

# **EXISLE ACADEMY**

## **THE BUSINESS SIDE OF PUBLISHING**

**MODULE 3 OF 4 — PUBLICITY AND MARKETING**

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# **The Business Side of Publishing**

## **Module 3: Publicity And Marketing**

Before customers can buy your book, they first need to hear about it. In fact they need to hear about it and see it several times before they are likely to buy. You need to build, or help your publisher build, a virtuous cycle where one review leads to another and where there are enough people who have enjoyed the book that they start recommending it to their friends. It is personal recommendations that will ensure the long sales life of your book, so you need to get enough of these to reach a positive tipping point in sales. And that means you need to have a lot of things going on. Do not depend on your book being seen online or in a bookstore, where only about a quarter of all books are purchased on impulse. You need to have people going into the book stores asking for it, so that the booksellers are sure to order it. At the Academy we recommend the rule of five..

### **THE RULE OF FIVE**

Your book should be seen by your prospective customer in at least five outlets before you can expect a sale. If one of those outlets drops out, sales will decline by more than the sales that outlet would have made. This is because the various exposures have a multiplying effect on both the customer's retention and recognition of your work and their decision to buy. People are not fond of parting with money, so it is reasonable to assume that once they've heard about a book and then seen it, people will still wait a while before forking out. It helps if the outlets are complementary. For example, a book on a motor cycle tour across Australia could appear in the travel section of a bookstore, in a special offer from within a motorcycling magazine, in a couple of places within online book stores, in a motorcycle supply shop and on a Facebook motorcycle enthusiast's page.

## TIMING

Bookstores are more likely to stock your work if they know in advance what publicity to expect for your book. The more information the publisher's sales force has about publicity that will appear alongside the book's release, the more they will be compelled to stock it. You need to know how far ahead of the publication date your salespeople will be seeking orders, so that you can ensure they are armed with this information in time for it to be useful.

For the online space, having advance orders placed with vendors such as Amazon or Booktopia will flag the book as a potential success and trigger their buying algorithms to order more. It's therefore helpful for you to direct some of your personal contacts to these online vendors and encourage them to place a pre-order.

## A NOTE ON LAUNCHES

These lovely events can sell books but they often don't sell enough to cover time and costs. Media very rarely attend. So, unless you want to do this as a way of wishing your book well and launching it into the world with friends, wine and smiles, don't bother. Better to put your effort and money into publicity and sales. If you must have a launch and you expect to get sales, make sure you cover the basics correctly and ideally work with an experienced independent bookseller. Bear in mind that they may ask for a contribution towards costs, so check how many people they anticipate bringing in from their own customer base as well as your contacts. If you hold the launch privately, be sure to stress that you are there to sell books — and have credit card facilities handy and a friend to do the transactions, leaving you free to sign books. It might sound obvious, but before you book the event make sure that stock will be available in time and place your order for books well in advance to ensure you have books on the day. Write out an agenda for the evening. A time after work, towards the end of the week — ideally a late-night shopping day, which is often a Thursday — is normally the most popular.

Be aware that launches attract freeloaders. They will eat your canapés, drink your wine but not buy anything ... and you will not see them again. A ratio of one sale for every two people at the function is particularly good. Be sure to send your invitations out at least two weeks prior and send a reminder closer to the time. Do make sure to let your publisher know the details, so they can help by promoting the event through their channels. While media attendance at such events is rare, do reach out to your local newspaper or community Facebook group and extend an invitation to them. Sometimes suburban and regional publications will be happy to do a piece on you as a local author, even if they do not attend the event in person. Make your pitch as newsworthy as possible. 'Local man writes book' is not a headline, but a backstory about a trend towards bike riding to lower fossil fuel consumption might be. Similarly, a great photo opportunity might be the carrot you need. If you will be riding in on a head-turning bike, make sure the media know that.



Have someone other than you act as the Master of Ceremonies; this leaves you free to mingle. When you find a customer you didn't know and they buy a book, learn all you can about how they heard of it and why they ordered it — this information will help you sell future books. Often book launches have a visitor's book where people can write their name, address and email contact.

As well as a bookstore launch, consider delivering talks held in libraries, social clubs and public halls. These events can be risky though. Some work well, while others — even by high profile authors — fail. It's a good idea to hold your event where people are likely to be anyway. Once, the director of Madam Tussauds in London guaranteed a celebratory crowd by having his launch among the waxworks. So, if you can, find an interesting place that will attract people on its own merits.

