



Publish Your Purpose Episode 2

Jenn: We are here to record episode #2 of our podcast and we also have video available for those who are interested. Today I want to talk about you and your vision. I want to get into your head really because the whole purpose of our podcast is to share with people the roller-coaster and journey of becoming an author. You have started your authorship journey in the Purpose Driven Author's Academy [PDAA]. I wanted to look at the first things we talk about in the Academy and take a temperature of where you were at the time, how you felt; were you overwhelmed? Were you underwhelmed? All kinds of that good stuff. How do you feel about that as an agenda?

Mark: This is great. Thank you. I'm very happy to be here.

Jenn: The PDAA's purpose is to guide you as the new author, who has a story, you want to share it, you want to make an impact and now you have to figure out how to actually do all of it. One of the things I really focus on is what your vision is. How are you going to make that vision come to reality? Can we start at the beginning – How did you feel and what were you thinking about that first day that you joined your first Zoom call with your fellow Academy students?

Mark: It was quite something. If you could picture this room and a bunch of yellow sticky notes that are flying around the room and I'm pulling them down one at a time. The Academy was a whirlwind of thoughts and notes and activities that were going on in my mind. The first class I was very excited to meet everybody else. I didn't know anything like this existed before. That was able to bring it down to zero. Start it at zero and chart the course.

Jenn: How long had you been thinking about your book? Writing different versions, different chapters? What was the evolution of that? Why now, or a couple of months ago, at the time of our recording? Why was that the right time for you to start this?

Mark: There were a couple of milestones that I'd gone through in my life that first started the idea and notion. It was all the way back in Afghanistan. When I was there and I realized that I was fighting a war in a country and I was fighting for more rights for them to enjoy in their country than as a closeted gay man in the military than I would enjoy in my own



country. I think that as a way of escape I was drafting an outline in my own mind, of what Served in Silence really meant. I put a pin in it a couple of times. It's been a few years in the making. At least the outline. And then it wasn't until a few years ago that I got very serious about it. Talked to different people about how could I actually start writing an actual manuscript. I relied on friends and family. Maybe to just tell them stories. Then they would write about those stories for me. And help me get an inventory of the manuscript together. As life would happen, we weren't proceeding as quickly as I wanted to, then I finally crossed paths with Purpose Driven Publishing.

Jenn: You said you were sitting on the outline for a while. One of the things that we're really intending to cover as we chronicle your entire journey from being in the Academy, starting to get the work done and having a manuscript and then starting the whole publishing process with us. One of the things we want to be focused on, is the roller coaster. Is the emotional journey. Is all of those things that nag at you where you yourself know that you need to get this done. But you're also in your own way, you're your own worst enemy sometimes. (I'm saying "you" but I mean the collective "you".) You said that you sat with that outline for a while. Can you think specifically why it took you as long as it did to not find the right time? The timing wasn't right for whatever reason but can you think of ways in which you might have just been belittling the idea or saying this isn't important or any of those self-limiting beliefs. Were you having any of that? I know that comes up in the process. Were you having that before you even were really getting the outline on paper?

Mark: Absolutely! That is the number one thing. You've got good cop/bad cop on whichever shoulder: "No, you can't do this." "No, you're not good enough." "Who do you think you are?" "You're not going to write this book!" "you're not gonna write it."

I think that you will find that being a student in the course is there are a couple of things we do that hold you accountable. So you're either half in, if you're kind of going in, if you're tip toeing in the water, there are certain things the Academy will do that will help you be all in and hold you accountable.

Up until that point, there were lots of things going on in my life. I wasn't fully out, as they say, as a gay man, I was in the military, there were family issues, just a period of all kinds of other things. It wasn't until late that I finally realized (not a lot of things sit on my to do list very long), and this one has. I decided now was the time to place the boot squarely where it needed to go. The PDAA helps do that, gently but squarely as necessary.

Jenn: I'm happy to be the boot.



So thinking about needing accountability, needing to kick people in the right direction, gently shove in the right direction. For somebody who is watching or listening, and they're thinking "Wow, Mark is so brave to share his story!" – what is that distilled nugget of wisdom that you think you can even give to somebody who is in that phase right now. Someone thinking "I have this story, I just don't know what to do with it." How do you give confidence or that boost of support to someone that is on the fence, or might be in their tenth year of thinking about it, but not actually taking action? What was it for you, do you think?

