

**Author Platform Rocket  
-Podcast Transcription-**



**Author Platform Rocket**

**Writing As Healing & Finding Your Inner Warrior**

**Guest: Michelle Bellon**

With **Jonny Andrews**

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**Voiceover:** Welcome to Author Platform Rocket, the highly acclaimed source for actionable business, marketing, and mindset strategy for authors delivered in 20 minutes or less, most of the time. In other words, this is how you sell more books while building a bigger fan base the right way, and here's your host and author, marketing veteran, Jonny Andrews.

**Jonny Andrews:** Welcome back, folks. We are doing the Author Platform Rocket thing again, and today my guest is Michelle Bellon, who's an award-winning author of eight different novels, and what we're going to be talking about is some pretty hardcore stuff I think, and it's using writing as healing. How to use this as something as a catharsis to really helped you kind of work through a lot of the stuff because your story is, as you will see very soon, pretty powerful and pretty impactful. So, welcome to the show. How are you doing?

**Michelle Bellon:** I'm great. Thanks for having me.

**Jonny Andrews:** Awesome. As we were kind of chatting beforehand, I mean, I got to tell you, this is probably the most emotionally driven interview that I've ever done, and so I think it's probably best just to kind of let ... I'm going to hand you the steering wheel as they say in this. I want you to tell folks what's your background, how you got into writing, and what it means to you, and like I told you before, I'll act

as the bumpers on the bowling alley in this one, but I don't think I need to because you're articulating all of this stuff very well, so take it away.

Michelle Bellon:

All right. Well, again, thanks for having me. I'm pleased to be a guest on your show. I specifically am interested in talking about my latest novel, *Breathe In*, and what drove me to write it. It was my eighth novel published, and it recently made finalist in the Book Excellence Awards in thrillers, and the reason I wanted to talk about it specifically is because of my belief that all artists, whether it be musicians, writers, painters, whatever it may be, we use our art form, our medium, as a means to get out certain thoughts, feelings, emotions, and it can be quite healing. It can be very cathartic, and that's always been the case for me.

I wrote *Breathe In* because I had a lot of rage to be very honest. A lot of rage, a lot of anger to get out, and the only way I could really get it out in a therapeutic way was to write a book, and it wasn't about me. The story has nothing really to do with me, but the emotions are very much from me, and I think you'll notice the pattern with all writers, is that they always create stories, plots, and scenes that convey the emotions that they are familiar with, that they want to express, and we're always taught to write what we know, and even if we're writing fantasy or paranormal or whatever it may be, there are always pieces of ourselves that go into those characters in those books, those writings.

So, yeah, that's kind of how *Breathe In* came along. More specifically, how it came along was ... Well, let me tell you a little about myself. I'm a mother of four. I am director of nursing. I've worked my way up in my career as an RN, and before I wrote any books at all, I was married, and I was married for 16 years, an emotionally abusive relationship. The funny thing is is when you're in an emotionally abusive relationship, it often takes you a very long time to even recognize it for what it is. So, it took a long time before I started to realize how manipulated, controlled, kind of sad, kind of lost that I was in that quagmire, and long story short, it ended in a night of violence, and after I was beat up pretty thoroughly, I had had enough, finally. It's sad to say that that's what it took, but I grabbed my children and my dog, and I left and I never looked back.

So, after that, even though that was a really tough time, the next four years were even more difficult because then I was really on my own because before that I got married when I was 21, so I was very young, and this was the first time I was really on my own, and I was on my own with my children, and I had to work my way up in my career so I could make more money and support them, and I moved a couple times and learned what it meant to be independent and face a lot of self things because when you're in a marriage, often we lose kind of a sense of self and independence, especially if you're in a situation where you are controlled and emotionally abused. So you lose that even moreso.

So, I was going through those things, and it was extremely trying. It was extremely painful, and as I worked through a lot of the emotion, I discovered a lot of rage, a lot of anger, and I decided that the best way for me to get that out

was to write a book where I could really funnel that, so I decided to write something that was dark and violent, but in the end it would be powerful because I wanted to show that even in our most vulnerable, darkest phases, we can discover our inner warrior. We can overcome those insecurities, those fears, those demons, and find our true self, our best self and rise above it all.

Jonny Andrews: I love it. No, that's super powerful stuff that you were able to take 16 years of emotional abuse and finally ending in physical abuse and then really just channel that into something, and having done that ... I mean, I guess this might be sort of a vacuous question, but I kind of have to ask you is like, do you feel better?

Michelle Bellon: I do. I actually do, and for multiple reasons. One, I wrote a story ... So, let me tell you a little bit about Breathe In. Breathe In starts out with a very mousy kind of young woman who doesn't understand herself. She never speaks up for herself. She kind of gets pushed around by everyone, and very quickly in the book, she finds herself the victim of a kidnapping, and she ends up in a cabin in the woods and quickly realizes she is the victim of what's going to be a snuff film, but there's a lot of disturbing scenes. There's some violence. There's not a rape scene, but an almost rape, which often in the writing world we're told not to write those sorts of things, not to write about children being abused, women being abused, pets being abused, and I get it. I understand that. We don't want to perpetuate it.

