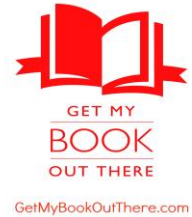


Get My Book Out There Podcast #19 Embracing Your Emotions As A Writer



Narelle Todd:

I'm Narelle Todd.

S.E. Smith:

And I'm S.E. Susan Smith.

Narelle Todd:

We are the self-publishing author and marketing duo that has sold over two million books. But we didn't start out knowing how to sell books. Fast forward past many failed promotions and a lot of lessons learned, you'll see how we went from self-publishing newbies to hitting the New York Times bestsellers list and making the USA Today bestsellers list 19 times and counting. We created the Get My Book Out There podcast to give you simple, yet effective marketing strategies to increase readership and book sales, so you know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, as well as some tips for staying mentally and physically well.

S.E. Smith:

Let's get started.

Narelle Todd:

And we're talking today about embracing emotion. So negative and positive emotions. And how as a writer you can take those emotions and use them in your writing. And I think probably for many of us, we tend to pull back. It's that thing around you can't get too emotional, just rein it in a bit, take some time and get calm, and then come back and do whatever your task happens to be. When you're a writer that, of course, is writing. But what we're suggesting is that emotion is not a bad thing. Would that be right, Susan?

S.E. Smith:

Well, I think what it is is a lot of people are afraid to really put themselves out there. So that when you're writing, you tend to think, "Well, how are other people going to perceive me? How am I going to put this down?" So you can write the best sentences and you can write everything just right, but what happens is it doesn't turn out well in the story if all of that emotion is pulled out of it. You really need to connect with the readers. And what I found a lot of times is I'll be reading something, but I'm not connecting. As a writer I know, for me, my emotions go up and down, up and down. That just happens because of fricking age right now, thanks to hormones. But it's one of those things that, instead of fighting against it, and that's one of the things that I'm bad about doing is fighting against these emotions, is let them go. Accept them. Embrace them. Good, bad, ugly. Put that into my writing.

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Narelle Todd:

Yes.

S.E. Smith:

And it's amazing that when you do that, how the characters just seem to jump off the page and come alive. So that when I'm upset and I'm writing about this character and that character is upset, it really comes through to the reader. And I've had readers tell me, "I was ugly crying during this," or, "I was snorting coffee through my nose when I wasn't expecting this humorous part," because you'll have that quirky moment that something just pops into your head and you just start laughing about it. And it may end up on the pages.

Narelle Todd:

I often say to authors when they're chatting with me, and they'd be saying, "My sales aren't necessarily going well. I'm just not making the sales that I should be, or they're not increasing. " They may have gotten to sort of a plateau and they can't go any further. And I think one of the things is, when we look at the writing behind it, you can understand with some, because the writing is two dimensional. There's only so many people who will read two dimensional fiction, because the reason for reading fiction is that we want to get into the world of the character. If as a writer we're not being presented with the whole world, which is the emotion, which is the world-building of how amazing it looks or feels, all of those touch points, that's when we can't grow as a writer because we're not taking our readers with us. We're not actually bringing the readers into our world.

S.E. Smith:

I like to call it interactive reading. For me, the interactive reading is you're laughing, you're crying, you getting angry, you're getting that anxiety of, "What's going to happen next? Are they going to fall off the edge of this cliff? Are they going to make it when the rope breaks?" If they're in this big battle, their heart thumping, and they're sitting on the edge of their chair as they're gripping this book because they are in the middle of this battle. And if they aren't feeling that, it's not interactive. If it's not interacted, they can take this book and they can set it down and they can go wash dishes. You want them to the point where they don't want to go wash dishes. They don't care if the dishes get washed. They'll do them at midnight, but they're not doing it until they finish this next chapter, which always leads to the next chapter and the next chapter.