If you are launching a children's book, be mindful of your audience. By definition it is likely to be full of children. Resist the urge to make long, lyrical speeches and thank a cast of thousands. Make it fun. Invite your guests to dress in character, do a reading with a bit of theatre, ply them with themed food, hand out craft packs so that they stay engaged with your book and don't get bored and restless.

## **A NOTE ON ADVERTISING**

Perhaps surprisingly, publishers generally do not advertise their books. They spend their money instead on specialist publicity experts, often in house, who seek reviews and media coverage for their books. As an author or a self-publisher, the most important and effective publicity that will drive people towards the sales tipping point is consumer reviews for your book.

## **CUSTOMER REVIEWS**

Even just a couple of real, positive reviews on websites like Amazon, Goodreads and your publisher's own website can have an immediate and dramatic impact on your sales:

1. They convince potential buyers that your book is good. This is the obvious point. Good reviews mean that people who have ALREADY found your book on a website like Amazon know that it delivers on its promise and is worth the investment.
2. They make it easier for people to FIND your book in the first place. There are millions of books on Amazon and your presence in their search results is a huge factor in how many people will even see your book in the first place. Amazon's algorithm gives better placement to books with many good reviews, so more reviews means more people will find your book.
3. They validate your book for other buyers and reviewers. Trade and media contacts who are coming into the game on your book late are likely to check Amazon to see that your book is popular and well liked.



## TRAPS TO AVOID

If you go on Google and look at tips for getting consumer reviews of your book, you will find there are a lot of weird and wonderful strategies out there that might seem tempting. But do not be fooled by the easy route. If anyone could pay \$50 or so and get 10 'legitimate 5-star reviews' then we would all be on the NYTimes bestseller list, right? Real reviews cannot be bought or bribed. Even sending a gift certificate or giving something away in exchange for your review violates Amazon's policies and will lead to the reviews getting taken down or worse.

Reviews need to be real from people who have genuinely read your book and are motivated by a sincere desire to express their opinion on it. But that does not mean you need to leave it to chance! There are many legitimate and effective things you can do to encourage and generate reviews of your book.

## REVIEWS FROM PEOPLE YOU KNOW

A lot of the reviews you get will be from people in your network who are already familiar with you and your work. The earlier you get organized, the more you will be able to leverage this group to get the ball rolling and build reviews and momentum for your book. If you are successful in this phase, you can recruit your own network as a mini army that will go forth and spread the word for you far and wide.

## FINDING YOUR FANS

Some call this your 'Tribe' or your 'Launch Team'. The idea is that you generate a group of anywhere from a dozen or so to a couple of hundred people who know you and are familiar with your work. They will be the first to order your book and leave a (hopefully glowing!) review of your book as soon as it is released.

If you have an established email newsletter or social media community, then you have already got this covered. If you do not, then it's time to do some thinking. Who in your network would be interested in your book, and how can you best bring these people together and contact them regularly in a helpful, non-spammy way? Do you belong to the same Facebook groups or internet forums? Do you network in the same circles? Could you start a Facebook page or discussion group and invite them to join and follow? You might want to segment this so that you can better hone your message; for example, you could reach out to business connections on LinkedIn and personal connections on Facebook.

There is no doubt that you have a professional and/or personal network of people who will enjoy and benefit from your book; bringing them together is an important next step in the marketing process. The earlier people are engaged with your book, the more successful your launch will be.

## A ROUGH TIMELINE OF WHAT TO SAY WHEN

- 1) Approximately 6 months out from the publication date: Announce the launch date! Start building excitement.
- 2) Approximately 3 months out: Share the link on Amazon. Your book will already be available for pre-order, and the number of pre-orders you get will significantly influence how much Amazon will promote your book.
- 3) Approximately 1 month out: Remind everyone of the launch date and share the Amazon link.
- 4) 2 weeks out: Remind again; build excitement.
- 5) Launch day: Share the link and mention that readers should leave reviews on their favourite platform, such as Amazon or Goodreads.
- 6) Two weeks after: Ask for reviews.

Of course, this is not all you should be sharing! Share tips, samples, small extracts to energize, reward and build excitement. But make sure you are ticking off the steps below as well. Everything needs to be done in your own style, in your own voice. Channel your real excitement, and write to your audience in a respectful, approachable way that echoes how you would really talk to a friend.

## ONCE THE BOOK IS OUT, JUST ASK

Believe it or not, but asking for a review is a powerful thing all on its own. If someone writes to you about your book, if someone mentions it to you in conversation, if you see someone reading it on the bus, just ask them to leave a review! They will usually be happy to help you out. Every review adds up and will make a huge, long-term difference to your sales.