In my mind, writing about that doesn't condone it because those things happen regardless of whether I put it to paper or not. It's happening out there regardless. So, what I wanted to do was still write the scene but show how somebody can get through it, somebody can survive it, and then what they do in the aftermath of that to make things better, to make things right again.

So, Tessa survives this ordeal, she becomes pretty much a kick ass person, and after that, she is left kind of wondering who she is because she is still struggling with a lot of fear and with anxiety and what does this mean and what do I do now, but at the same time she's restless, and she wants to find that person again, and so she starts roaming the streets at night. Next thing you know, she's kind of a social justice vigilante at night, and then by the end of the book she finds out who was in charge of her kidnapping, so lots of twists and turns along the way.

So, yeah, it was helpful, back to the question you had asked, because I was able to write scenes that were raw. They were unhindered. I didn't hold back, and it comes across to my readers. My readers are writing reviews that say, "Wow! This was really hard to read. This was a trigger. It was powerful, but it was wonderful because I was shaking, I was emotional, I was in it, but at the same time I was rooting for Tessa the whole way," and it just goes to show that wonderful, beautiful things can come out of dark places.

So, yeah, I felt better. I felt like I was in tune with Tessa and a lot of other people in the world that face all sorts of abuse. There's so many different kinds of abuse in the world.

Jonny Andrews: Absolutely. It comes off in a lot of insidious ways, and like we were chatting about, emotional is typically one of the hardest to nail down just because it just sort of lives in there and then eventually becomes your own personal narrative if it lasts long enough without any sort of ... You start thinking to yourself, "Oh, maybe I am that person. Maybe I did do that. Oh, jeez."

Michelle Bellon: Oh, absolutely. One of the biggest things I was facing at the very end of my marriage before it became physical is I was really lost to who I was. I was so used to being manipulated and controlled, and I had no sense of self worth. He would tell me I wasn't good enough or smart enough or get mad at me for not working, and then I'd get a job, and then he'd get mad at me because I was working and I wasn't doing a good enough wife or mom, so it was just never good enough, and that constant sense of needing to prove my self worth. I actually became pretty neurotic. I became that wife that was always cooking and cleaning and running all the errands and trying to be perfect, and next thing I know, unhappy in the marriage, but then I'm questioning every doubt I have like, "Well maybe that's not fair. I've got a nice home, and my kids are healthy, and I've got all these other things. It looks like I should be happy. It looks like it should be wonderful, but I'm not. I'm not happy. I feel bad about myself."

And so there was this constant self doubt, and I realized I didn't even trust my own self, my own thoughts, my own feelings, and that's a really scary place to be, and I think that's what's so powerful about people in emotionally abusive relationships is the fact that we so often don't even see it for what it is until it's really late in the game.

I didn't realize what was going on for many years because it was so slow at first. It was just the flow control of who I hung out with and how often I got to leave the house, and next thing I know I'm not really going anywhere and doing anything. I'm just ... It's all about meeting his needs and meeting his criteria.

So, emotional abuse is very insidious. It kind of erodes at you slowly over time, and it can be just as destructive if not more than physical just because not only do you have the physical scars, but you have that identity crisis. Like who am I? I don't even know what am I here for? What am I supposed to be doing? What are my own emotions?

Jonny Andrews: Yeah. That stuff is really powerful, and I talk about, not on an abuse angle necessarily, but the same concept holds true for this is that your personal dialogue, your beliefs, that stuff going on between the ears very much in every single humanly possible way, it dictates the outcomes you're able to achieve in your life or just the way that things go because we're all driving, we're all steering our own ships for the most part, and when that dialogue is going down those dark roads and the beliefs are, as you said, sort of almost slow cooked in

that kind of way to the point where you get there and you're like, "I don't know who I am. I don't know if ... " Sometimes you even begin to believe all of that stuff. It really is beyond damaging. It's essentially sort of like the walking dead for the most part.

Michelle Bellon:

Absolutely, and what you're saying is so true because your internal dialogue, it becomes what they've been telling you. So, at first they are doing the abuse, but then after a while, you start perpetuating it yourself. You tell yourself you're not good enough. You tell yourself you're not smart enough, that you can't get along without them, that you need them, and then even after you break away, that's a hard pattern to break because it's ingrained.

So, now you're just perpetuating the abuser's abuse. You're taking on that role yourself. You're going, "Well, this is what I'm used to. This is the pattern. I'm going to keep doing this to myself. I've extracted myself from the problem, but now I'm so stuck in this pattern. Now I'm just going to be mean to myself. I'm going to be cruel to myself," and that's where that anger stems from.

That's where I was so mad. I was mad because I'd lost 16 years. I was mad because that whole 16 years I had told myself that it's okay, I'm doing the right thing for the children, that it's not really affecting that much, but I'm doing it for the greater good. It's worth it. I was telling myself all those things, and then the aftermath after I left, I started to see how damaging it really was to me, how damaging it really was to my children.