Again, as a human you tend to kind of shield yourself. And so you don't give the emotions that you normally would when you're by yourself, just let your emotions have full range just in front of anybody. And so you have to embrace that as an author. And let it. Let it flow. Give it to people, just let it all out there. If you're having a bad day, don't be afraid to put it in there. I remember there was a part in one of my stories, Gracie's Touch, where she finally says, "You know what? If I want to have a temper tantrum, I can have a temper tantrum. If I want to cuss, I can cuss. And there's not anyone that can say anything to me at that moment. I don't care. I'm just going to let it out." And it was funny because, at that moment I was having a very frustrating moment, and I was just wanting to just let it out. And I did on the pages. But it turned out to be a really cool part of the book, because she's in the middle of throwing this temper tantrum.

And she's like, "I know I'm an adult, but I don't care. I'm going to throw it." That's when the aliens suddenly appear and she's like, "Oh crap. Maybe now it's not a good time to do this." And that's usually about the time your husband comes home or your kids walk in, or the neighbors are like looking at you kind of weird. Just taking all of that and putting it in that moment in that book. There was another time where, spoiler alert for those just in case, but in Gracie's Touch she discovers that everything and everyone she's ever known has

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disappeared. She's standing on the edge of this cliff. At that moment I was just so lost into the thought of what would happen if I lost everyone I knew? All the people that I love. And I was sitting here writing it, and I'm crying because I'm imagining how I would feel at that moment, that devastating moment, knowing it was all gone. And I just poured all of that anxiety, that fear, the horror, the trauma of what that feeling was like into that scene.

And that's one of the most that people come back to me again and again. Just don't be afraid to let your emotions go. Embrace them. Embrace that moment. Embrace the ups and the downs. And when you're feeling down, write it out into a scene. And when you're filling up, write it out into a scene.

Narelle Todd:

How then do we work with being self-aware enough about our emotions? And the reason I asked that is, for many of us, we may not recognize the emotion we're actually feeling at that time. Or that it is actually an emotion. Society traditionally tells us to temper things down, or to be on an even keel and not have this sort of ups and downs and not to feel them so much. Put it into a box and shut the lid. So how do we get self-aware enough as a writer to be able to then use that emotion? Do you have a trick for that?

S.E. Smith:

The trick is, like I said, when I was writing that scene where I was standing on that cliff. I basically, I closed my eyes and I imagined what it would be like. I have to think that this is what really great actors and actresses do to get into the mood and the scene. Because we've all seen those scenes and been amazed they could cry on command. And it's like, "How do you cry on command?" But if you just put yourself into that moment. And one of the things I've done is actually just closed my eyes, imagined it, and then just pull those emotions straight from what I was feeling through my fingertips to the keyboard. And I'm not even looking at the screen, I'm just writing it out as I'm picturing it. But it's being aware that you do have these emotions. And being conscious that, you know what? Instead of me boxing those emotions up, let me let them out.

Maybe my box is going to be the paper, the computer screen in front of me. So don't be afraid of that. And I think that's where most people, like you said, they've been taught to temper down, to box it away, not to let other people see it. But you can still do that if you don't want to have your neighbors wanting to know why you're screaming and crying and stuff, just push it through onto the computer. And let it come through in the stories that you're telling.

Narelle Todd:

Very powerful. And that scene in Gracie's Touch that you alluded to, I still remember the very first time I read that. Ah, ugly crying. And still to this day. There'll be sometimes if I'm feeling a bit fragile I'll skip over that part, because I'm like, "I don't want to cry today."

S.E. Smith:

But when you do read that part, and then you continue reading on, you see the emotions that she's worked through.

Narelle Todd:

Yes.

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S.E. Smith:

Then it helps build your strength up. And I don't know if, the authors that are afraid to put that emotion in, if they realize that in the long run, we really do a big part for society, helping people through our stories. That's why I always say you have to think of yourself as a role model. I don't just write fiction, I write stories that take people to other worlds. That help them. I'm working through these emotions on the paper. I'm also showing people how to work through difficult situations. How would you survive something like this? How would you survive a zombie attack? It's learning those techniques. Because if you can survive zombie attack, you can survive anything. You're ready for anything. So it's understanding that and putting it in those, and not being afraid to do it. And realizing that the steps that you're going through, and that process, may actually help somebody that's actually going through that same thing in their own life, or at least in a way that they can relate to.

Narelle Todd:

Yes, for sure. One of the things I always say to authors, and they often are surprised by this, is I could actually list their five top values just by reading their books.

