

[Book Journeys Author Interview](#) - June 14, 2018

Pleasance Silicki with Emily Cohen, author of *From Generation to Generation: Healing Intergenerational Trauma Through Storytelling*.

"It's a life changer, that's for sure."-Emily Cohen

Pleasance:

Hey, everyone! It's Pleasance here, and I am with Emily Cohen today. Emily, are you there?

Emily:

I am!

Pleasance:

Hey! Just making sure the technology is working properly. So, I'm Pleasance, I'm the author of *Delight: Eight Principles for Living with Joy and Ease*, which the Author Incubator helped me publish in 2016, and I'm the host of this awesome, fun show, where I get to talk to authors about their experience on the author journey and author transformation. So, I'm here today with Emily, and the name of her book is *From Generation to Generation: Healing Intergenerational Trauma Through Storytelling*. And I have to say that I was doing a little bit of research and reading before we talked, Emily, and I'm so fascinated by the work that you do, and I think it's so incredibly important. And with literally - I know you're not gonna believe me, but I'm telling you - well, actually, you probably won't believe me because you probably are extremely intuitive, as I am, and that, earlier today, I was speaking with one of my private clients - ... my dog's gonna start barking, and then lemme talk - and she's a rabbi, and you're - ... about ancestral healing around money block.

Emily:

....

Pleasance:

Because of the Jewish tradition of - all these money stories and money blocks, and so, when I went on to read about your work, I thought, "Thank you, Divine Universal Spirit and Wisdom, for ... connecting me to have this conversation with Emily today." So, welcome.

Emily:

Thank you, it's great to be here, and ...? That is - I don't know if the rabbi told you or whether you ... uncovered it for her, but that is so on point.

Pleasance:

Well, it's funny that ... I actually - I had just listened to - I teach a lot of ayurveda and I - and I use a lot of ayurvedic wisdom in - in the mentoring and ... work that I do, and there's a lot about ancestral healing in ayurveda, and about digestion of our old lives and emotions, right? So, as

we're having a conversation, all these (garbled) coming up, and I'm Jewish also, so I feel empowered to speak my truth about my tribe. Because we - we got some money stuff that we gotta talk about! So - anyway. So, it was ... through that lens that I came to this, I said, "Oh, I can't wait to talk to Emily!"

Emily:

And here we are.

Pleasance:

So, tell me about how you got started - and here we are - how you got started with this work and - and then, how it led you to Angela.

Emily:

Okay. So, after my mom died, a lot of people kept telling me that I needed to put her story down. And I've always ... had this inkling that I would - ... I knew it almost by heart, 'cause I'd heard it so often, and ... she had done a couple of interviews that I had on tape, and ... I started - so, after she died in 2014, I started dabbling. And I really didn't know that it was gonna end up this way. I - I ... started, ... most - most second-generation or third-generation survivors write about their parents or grandparents. And - so, that's what I started to do. And, I don't know, about two essays in, I had a - a neighbor who's a lovely woman, who was a - an English teacher at a local high school, and she offered to mentor or coach me ... gratis, and so, we were just working together, and she looked at one of my stories and she says, "Where are you?" And I said, "It's not my story." And she said, "Yes, it is. I want you to go back and rewrite this ... - instead of third person, rewrite it in first person, go back and start putting yourself in it." And so, I did, and then I ... just dropped it for awhile, 'cause I - it got heavy and I didn't quite know what I was gonna do about it, and by that point I'd engaged another writing coach for a fee, who was in New Jersey, who said - ... when I said, "Hey, I'm thinking about writing a book about this, ... how long," and she looked at my stuff and she's, "Well, maybe you'll have enough stuff in five or six years." And I thought, "Five or six years? No, oh, hell, no." ... I'm not gonna drag this out. If I'm gonna do this, I'm doing it. And so, I actually am friends with someone else who was - who had written a - a few books with Angela, and she suggested that I connect, and I did, and I signed up right then and there, because I knew she was gonna hold me accountable. And that was important. I've - I've always been very deadline driven in my prior career, and so, I knew that having those deadlines, that was gonna help me realize my dream.

Pleasance:

And were you - I'm - I don't quite know, but were you already doing a lot of healing work? Were you already - what was your profession? Did you have a - another career?

Emily:

Yeah. I was not.

Pleasance:

Okay.