Mark: I think two things – One is that you'll know. When you are listening to this podcast, if you are watching this podcast, there is something in your character or make-up that has you as a purpose driven person... to be here. That is part of the make-up. The other thing is the timing. The right time in your life, depends on your family and then your support system. That all combined with the Academy. When you take a look at that first email that you get: "Welcome to the Academy. Here is your introduction. Here is the curriculum. Here is the time line. Really start to immerse yourself into that curriculum, I think there's a safety almost to put the armor on and think "there's a lot of things I don't know about this." "I know I want to write a book. I don't know how to write a book. That's why I'm here."

I think you have to just take it on faith. You've got to take the step. You've got to be able to move forward. What really helped me do that. There was a lot of content. A lot of structure. I really needed that because the last few years I would go in and be all gung ho and then feel "you're not really good enough." And then it would take maybe three or four months to build back up that energy again and be positive and get motivated to get back and do it again. What attracted me so much for the Academy is just that.

When you get that first email, get the password to your account, and you see what the curriculum is going to be, and if you're a bad student and you read ahead and start digging in and you see "wow, this is really exciting!" For me it was a combination of having a great support system. I built one myself. I knew I needed to have that around me. I'm just that type of person. Everybody around me, my friends, my partner, we all had to be focused on the same goal. That really does start at week one talking about that.

Jenn: Speaking of goals, this is a perfect segue to where I wanted to take this conversation: Lisa Corrado on the PDP team, is really all about being the boot, putting it squarely where it



belongs and making sure that you're accountable and have your goals properly set and formed.

Let me back up a minute... Somebody listening to this and thinking "I want to do this." And you're sharing really good wisdom from your own personal experience. The next hurdle people have to get through is how do they fit this into their lives? The Academy, as it stands as we record this, is a fourteen week program (it could be different by the time someone listens to this podcast), but that's a commitment. That's a fourteen week commitment. That's just the beginning. There's so much writing that has to be done. There's so much behind the scenes work that has to be done, that nobody sees but you.

From that goal setting standpoint, when you were thinking "how am I going to fit this into my life?" You have an important job, you have a spouse, you have a life, you travel, you do all these things... how were you able to really strategically set the proper goals so you felt like you're going to meet them vs. being something that is totally unrealistic and you're saying "I'm going to have a book done in two months" which it's not realistic. For you personally, what was that goal setting process like?

Mark: It was pretty amazing. If you just take a look at the curriculum and the process. I make fun of myself later about this too, I really hated this. I thought it was very patronizing "Just trust the process" "trust the process". Not feeling comfortable about this process. But it is so true. Once you get into the Academy, there is a formula that you learn, and it all builds on the next one. It is so expertly done, that you don't even know it until you get an aha moment a few weeks down the road. Ha ha I've done that. You have to re-accomplish and re-doing the process.

In the very beginning was simple things. Making a commitment to yourself and a contract with yourself. And that goes into the vision. What you are really setting out to do. Is it going to be perfect? No. Are you going to put it on a white board and erase it and keep adding to it? Yes. I hope so. But what was amazing about it is, when you get to the goal setting... Lisa is just amazing... amazing, because you kind of got beat up at first. But she does it in such a nice way. Everybody loves her. She is one of the other boots that we talk about, kicking your butt along here. The first week that we talk to her, in the goal setting process, it was everybody was just going through the motions. I don't think we understood. I don't think that we really put our hearts into it. She called us on it. It wasn't pretty at first. She said "we'll meet again NEXT week and re-do that again." Nice try, but No. And it wasn't until then that everybody got permission to roll up their sleeves and say "what do I want? What do I want out of this process?" you are paying for this. You are committing your time to this. The classes that you have and going through the interactive



weekly videos is just a smidge, a portion of it. There's a lot of work that you have to do weekly. What does that look like? How do you fit that in? Just like anything else in your life, if it's important enough, you're going to make the commitment and you're going to do it.

18:49 – Commercial break

Jenn – You've just alluded to this whole idea of permission. I think Lisa needs to make an appearance on the show. We will make that happen. Talk about permission. What did being granted permission do to your ability to be productive?

