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-Podcast Transcription-**



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Voiceover: Welcome to Author Platform Rocket, the highly acclimated 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 your author marketing veteran, Jonny Andrews.

Jonny Andrews: What's up folks? Welcome back to Author Platform Rocket. I am, once again, Jonny Andrews. Today we have a very special guest on. This is part of the author interview series where we're going to find out what's going on in the lives, what folks have gone through, and hopefully a lot of this stuff is going to be able to help you out as well. So, today we are chatting with the award nominated Tricia Copeland, who is the author of the "Being Me" series.

What we're going to be getting into is actually pretty heavy stuff about pressure, lots of how pressure, internal and external, can lead to obsession, how things manifest, and then also how you can get out of situations that might not exactly be healthy. I think when you hear this story, you'll know that I am under exaggerating on this one. So Tricia, what's going on? How are you doing?

Tricia Copeland: I'm good. How are you, Jonny?

Jonny Andrews: It's a delightful day so far. Lots of running amok and headless chickening but that's typical for these kinds of situations. As we were talking about this before and I was getting a handle on what was going on, why don't you tell everybody, give a history and a little background on who you are?

Tricia Copeland: Sure. I grew up in Georgia in a small rural town, decided to escape that town when I went to college. I enrolled in a technical engineering school in college, I had pretty good grades in my small rural town, but got to college and decided or learned or realized that it was little more than I expected. My freshman year went pretty well, got into my sophomore year, and the classes got harder, and the stress of my courses and friendships, relationships, my relationships with my parents were hard because they were still expecting me to have straight As and all these calculus classes, and I was a biology major.

It was very stressful for me, so my coping mechanism became, or I decided that a good coping mechanism for me would be to excel in other areas, and one area that I picked was how I looked and what I ate, and I decided that all needed to be perfect. I started working out and eating really healthy, salads, and then that developed into a situation where I looked great for a while but then I just kept on that path and continued to eat less and less, and continued to exercise more and more, until I developed anorexia, and got to a point where I had lost over 30 pounds.

My low weight when I finally decided to get some help after some heart palpitations and issues, that I weighed 72 pounds and almost died, because my electrolytes were out of balance and really I had no nutrition in my body, and was not able to think rationally enough to get myself help. That was a pretty big low point in the beginning of my junior year of college.

As you might expect, my parents thought, some of my friends thought that I was constantly lying to them, just to try and protect what I thought was my only thing I had. My grades weren't good enough, other things in my life I perceived weren't good enough, so I was going to make that part of my life good enough, and in the end, obviously that didn't work for me. But I was really lucky and got into a really good treatment program and met a lot of good people, medical people, as well as just other people that had been down the same path that helped me in my recovery.

I was able to transfer to a new school that was a lot better situation for me, and I went on to graduate summa cum laude from that school and go to graduate school, and really have everything that I wanted in the beginning. But it just didn't need to be such high pressure for my personality. So, in the end I feel like I'm definitely a stronger person for that, but it was something that was very scary to go through and I'm really passionate about sharing my story so that maybe someone else doesn't have to go through the same thing.

Jonny Andrews: Absolutely. It sounds like a lot of this had something to do with, was it that you were feeling that all of these things were outside of your control and this was

one thing that you could have, like the iron fist of justice, and just hold onto it, do it?

Tricia Copeland: Right. Yeah. I mean, it was one of those things, no matter how hard I worked at my grades, they didn't ever seem to be good enough. All the things, the bubbles that you try to hold up in your life were just falling apart. It was one thing that I was like, "Okay, I can control this. I can weigh how much I want to weigh, or I can look how I want to look."

Jonny Andrews: I get it. So it started off it sounds like as a mechanism for coping with stress, if I heard you correctly. The parents were saying, "Hey, we need to see you doing better" and of course, it sounds like you probably dialed that same sort of expectation up, but you turned your amp to 11 internally, and then this was something that you were like, "Okay, we need to left off some steam." What was the progression like? You were talking about how in the beginning of it it was just like, "Okay, we're going to eat healthy and exercise."

And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, so what was the progression that got you to then you know, 72 pounds?

Tricia Copeland: Well yeah. Like you said, I just started out by running and taking an aerobics class once a day, and then I got really good feedback from that and, "You look great" and had more guys asking me out, and that was wonderful. And then yeah, I just decided, "Hey, it feels good to work out." You get that adrenalin and endorphins, and they all make you feel really good, so I decided to do it more. Whereas, at first I would work out one hour a day and then I would work out two hours a day, and then just gradually reduce my intake of food, too.