## PEOPLE YOU DO NOT KNOW

For your review strategy to be successful, it helps to also go beyond your personal network. This is especially important if your platform is relatively new and you do not yet have thousands of followers hanging off your every word.

- **Contact top reviewers:** Amazon has a list of top reviewers at <https://www.amazon.com/review/top-reviewers>. These are people who have reviewed hundreds if not thousands of books and been thanked for their work. Consider going through the list and finding people who review books that are in the same space as yours. Then write to them, politely letting them know about your book and asking whether they would consider checking it out. Keep your outreach polite, open and to the point. Do not expect to hear back from more than one in every five or ten people you contact.
- **Join Goodreads Groups:** Goodreads is an important platform that, funnily enough, is owned by Amazon. Goodreads has a lot of groups: <https://www.goodreads.com/group>. Have a look through and see if there are groups that are relevant



to your book. Join as early as possible and participate actively, making yourself a useful member of the tribe. Then, when the time comes, you can politely mention your book and ask for reviews. Being an active reviewer yourself might help to build good will.

- **Network with other authors:** You might think that other authors in your space are natural competitors, but in fact they are potential allies. Review the books you like, join the communities that the authors in your space are in, and make yourself a positive and helpful presence. Reciprocity may kick in, leading to more reviews, exposure and of course, sales! Check sites like <https://www.indiebound.org/> to find other authors whose communities you can join for inspiration and networking.

Get out and spread the word! You worked hard to create this book, so now be proud of it and openly invite people to claim their copy and share their opinion. Get started as early as possible, and do not be afraid to simply ask.

Finally, be sure to use all the opportunities for authors that online sites provide for you to talk about yourself and your book. This is free advertising in the right place, so use it! Start with ensuring you have an author page on Amazon by visiting Amazon Author Central in the relevant market.

## MEDIA EXPOSURE

Media coverage is important for your book for several reasons:

- It helps potential buyers find out about your work.
- The media exposure gives booksellers the confidence to order your book and reorder it when they run out.
- It helps booksellers to remember your work and recommend (hand sell) it to their customers.
- It builds your reputation and credibility and, in a weird circuitous way, makes it easier for you to get more coverage in the future.

Two examples of press releases are attached to this module. They are a cheat-sheet for journalists to quickly find out the key details about your book and offer a newsworthy hook to help it get the attention of the editor. Press releases should include a short blurb/ description of the book, its price, when it is released, the cover, contact details and a call to action (offer of a review copy, extract or interview). They should also include some biographical information about the author, a little about what the book has to offer that is unique and, most importantly, a media hook (more about that below).

As important as this tool is, press releases are likely to be deleted or binned if they are sent untargeted. You need to find the person in the media outlet you want to talk to and approach them directly, supplying either an information sheet or a press release and asking if they would like a copy of the book for review or offering yourself for interview. Do not send copies of your book on spec; these are often treated as gifts by the recipient's office and you will never hear anything again. What you need to do is to provide a contemporary, relevant 'hook' — a link between your work and today's news — and pitch it in a way that is relevant to the type of media outlet you are talking to.

For a story to get the attention of journalists, the hook needs to be crafted in a way that is mindful of news values (a set of criteria that editors use to decide if they should run a story).

## NEWS VALUES FALL INTO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

- A) **Conflict** — an example of this might be to identify some myth or misinformation about the topic you are writing about and offer an opposing point of view.
- B) **Timeliness** — your information needs to be relevant now. The fresher your information, the more likely it is to get coverage. Alternatively, you might choose a festival or national holiday or season to use as a timely lever. The motorcycle book author might offer an article on tips for keeping your face from freezing while riding in winter just as the weather begins to get cold.
- C) **Proximity** — news outlets like to be relevant to the communities they serve. For this reason, make sure you reach out to your local publication and let them know about your work. Similarly, if your book has a story about the best bike road trips and where to find them, reach out to the media in these locations and let them know your book features them as a tourist destination.
- D) **Impact** — Do you have information that is a game changer? Have you discovered proof that the earth is flat? Foregrounding impactful information is a ticket to a headline.
- E) **Prominence** — Are you well respected in your field? Have you written about an issue that has relevance to the latest royal or celebrity caper? Highlight this to arrest the attention of editors.
- F) **Relevance** — Think of this as being in the zeitgeist. For example, the book on motorcycling across Australia could be positioned as a great thing to do and a fun thing to write about and discuss while Australia talks about a domestic travel boom. If you have photographs available and talk to a travel editor you may end up having a story written about your book.
- G) **Oddity** — News editors love the bizarre. The more unusual your story or visual content, the greater your chance of getting airtime.