Mark: You're asking me what would I do or how would I encourage somebody watching this? They're thinking about taking the Academy. It's all about permission up front. Let's face it, the feelings are very similar. You're going to have classmates that are going through the same thing that you are. You're going to have Jenn and her incredible staff that is on call for you, and sending out your May Day/SOS email, when you're feeling at your lowest. That's about permission. Is it okay that I'm feeling this way? I just want to throw in the towel. What have I done? In the very beginning it was about permission.

The other thing, what I love and respect about Lisa, is that she gives you permission to dream big. To dare to be great. You just need that positive reinforcement. You can just tell that she is the kind of person to put an arm around you; to be a good friend; to give you a tough love hug and say "okay. That wasn't really what we're looking for. What is it that you REALLY want to do? What are your goals?" And then we started painting some dreams. In our class talking about climbing Kilimanjaro.

It was really just giving yourself permission. Once again, it's part of the formula. When you shut off the camera, when you shut off your live feed, now you're just at your desk, you give yourself permission to write. You give yourself the permission and the time away from the family, friends out doing fun things, you've given yourself permission to be the author that you want to be.

Jenn: Do you think, for you, that extends into the perfectionism trap that many of us find ourselves in? Where you're giving yourself permission that it doesn't have to be perfect?

Mark: I wish that we could write that formula in and of itself! Perfectionists and "A" personality type people, let's face it, we're tough on ourselves. We're tough even getting through the day, let alone trying to accomplish something. Give yourself a chance. Again, that's permission. I felt that through the course, the Academy, (took me a couple of weeks to



figure this out), I felt comfortable in the fact that “You’re okay. You’re giving yourself permission to do this.” And once I did that, and took those blinders away, my field of vision started opening up a little more. I was able to write more freely.” Because it was just that one little word – permission. But it was so amazing and when Lisa does it for you in your class, you will be amazed at what will happen to your ability and writing.

Jenn: I think that’s so important. I think that contract that you mentioned before... the contract with yourself. It’s a matter of getting the permission slip (Lisa provides an actual permission slip for you to hang somewhere as a reminder that you are giving yourself permission to pursue this dream) and then there’s the contract with myself. I ask all the students to sign. It’s what it sounds like – a contract with yourself. Talk to me about that... was that valuable? Is it serving a purpose now that you’re almost done with the Academy?

Mark: It was pretty amazing. It sounds a little cheesy. It sounds like “How old are we? Are we going back to elementary school?” I bet I was one of the first people to hit Print, and I resized it, I wanted it done, and on my desk, I signed it and scanned it, sent it back to the teacher. Jenn had a copy. I like to get my homework done. I took it to the next level too because I brought it down and put it on my refrigerator. Mr. Wonderful got to see that too so that he realized... “Okay he’s not here to watch game of thrones with me right now... but that’s okay. He’s working on a commitment to something that he has committed to and this isn’t work.”

In that same first week, lot of conversation at my house at the dinner table, it helps set and put yourself in this position, almost ready to receive. If you aren’t ready to receive (like first day of class, you have your notebook, do you have your pens/pencils?), are you ready to prepare to launch. I did that throughout the whole house. I got rid of obstacles. I made sure I wasn’t going to be doing study time when maybe it was around meal time. Or when I knew that the neighbors would drop by. Then I talked it over with Mr. Wonderful and my friends. I said Sunday is my day to get all my homework done and get ready for the week. Tuesday from 2-3 is the power hour with Jenn and the team from PDP and classmates.

You learn so much from each other. It’s been so valuable just listening. It’s kind of nice because “All right, somebody else is out there feeling naked and afraid and raw and going through these same emotions that you are.”

Jenn: It’s spot on with everything that you’re saying. For somebody listening to this and they don’t have any intention of being in the Academy... all of these things still apply. It’s



really about making that commitment to yourself that this is a priority. We can make room for things that are important to us. Maybe giving up watching GOT the night it comes out. Or maybe it's giving up a vacation because you have to do this. Because, on

the other side of that, there's a very big vision, that you're trying to get to. It is all of that hard work and the behind the scenes dedication.

I use running as an analogy (love that you are also a runner), when I ran my marathon... there were days when I was miserable and I was running in 12 degree weather. I am running in 90 degree weather. And nobody saw any of that. But it's that commitment to say, "this is for me" and for those to see me crossing that finish line. In this case, it's the book. The book is being published. There's a lot of very minutia type of steps that have to happen in order for you to get there.