Oh my goodness, the PTSD they had related to it and what they had to overcome. They're doing amazing now, but we had a couple of really rough years because they had their own emotions tied to what their mom went through, what they went through, how they viewed themselves, how they viewed their father, and man, aftermath can be more difficult than when you're in it because now you have to face the anger related to it and the guilt associated with it and the coulda, woulda, shoulda, and that's where that anger boils up inside of you, and if you don't face it, if you don't reconcile it, it can become toxic, and then you just perpetuate the abuse in some other form, whether it's others to ... And usually it's self destructive to be very honest.

So, I recognized it, and I'm a writer, and I love writing, so I decided to just put it all in that book, make it raw, make it powerful, and I even thought, "Maybe I won't even publish it. Maybe people won't want to read something so brutal," and I'll be honest, it's not brutal through the whole book. There's just a few scenes that push that boundary, but the idea of it is that she overcomes it. She faces it. She's ugly in it. She makes bad decisions, but she makes them anyway, and she tries to overcome, and she does. She finds that inner warrior, and then she becomes that kick ass heroine that we all root for in the end.

Jonny Andrews:

Nice. How are you doing today with all this stuff? I mean you were saying you're the director of nursing, and I'm assuming you're still a mother of four, so that typically doesn't go away.

Michelle Bellon:

Yeah, I am. two of my children are adults now. One of them lives out of the home, and the other one's 18. She'll be moving out very shortly, but I still have a 15 year old son at home, and I have an almost 10 year old daughter, and great, we're doing great now.

It was a lot of counseling. It was a lot of struggle. It was a lot of just being there for my children in their dark moments because they had some rage and some anger and some sadness, and my son even got into a little trouble with the law a couple times and has some panic attacks of his own, and I just kept thinking, "I'm going to just stick by him through this. I'm not going to give up on him," and it's amazing because this last year they've just come full circle.

They've become these beautiful, wonderful kids that support each other. They always are hanging out with each other. They're each other's best friends even though they range in ages from nine to 23, and it's just become really great because when you're going through all that, you have moments where you think of giving up like, "Man, I really failed at this. I let them down. They're sad. I'm sad. This is not the life I imagined for myself." That's also something you have to reconcile that your future is not what you thought it was going to be, and you go through dark times where financial stuff's all out of control, home situations are out of control. You're just trying to rebuild. You can even get depressed. You can face depression. You can face questioning if you're even going to make it to the next day, to be honest.

But I developed a sense of gratitude that even if I didn't feel gratitude, I needed to be grateful every day for what I have and never give up, so everyday I would get up, and I would consciously say to myself the things I'm grateful for, and I would be conscious of where I was going, where I wanted to be, what I wanted to accomplish, and I just kept being there for my kids and working it out and finding my own inner warrior and refusing to give into the things.

And it's great because I also believe that sometimes the things you're doing right now don't pay off immediately. Sometimes they pay off way down the road, and for my family, that's exactly what it was. It was a really dark time. It was a hard time for us, but now we're back to being a family. We're really whole. We're healthy. We're making good choices, and it feels good. That's all I can say is a true sense of gratitude.

Jonny Andrews:

That's absolutely fantastic, and I'm super happy to hear that, and it sounds, I mean basically in these kinds of situations, get out, get help, don't quit.

Michelle Bellon:

Absolutely, yeah. I think a lot of women are in situations where they honestly feel stuck. They're like, "Even if I wanted to get out, I can't afford it." That's where I was. He wouldn't let me work. I thought, "Jeez, how am I going to ever take care of my children?" He made more money than me, and you really just think, "I'm stuck. I can't do it. I'm scared. I don't even know how to be alone. I don't know how."

And all I can say to that is reach out to people that have done it. Reach out to people that love you. Reach out to people that support you and believe in you, and just every day think of some way where you can boost yourself up, where you can tell yourself, "I'm just going to get through the day. I'm going to get through this one accomplishment," and it works. It pays off. I doubled my income, I worked my way up in my career, and I'm not saying everybody's going to do that. I mean, life's a struggle. We all have our different paths, but I do believe hard work does pay off.

Jonny Andrews: 100%. Absolutely. Well, I wanted to thank you for coming on because I mean, I know that's a hard story to tell, but that's some super powerful stuff, and I think there's probably way more people out there who need to hear someone such as yourself talking about this stuff than we see on the FBI statistics list, so seriously, thank you so much for coming on. Where can folks find your stuff, more about you and all that?

Michelle Bellon: Well, of course, my website, MichelleBellon.com, and then all my books are on Amazon. Breathe In specifically is the one we're talking about today, and yeah, I just really appreciate you inviting me to be on your show. I hope that anybody that reads that book can just find some sort of inspiration and inner strength for whatever they're going through, and thank you.

Jonny Andrews: Awesome. Thanks so much.

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