Emily:

I was not doing any healing work. In fact, what - what happened was - no, I've always been - I've been a freelance writer, technology, I was a PR person for big ... companies a long time ago, so I was looking for a change, in a way. I just wasn't feeling fulfilled, I was feeling ..., "Oh, my God, I'm gonna shoot myself in the head if ... some other twentysomething comes to me and says, 'Guess what ...? This prod - if you don't have this document done and this product doesn't launch, the world will end.'" I'm ..., "No, the world is not gonna end." It was just - it was just getting so out of proportion, I think, in what was really important to me. So, actually, I - I started out thinking - ... when I originally signed up with Angela, I was just gonna write the story and it'd be cathartic for me, and as we ... did weekly calls, she got me to realize - she - ... "Oh, my God, this can help other people." 'Cause you're doing the work yourself, and now, you can work with others to do that. So, that's how it - it came up, and I - yeah, I've been doing it about a year now.

Pleasance:

Okay. So, you sign up with Angela, did you do the - it doesn't sound like you had a lot of blocks or issues with the signup process or the investment or the time. It sounds like you were pretty intuitive with just ... a "Hell, yes." Is that true?

Emily:

Yeah. It was a "Hell, yes," right away, just ... because my friend ... gave me a recommendation, and I just have this feeling, ... if I could just sit - I had just moved, I didn't know what my job was gonna be, and I said, "You know what? I'm just gonna do this in these - ... in this - these eight weeks, nine weeks, this is gonna be what I'm doing. So, it

Pleasance:

Okay. So - yeah! Well, let's talk about that, then. So, how did that translate to your daily schedule? 'Cause this is a big thing, right? People who are listening, who are thinking, "I wanna write a book, but I don't have the time. I don't have the money. I don't know where it will fit in." So, talk to me a little bit about what that looks like in your daily life.

Emily:

Yeah. So - yes. Not having ... a steady income, I still did some freelance work to keep things going. And typically, what I would do is, I would get up in the morning and do whatever writing work I had to do for a client. And then, I would go work out, swim, whatever, about midday, and then I'd come back, and I found I was most productive from ... two until six. That's when my - my - my creative side comes out. So, I ... had a - I had a very defined time change. So, I would ... work in the morning, have one - one part of my brain working. I'd go swim, work out, break it up, think about what I - what I wanna write it - that afternoon, start thinking creatively, and then I sit down and do that.

Pleasance:

Okay. So, what happens during the process? What did you notice, what was your cohort like? Talk to me - now, we're into your actual schedule, you're paying attention to when you can write. What unfolded then, and what did that feel like?

Emily:

I was amazed at how many stories I had inside me, and how many - there were a lot of "A-ha!" moments as I was going through it, realizing triggers that I really hadn't paid attention to, before. ... there were some triggers I - I understood, others I was surprised to find. So, that was ... pretty cool.

Pleasance:

Can you give me an example? Something specific? Yeah.

Emily:

Sure. I guess I didn't realize so much how my mom - so, she forbade me from wearing stripes. And I - ... I really didn't connect it, I don't know why, to the - to the uniforms they had to wear. Because, she would - she would look at something, ... say, the New York Yankees, and turn it off, 'cause they were wearing pinstripes, and I was ..., "This is insane! What's going on?" And I just - I didn't really think about it until much later, when I was writing, ... "Oh, God, that's what that was about!" ... there were - there were definitely other things that I understood. I - I didn't - I knew that my - my fear of travel had something to do with how my mom made me feel, ... the world is bad and you can't trust anybody, and I knew that was where it was, that that was the genesis, but I didn't dig back farther until I was writing this and realized, "Oh! That's because ... people left their homes," and in Germany they were picked up, they were taken, and they didn't come back, right? They died. They were killed. And so, that's really the genesis of it. So, it was - it was really mind - eye-opening for me. And

Pleasance:

Did you have to do a bunch of ... your own work to get through that? Did you have a therapist or ... have to - yeah. Okay.