Your book is not news in itself. Ask yourself how it ties in with today's conversations. What is it about your personal story that will give people pause to think? In general, features and articles quoting you and mentioning your book are both more likely to be achieved and sell more books than a place in a review section.

Online groups and bloggers, particularly on Facebook, can all help spread the word if you are relevant to them. They will need you to advise them of the relevance and provide a concise comment on your book, specifying why it is important. Also provide them with easy-to-use digital imagery. Ask them if they want the physical book too. Sometimes you can achieve publicity in all kinds of media by providing a few copies for a giveaway.

If you don't know which magazines and radio stations have audiences that are similar to yours, you need to find out. Often a publisher's publicist will have a good idea of this, but if you are self-published, spend time in the library and online to find out who you should approach. Many approaches will not be responded to and will simply vanish into a black hole. Do not be despondent. Try a different approach and/or different people and



remember that sometimes reviews can take months to emerge. It is not unusual for your press release to be copied and treated as a review, so always be sure to do as much of the reviewer's job for them as you can.

## WHAT ELSE?

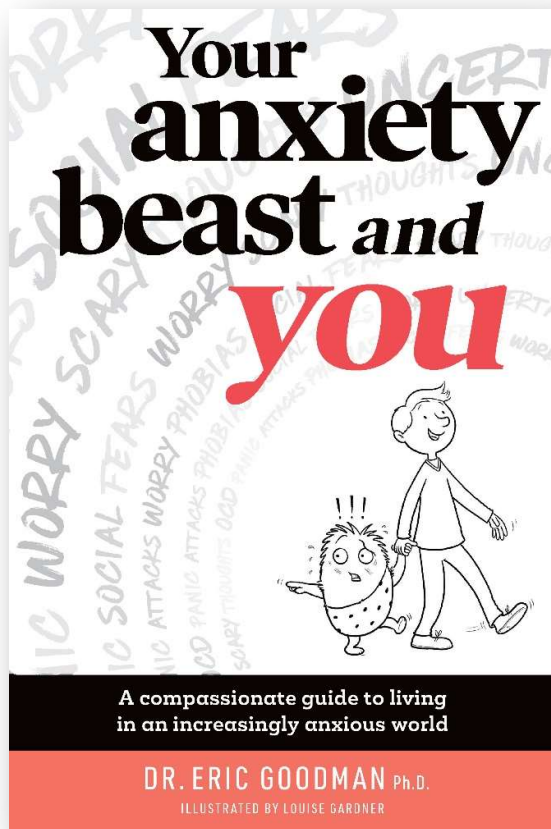
A popular way of promoting your book, especially on your own web/Facebook sites, is to have your own video. This is a great way for people to see your face and it encourages media to interview you as they can 'check you out' first.

- The video should be three minutes or less. Amazon, for example, will not accept anything over four minutes.
- Make sure that any URL information or website titles are displaying the correct information. (If you want an online retailer like Amazon to host your clip, don't make the rookie error of including a URL in your video that takes viewers away from their site — it will never see the light of day.)
- Put 'bumpers' at the front and back of all your videos with your imprint logo, i.e. bookend the video with a still image of the book image and imprint.
- Make sure the viewer knows where to go if they want more information and/or to buy the book.
- Make sure there are some close-ups of the book cover during the video, as well as wider shots.
- It is impactful if the author says, for example, 'In my book XXX I show, I make, I do ...' a few times. This reinforces the name of the book for viewers, and why they need it.
- Rehearse what you are going to say so that you know it inside out before you start recording the video. Better still, have an autocue script running on a separate device that you can read easily while you are being filmed.
- Smile! People will relate to you better if you're smiling. Make sure you smile when you're practising.
- It is optimal to upload to YouTube/Vimeo, as then other platforms can use the html embedded code to share your video to their website. However, social media prefers you to use video native to their own platform so avoid sharing a YouTube clip on Facebook, for instance. It's tedious, but you will get much better cut through if you upload the clip separately to each social media platform.
- WIIFM — What's in it for me? Think about what the viewer might be looking for; what's in it for them?