S.E. Smith:

Yeah.

Narelle Todd:

That's how much of who an author is, like their core essence is, comes out into a book. You get common themes and common things happening, and you can tell what their value system is just from reading their books.

S.E. Smith:

Yes.

Narelle Todd:

So that's how much of an author goes into a book. I just like to encourage authors to also then, there's so much of you in there anyway, it's just this next step to put the emotion in. Feel it all into the book. And I think that then helps take your writing to that next level. And of course, then your sales as well.

S.E. Smith:

Well, and you're more relatable to the reader. And I love the way you connected with how you could pick out those key things from a story about an author. Because oftentimes when we're at a convention, and a reader that's fallen in love with your work, they're willing to travel long distances and spend lots of money to come see you, to come meet you, because of the worlds that you've created. And so if you are a lot like what you're writing, then it helps them with that connection too, because there'd be nothing worse for you to write one way and then they come meet you and you're like totally different. And so I think, for me, it's all about the honesty, I guess in a way. It's the honesty. I am an honest representation of my writing. So if you read it, I've got the humor, I've got the love for adventure, interests, the friendship, the loyalty, the love for family. All of that comes through in my stories, but it also comes through when my readers come and they visit me at the different conventions.

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Narelle Todd:

Yes. So important to have that congruence between who you are as an author when they meet you, as to who you are on page. And so often we hear stories of people who meet their favorite author or meet their favorite actor or something like that, and they're just like, "These are just two different people."

S.E. Smith:

Yes. And then they become disconnected and disappointed, which is really the sad part.

Narelle Todd:

Very much so. So I mean, just in wrapping up. Our three points for emotion, when it comes to writing. So our first one was to recognize your emotions. To actually know what they are. And to embrace them. To be okay with having deep or strong emotions. It's not a bad thing, despite what society may tell us from time to time. And then two is to use that in your writing. And you gave some great examples there of how you do that one.

S.E. Smith:

And it's just so important to make your stories come alive, to have that connection.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah, definitely. And then our third one is to connect with readers then through emotion.

S.E. Smith:

And pull them in. The fact that you're doing that connection. When they read you in your books, and then they see you in person. It's like I said, my favorite time when I go to conventions is sitting in the lounge or lobby or the bar area, and I usually find a couch area. And then just readers and authors both just all start congregating. And we usually end up as a big group. And we just have a lot of fun just talking about anything and everything.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah. Because they know you. They feel they know you. And it really doesn't matter what genre you're writing in.

S.E. Smith:

No, it does not.

Narelle Todd:

Fiction. It's-

S.E. Smith:

And that's what I think a lot of people miss with the non-fiction. Non-fiction needs to be told about life stories, because that's exactly what we're doing here is non-fiction. But it's so that the people can connect with you, and they're learning. They're taking and applying it to their life, because every situation, every person that you've ever met, has had some influence on you and some influence in your life. Has made a change. And it could just be something that they said that suddenly clicks a light bulb in your head, or something that they did

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that resonated, that, "Yes, this was the right thing for me." And it's such a wonderful world and such a wonderful opportunity that you don't want to miss out.

Narelle Todd:

Yes. Well, that's the power of storytelling. You need to bring in the whole ... all of the aspects of life need to come into the story. It can't just be the dry recitation of-

S.E. Smith:

The perfect sentence.

Narelle Todd:

Yeah.

S.E. Smith:

The grammar rules. I'm good at breaking the grammar rules.

Narelle Todd:

It's okay because you've got all this other stuff. I think emotion ... I mean, grammar is necessary, don't get me wrong here, people. But I think emotion tops grammar.

S.E. Smith:

Yes. [crosstalk 00:14:14].

Narelle Todd:

I'd rather read an author, say, with 80% correct grammar with emotion, than someone who's 100% correct.

Okay. Well there's three tips for the day. So basically go out there, feel all the emotions, and then put it into your writing.

S.E. Smith:

I hope you enjoyed this week's podcast. And we look forward to talking to you guys again next week.

Narelle Todd:

Hey, thanks for joining us today. You know we've got way more information we want to share with you to increase your book sales. So please come and join me at facebook.com, Get My Book Out There.

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