So, the combination of those two things is really what tanked my weight in the end. Just trying to keep up my ... It really became a routine, and obsession, with everything always had to be the same, and I had to repeat the same things every day. I think it's really mixed in with OCD and your mind blends into this thing of, "I have to do these things every day and if I don't do them," then you're right, things would be out of control. It was definitely not a good place to be in your mind, and people that haven't been in it, some people may experience this, but when I wanted to get out of it, wanted to get healthy, I literally couldn't do it myself.

It wasn't fun to be in the situation where I felt like I literally almost died, but at the same time, I was grateful that it happened maybe sooner than later, because even in my recovery, I met people much older than me, younger than me too, but older than me that were still struggling with the disease. I saw them and didn't want to be 40-60 years old, and still fighting with the same thought process.

Jonny Andrews: Absolutely.

Tricia Copeland: I felt really lucky to hit a bottom fast and then decided, "Hey, I don't want to be this way. I want a full life."

Jonny Andrews: Yeah, I think that's super important, is recognizing, I like how you were grateful for hitting the bottom sooner rather than later. And it's an interesting phenomenon, because that actually occurs in so many different things, even business and whatnot. I believe it is, what is it Gary Vaynerchuk might have been the guy, who's like "Fail faster" kind of thing. It was either him or Robert Kiyosaki was talking about that. While that's not quite the same situation as this one, it makes a lot of sense.

It's like get to the end now, so that you can say, "Okay, I'm here, let us rebuild" which actually leads me to my next question. As we were talking about before we fired up the show here, you had mentioned that these behaviors, which behaviors do, rewired your brain. So now had these recurring patterns. It was very obsessive, that you were very much entrenched in this, and couldn't see it. It's one of those forest through the trees things, obviously, but on top of that, having a condition like this was clearly not healthy mentally either.

So how did you break those patterns? How did you all, and first of all, even allow people in to have that conversation with you and whatever it was that they did? And then how did you break your patterns and start to develop better ones?

Tricia Copeland: Well, I was in an inpatient treatment center and it was interesting because the person, my psychiatrist, was treating my anorexia much like you would treat a cocaine addict, or an alcohol addiction. Basically, I went into the inpatient treatment with a bunch of alcoholics, and I'm like, "Wait a minute, I'm not an alcoholic." Not that anything is wrong with alcoholics or drug addicts, 'cause that's just as much of a disease as what I had, but of course I was 20 years old and I was like, "Whoa, this is not the right place for me."

They're like, "Yep, you're going to stay here and you're going to eat three meals a day. That's what you're going to do. And if you don't do that, then you're going to the hospital" and I was like, "Huh? Okay." I already knew that me trying to get myself better didn't work, and none of my friends could talk me into getting better. My parents couldn't talk me into getting better, so at that point I was like, "Okay, I've done everything else, I've tried to think of this a different way, so I'm just going to do what you tell me to do."

Ate three meals a day, went to therapy sessions, talked to a lot of people. At that point I had to get physically healthy so that my brain could even work, right? Because when your brain doesn't get the right nutrients, it's a never-ending cycle because it makes you depressed when you're not eating enough or right or healthy, because your brain chemistry is off, so then you're depressed, but you're depressed so you continue the thing that you think's going to make you feel better, but it doesn't really make you feel better.

It's one of those cycles, so really I had to get healthy physically first, and then my brain was working better and I was thinking more logically, and then working with a psychiatrist and a therapist and other people that were recovering in this way, and just talking about my need to have the best grades and have all these things that I thought my life needed to look like on the outside, when really what I needed was to just be happy with what I could do.

I didn't need to make a 4.0 or 5.0, or it used to be a 4.0, but a 5.0 seems to be the goal now, but anyway, so I was just that type of personality, that I always wanted to do the best at everything. And realizing that I could let go of those things and people would still see value in me, even if I wasn't making straight As.

Jonny Andrews: No, that's a really valuable lesson. We are not what we do all the time. If I'm hearing this correctly, it sounds like there was one of the big ones was removal from the environment, where the problem was living?

Tricia Copeland: Yeah. I did decide to go to a different school and get out of that one school environment. I took a year off from college all together. I got a full time job, I got my own apartment, and then made decisions from there, where I wanted to go next. I enrolled in a different school that's more of a liberal arts school instead of this high pressure engineering school, so that was really good for me.

Jonny Andrews: Excellent, yeah. Also just to get you into, you said it was an inpatient center, correct?

