces, it ends very badly. So it's considered very bad etiquette for authors to respond to reviews.

I agree with that.

Very bad etiquette.

So I had a circumstance where someone reviewed my book, but they were actually reading a different book. It said, blah blah blah blah. I think I can't remember which book it was. Let's just pretend it was the pumpkin plan. And they're reviewing a book written by someone else completely. Uh-huh. So I put in there, I said, in the one star review, I said, thank you for making this review. based upon the content you provided, it looks like you're referring to another title in its entirety. I just want that to be clear.

But that's that's not what y you need to get that taken down.

Can you? Yes. I've never had a review taken down that

# don't write *that* book!

You can. You can contact that's a perfect example. So instead of responding to that, the the way I would handle that is to contact Amazon and say, actually this person is reviewing a different book. Here's a book they're reviewing. I think they just made a mistake. Will you please take this down? Okay. And they will take it down. and then now you haven't responded to the review.

## **Mike Michalowicz (40:40.588)**

Interesting.

Interesting. What if someone has like I have some reviews by books and they say Mike says this and they actually have a quote that's not the right quote. They actually in Profit First they say Mike states that profitability is driven by sales minus expenses equals profit.

Yes, they got the formula wrong. Okay, well.

Just let that one star exist. Yeah. Interesting. Maybe you counter it with quantity of reviews and just encouraging more reviews.

Well.

## **AJ Harper (41:09.058)**

Yeah, more honest reviews because if the book is great, if the book is a must read, if you've done your work, then it will stand up. It's okay. You don't have to correct these things.

Have you ever in the past before communicators responded to reviews yourself?

Zero Never. No, because I have seen what can happen.

And is it just it doesn't matter what you write, no matter how professional it is, how much if it's factual and you're you're correcting facts, you've seen

Okay. Stay away. Stay away. Don't do it. Don't do it. Mm-mm. Okay. So this is this is the the extreme. So there's in the fiction community, this is a huge problem, but they have a term called BBAs. Do you know what it stands for? No. Badly behaving authors. There's a there's a website dedicated to it. They'll call they'll list authors who are BBAs. And the way you get it

# don't write *that* book!

is if you're responding and engaging with reader reviews and reader commentary.

## **AJ Harper (42:04.35)**

Because that's not your space. It's not your space. Goodreads, for example, not for authors. Yeah. Goodreads is for readers. Yeah. That's their reader space. That's where that's their social community. It's for them.

Interesting.

## **Mike Michalowicz (42:19.95)**

You know what's interesting as a as a reader myself, and you're a reader, I remember reading a book by Gary Baynerchuk. Mm-hmm. And the reason I bought the book was because of how he responded to a one-star review. So what I did was, I think it was the one, it was a black book with a green text cover. I can't remember the title. But I'm reading through and I I pulled up and there's it was a new book, 150 reviews. All of them are five star. So I'm like, okay, great. And there was one one star. So I'm like, let me read that one. And

It lambasted him. And he simply responded and said, That really hurts. Thank you for responding the way you feel. I will issue you a refund for the book. Mm-hmm. And I was like, that's that's that's the right way to I was really impressed by his business acumen. So I became a Gary Vanderchuck fan in that moment. But maybe that's the anomaly. Or or maybe maybe you get nine responses like that, but one puts you on the BBA. I I I don't know.

Okay.

Okay.

## **AJ Harper (43:17.986)**

Well, mostly when people are responding to reviews, it's to do the thing you said earlier, which is I'm gonna correct these facts. Yeah. I'm gonna you know, that's not actually what happened. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's you know, how dare you? So the the worst example I have is a person and this actually I remember when this was happening in real time. This person tracked down the reviewer. So on you can go on neck yeah, book re book bloggers, book reviewers.

# don't write *that* book!

yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz (43:29.078)**

Yeah, yeah, a hundred percent. That's the worst.

**AJ Harper (43:47.394)**

You know, they can get their they go on nut galley and they can get early reader copies and things like that. So, now they're booktubers, they're on they're doing this book talkers and whatever, the people who review books. An author didn't like a review. F this was before people were on YouTube, before they were on TikTok. So it was just behind a screen and maybe you didn't even know who they really were. Okay. So like just the written text.

could have a username so you're not seeing their face. Found the reviewer, doxxed them, drove to their house. my. Yeah.

yeah!

That's insane.

Yes. Now that's an very extreme example. Yeah. Okay. But we are not to engage Like that's a v that's a cautionary tale. That's talking. Yeah. But really, I just think we have to get in the mindset of I'm gonna put this into the world and if you're not comfortable with it, if you think that it's gonna maybe be have a negative impact, I mean, some of that fear is you need to just get past it because it's just

**AJ Harper (44:57.314)**

the inner critic trolls messing with you, but sometimes it might be a good gut check for you. Hmm, can I deal with whatever this fallout is gonna be? Am I gonna be okay with it? Is it still something I wanna put out if I don't get the response that I think I'm gonna get?

I wonder if one kind of technique is don't read your own reviews. Yeah.

Just move on. Yeah. Because it's not for you and you think it is. Yeah. But it's not.

# don't write *that* book!

Yeah. And it is for you when when you do your next book or whatever, those reviews can be very helpful. You know, I aggregate stuff and say, people want simpler books. They do like the front loading, but they don't like certain storytelling.

You know what, then just have an assistant or if you're gonna yeah, just have them do it. Have them say, Here are the main points. Yeah. And that you need to consider. But I think it's better if you just remove yourself. If you just tell it if you're sitting there going, I can't wait for my review, then you're starting to think this is some sort of thing that is mine, that I that's a reward for this thing that I've created. And if you think this is a reward.

## **AJ Harper (46:04.79)**

And then in instead what you get is a whole bunch of people upset with you. You can see how you feel like you need to engage with that. So you've got to just let it go.

Any classes, coursing coming up that you wanna share with our audience?

Well by the time this well wait

We don't know. We may do this as a bonus. We may run this as a normal episode.

Okay, if you're listening and it's May or June, then yeah, I'm my my top three book workshop starts in the f in August. And at least at the time we're recording this, I do have some spots available. I only run it one time a year. It is my gauntlet, it is my Mount Everest, but it's worth it. some of our alums that have come through workshop, New York Times, USA Today bestselling authors.

## **AJ Harper (46:55.4)**

more importantly, they wrote just stellar killer books in that workshop. So and that's the only time where I'm basically holding your hand and working one on one with you through the whole process. So

The website's AJ Harper.com. Yep. We don't know what's the next episode will be just because based upon timing. You did share that some avid listeners missed our prior bonus episode because they're in this Thursday ritual. Yeah. So my little ask for everyone is hit that subscribe button

# don't write *that* book!

on your pod listener. like I have my favorite podcasts I listen to too, and go to the show and you'll see.

Yeah.

## **Mike Michalowicz (47:36.77)**

When an episode is not listened to yet and there's gonna be a bonus snuck in there. So make sure you Yeah. That's maybe bonus number two.

Yeah, we had a one other bonus. Yeah. We're doing the bonuses because maybe it happened cl you know, we're if it happened close to if what we're talking about happened recently. Yeah, we don't want it to be months out. Yeah.

we have a website for you. It's DWTB Podcast.com. Also, you can email myself and AJ through our email, which is hello at DWTB Podcast.com. Thanks, AJ, for preparing all the resources we have on the website. You can download all that stuff, get a little sample of what AJ's doing. and the big reminder is don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.