# Your Anxiety Beast and You

*A Compassionate Guide to Living in an Increasingly Anxious World*

ERIC GOODMAN, PH.D WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LOUISE GARDNER



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**EXISLE**  
PUBLISHING

*Independent publishing with passion and purpose*

**As humans we are hardwired to seek safety and certainty. That's a near impossible quest in the current climate, making anxiety a constant unwelcome companion. Rather than railing against it, a prominent psychologist advises us that it's time to see anxiety as an overprotective, well-meaning bodyguard with all the impulse control of a toddler. The best way for us to preserve our mental health in an increasingly anxious world is to learn to accept the way our anxiety makes us feel, developing tools to reduce the harm it inadvertently causes while trying to keep us safe.**

Just like The Beast in the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast*, anxiety is an emotion that society initially misjudges as the villain. *Your Anxiety Beast and You* is a kinder, more compassionate approach for people suffering from anxiety. Rather than living with an enemy inside your mind, you're encouraged to see anxiety for what it really is—an inner hero. It is always trying to protect you from threats, however, it is completely confused about what are true threats in the modern world.

Learn how to cope with your anxiety and train it to be a better inner-companion through integrating therapeutic methods from compassion-focused therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Gain an understanding of why society stigmatises anxiety and gain a better understanding of your own anxiety beast with humour and compassion. *Your Anxiety Beast and You* takes you through step-by-step strategies to cope with the howling of the beast in your mind, the physical effects of anxiety on your body, and then focuses on ways to come up with 'teachable moments' for your anxiety to learn that what you fear is not actually a threat.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Eric Goodman, Ph.D.**, is a clinical psychologist and anxiety disorders and OCD specialist. His private practice is in San Luis Obispo, California and he is a lecturer at California Polytechnic State University. He is the author of *Social Courage: Coping and thriving with the reality of social anxiety* (Exisle). He lives in San Luis Obispo with his wife, three kids, dog, and their anxiety beasts

# Together Things

*When her father feels sad, a little girl finds ways to keep the bonds of love alive*

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE VASILIU

ILLUSTRATED BY GWYNNETH JONES



The author is based in Melbourne and is available for interview from February 1, 2020.

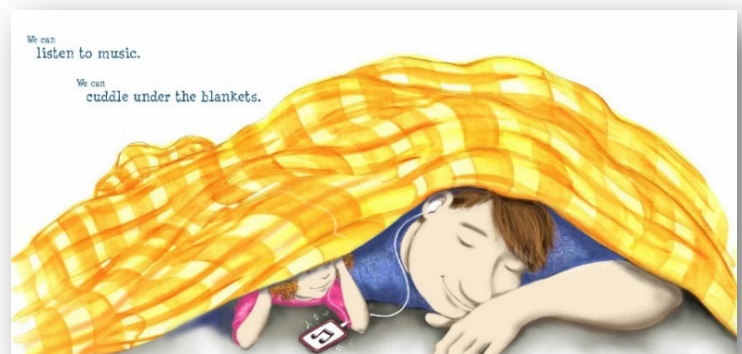
## ABOUT THE CREATORS

**Michelle Vasiliu** is an award-winning children's and middle grade author. She is also an educator and mental health peer support worker for *Families Where a Parent has a Mental Illness*. Michelle is on a mission to help kids better understand the often-confusing world of living with a family member who has a mental illness.

**Gwynneth Jones** drew all through her maths book at school, so left to study art and hasn't stopped drawing. Her previous books include *The Chalk Rainbow* which addresses neuro diversity in children.

**Michelle Vasiliu is an award-winning children's author, educator and a mum. She also lives with mental illness. Many of us, she notes, are still too afraid to tackle the topic of mental illness with our children. Michelle hopes her new book, *Together Things*, will give people the courage to try.**

One in five adults will experience depression in their lifetime. It's an illness that is tough on the families of those effected. Young children especially can be confused and upset when their mother or father suddenly can't play like they used to. *Together Things* will resonate with the thousands of little people who know what it's like to live with a parent experiencing mental illness, helping them to understand — that it is okay for them to feel mad or sad about their parent's illness. While the person they love is in the haze of mental illness, they may have to do different 'together things' to keep a feeling of closeness. Quieter things like drawing pictures or cuddling up and reading a story together might be a better way to spend time together, than big, bold intrepid stuff that takes a lot of planning and energy. Through wondrous illustrations and a compelling story, carers and young children can open a conversation about the importance of talking about mental health and build an understanding that sometimes we need to adapt our way of being together to allow time to heal.



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Teachers' notes available.