Tricia Copeland: Yes. I was inpatient for only five days, because of insurance reasons, but then I did a 30 day all day program, in a halfway house. I lived with other people that were recovering from eating disorders, and then during the day we were all together in like a therapy recovery program. That was very helpful for me.

Jonny Andrews: Change the environment, change the story, and change the behaviors, and I'm assuming it sucked at first.

Tricia Copeland: Oh yes. There was lots of not feeling happy and just being very depressed and sad. Of course, you're mad at yourself too, 'cause I did it to myself. Yeah, I was really not myself for a long time, because you look back and you're like, "Well, I could have prevented that."

Jonny Andrews: Makes sense.

Tricia Copeland: [crosstalk 00:13:09]. Everybody's at different places and you have different coping mechanisms.

Jonny Andrews: Absolutely. Now you were talking about how some of the characters in your books, you were saying they aren't necessarily written from you, but they do mirror those patterns. Talk a little bit about that.

Tricia Copeland:

Right. When I started writing, it was more to entertain myself and my husband bought me a computer, he was like, "Here." 'Cause I was staying at home with three young kids, and at night I would write instead of watching TV, and I wrote probably 180,000 words of my first two books, just writing in the evenings after my kids went to bed, but it was very much a character who was starting, she was 18, starting out in college, and thought she had it all together.

And then little things start happening to her to break down, or things that were out of her control, and things that she hadn't planned for, and her reaction to those was similar to my journey, and eventually she develops anorexia too, and has to find a way out of that. But I liked writing, it was interesting, because very early on an agent said to me, "Oh, I wanted this story wrapped up in the one book." And I was like, "Well, I did say in my letter it was a series, but okay."

But I was like, I couldn't sell it in one book, because I wanted to show that it could be a normal person who might just fall into these patterns or fall into this way of thinking, or a seemingly normal person. I don't know what normal is, but anyway. That might fall into these patterns and [inaudible 00:14:48] really need extra help with something. I even thought of myself that way, and I had everything, I was fine, I was normal.

I was this middle income, middle America person. Why would I have anything extreme happen to me? It could be anybody that has these episodes in their life and they need help, but little things can add up to that, and then how do we get through that with the help of others around us, or therapists, or whoever we need to go to to come out of those things and be healthier?

Jonny Andrews:

Absolutely. I really like that. This is in your past, as you were saying earlier. It's something that maybe it pops up every now and then just in the back of your mind, but it sounds like this has been very almost cathartic to be able to write about these things. Hopefully some folks, when they read what you're doing, they're able to get something out of that maybe for themselves. Have you had anyone write in about how this might have helped them?

Tricia Copeland:

I have. I met a lady a couple of years back at one of the author conferences, conventions. It was an author signing and she picked up my book and she got two or three books in, and she ended up emailing me and saying, "Thank you so much for" ... And it just made me feel so good, because she didn't have the same experience. She had another mental health issue, but it was just really good that she reached out and said, "Thank you so much for writing this." I really try to write things from the positive perspective, and how you overcame it, and how you can be an advocate for yourself and empower yourself.

Obviously you can't, a lot, just like I explained, I wasn't able to get out of it myself. It did take a village to help me, but you should reach out and get help from other people, because as humans, I don't think we're made to be an island person. Yeah, that was a really good experience for me, and it was neat to have

that person reach out to me and say thank you, so I really appreciated her doing that.

Jonny Andrews: That's awesome. Well, I wanted to thank you so much for coming on and sharing your story in this. 'Cause I think like I was saying earlier, I really think that these stories from actual people can probably help. Where can folks find more about you?

Tricia Copeland: I have a website. My website is TriciaCopeland.com, so it's T-r-i-c-i-a-C-o-p-e-l-a-n-d.com. I have all my books there, and I also have on social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, really anywhere you want to go on social media. But I love connecting with readers and other authors, too. I'd love to hear from people.

Jonny Andrews: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming on. This has been absolutely great.

Tricia Copeland: Oh, thank you Jonny. I appreciate you having me.

Jonny Andrews: All right. Talk soon.

Tricia Copeland: Take care.

Jonny Andrews: All right. That does it for another round of AuthorPlatformRocket.com. Remember, we're here to help you with your business, marketing, and mindset, so if you have a question, want us to cover a topic, or interview a special guest, just shoot over an email to show@authorplatformrocket.com. As always, we need your reviews and support. If you like what you're hearing, please leave us a glowing review on iTunes and forward this show to an author friend who might need the love and assistance.

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