I think often people see new authors and they see books coming out, and they're seeing the end product. They're saying "Wow, Mark's amazing. Mark's incredible. Look at this book. It's so awesome, he must have just [snaps fingers] did that and then the book appears." When in reality it's been a journey of a lifetime (when writing a memoir) and then also its all of these steps that have to just happen. Some days you don't want to do it but, guess what, you're the only one that can do it. A publisher, any other publisher, we can take the logistical barriers, we can eliminate the headaches, but we can't do anything if you're not putting the words on paper. That's where the rubber meets the road in so many instances.

27:30 –

Do you have a nugget of wisdom or piece of advice or question to ask that the person listening to this would say "I want to take action today."? What is that next actionable step? A baby step that someone can take?

Mark: The next actionable item would be having a very honest conversation with yourself. In the car, out for a run, in the mirror, whatever it is. Make that commitment to yourself. If you're willing to have the conversation and make the commitment, then the next thing to do is really to pick up the phone, call Jenn and the team or go out on the website and take a look at the curriculum, you will quickly see that the author's Academy is the road map, the compass, if you're tired of running in circles, and you're tired of all of those sticky notes swirling around, then this is the way to get it grounded. It really has been an incredible journey with regards to getting organized.



Taking 14 weeks, I made the commitment to my family. We gave up vacations. We like to travel a lot. “For the next 14 weeks we’re not going on any vacations.” I am just going to hunker down, do some staycations and work. Focus on this for myself. If you’re at that stage and having that discussion, and you’re still unsure, or you’re still just don’t know what you don’t know? Then don’t even hesitate. Get on the website, make an

appointment with Jenn and her team and ask her the question. Tell her where you are in your journey and is this going to be perfect for you?

One quick story... I’ve had all of my questions lined up for the first day. I knew in a matter of the first three to five minutes of that first call that I knew that this Academy and this course the way to get from here to on to paper, in 14 weeks I’m going to have a manuscript, that was really motivating to me because it had been a few years to get to this point. This is the first time that I can put it down and say “Okay... We’re going that way. In fourteen weeks. Let’s go. CHARGE!”

Jenn: Ready, Set, Go.

I don’t want this to be an infomercial for the Academy so I will say that there are plenty of times I will talk to somebody and we’re not the right fit. That’s okay. I do my very best to have thorough conversations with people and point them in the right direction. Actually, just yesterday, I spoke to a woman who is writing a fiction book that is very purpose driven. We don’t do fiction. I still spent 45 minutes on the phone with her. I rattled off like a firehose everything that I could think of, every resource I could send her to and just fired it all out there. Because to me, it’s all about giving. My way of giving back is to have these conversations that may not benefit my company, but that person is going to make an impact in the world in a different way.

To be clear, anyone can have a conversation with me. I’m not a hard sales person. I’m not shoving someone into a package. It has to feel like a good marriage. Ultimately the author publisher relationship has to be a strong one. Because there are a lot of bumps in the road. In a few months when we’re in the thick of it, in terms of the editing process, your manuscript there are going to be times when you want to come to my home and pillage and plunder and that’s what just happens because I’m the bad guy. I’m okay in that role. But I try to be super clear with someone. You have to have a good solid foundation in relationship with those you’re working with. Especially when you’re writing a memoir. You’re putting your story in our hands and we’re going to do the best for your story. That’s a big commitment and big trusting relationship.



Mark: Disclaimer – I sent out a letter to whole PDP team to thank them after the class and Jenn called and said “Just remember this. Remember this during the editing phase!”

Jenn: I like to have the expectations properly set. I think a lot of times people do end up walking away from an experience like writing a book. Because the expectations weren't properly laid down. I do my best to lay down the foundation wisely.

That wraps us up for today. Minimum of 25 episodes to do. Incredible for listeners and viewers to just watch your journey. Because, as of today, the end of August, it will be a totally different conversation in March when You're on the other side of it and you're holding a physical book in your hand. That's some serious levels of some craziness. I'm excited for everyone to witness this evolution.

Mark: Very excited. See you next time.

Jenn: Thank you everyone. See you in the next episode.