Emily:

Well, actually, while I was doing this, I'd ... gotten really disillusioned with therapy, myself. My - I - I felt ... I just kept paying ... two hundred dollars every week for an hour of - of looking backward and understanding ... what had happened to me, and yes, that was PTSD, but there's no - there was no sense of how to heal that, how to move forward, how to not keep repeating the past. So, I ... - being a writer, I stumbled upon some books by James Pennybaker, who talks about the healing qualities of writing. And that was where - ... that was really where this came from, where I thought, "Okay, I can use this to heal myself," and I - I really am a very, very different person than I was before I wrote the book. I'm much calmer, I'm not like tha - I was always really on edge, and really anxious and hypervigilant, and all those things are definite

triggers for the second generation of - and I'm gonna say, not just Holocaust survivors, but they're now seeing that a lot of those same traits come up in the survivors - or the children of survivors of, say, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or Syria or - to be honest, I'm personally v - I don't wanna get political, but I'm - I'm personally looking at ... the - the United States policy right now, of - of ... ripping children - separating children and their parents at the border. That's a trauma. And ... how is that going to then affect ... the parent and the child, but now, you're also - through science, we know that DNA changes, so how is that gonna affect that child - child in ... twenty-five years? So, I know that's ... a big concept to grasp, but that's - that's really what we're dealing with, here, this intergenerational trauma is something that comes through your DNA.

Pleasance:

I - I mean, yes. And this is something that I'm - ... in fact, I have a podcast of my own, through the work I do, and we're just talking about this earlier today, actually, this cellular - ... the one to - core wounds and what do we do with it? What ... a fascinating time it is to be alive, because there's this intersection of science and well-being with healing and trauma, and it's the first time that we're really having these conversations. At the same time, it's so painful, because we're having these - we're being re-traumatized, right?

Emily:

Right.

Pleasance:

Over and over in journalism and in - ... it's just, if you're into these topics, which pretty much everyone I spend my time with is, it's layered and complicated and there is a sense of hopefulness in the work you're doing, right? ... you are a leader in the field, bringing this to the light and ha - saying ..., "Yes, these are some of the things that are happening and have always happened, with human beings," let's be clear, in different ways, and now, we can actually apply techniques and tools to look forward. I think that's also ... what you're saying, was the backwards model, and ... reliving things each week isn't necessarily the best fit for everybody, and so, now we live in a world where there's a lot of tools, which is really cool!

Emily:

Right. Right. Exactly. And ... I - I had different therapists. I didn't really start until I was out of college. Even the very last one that I saw, it - it still felt ..., "My God, all this stuff is rattling in my mind all the time, in a circular fashion," and once you give those thoughts a place to land, outside your body, outside of your head, on paper, it's - it actually stops the - the chatter in your brain. So, maybe you can ... look at it more objectively.

Pleasance:

So - yeah! ... absolutely. So, that - so this - writing the book really was the ... for this work that you're doing now, with healing. So now, let's talk about - towards the publishing, let's talk about

the structure of the writing, and towards the publishing side. Is there anything you noticed, as you got closer - when did your book come out?

Emily:
The e-book?

Pleasance:
Yes.

Emily:
Or the paperback?

Pleasance:
Well, both.

Emily:
Well, actually, my - my paperback is coming out next month.

Pleasance:
Great! Okay.

Emily:
We are on the verge, on the verge.

Pleasance:
That's awesome.

Emily:
And my - the e-book came out a year ago - yeah, at the end of June.

Pleasance:
Okay. So, as you got closer to publishing, can you talk a little bit about that process? So now, ... as you are - finished the actual book, what was that process like for you?

Emily:
You mean - it was pretty smooth. I had a fantastic editor, who I actually have again, for my second book. She really provided huge value for me, in - not in so much structuring my stories and my - my healing - ... the message, but helping me put it together in a way that could help someone else, how they could actually see how to apply it to themselves. Because I wasn't real skilled in that, that wasn't my special field of genius, and ... it was - it - it was pretty - my writing itself is pretty tight, so the work really needed to be done in terms of making it serve the - the client, making it serve the ideal reader, ideal client, in the best possible way.

Pleasance:

And then - so, it came out, and now, talk to me a little bit about ... what you learned after the e-book came out, and what that has done for your professional life and your personal life.

Emily:

It's - it's a life changer, that's for sure. Because I never - I - I never ha - expected to write a book. I really didn't. ... I've been a writer all my life, and even when I was a kid - people will look at me now, going, "Well, I knew you would, you love to write." Yeah, I did love to write, but I never - it was never a dream, and all of a sudden, here I am, now, with two. And it's ..., "I will never not be an author." And it's really - it feels really good, and I ... say, there - there are people that - that ... look at - know my story, and I've - I've had a couple of people go, "Well, did you need to ... air the dirty laundry?" kind of a thing, and ..., "You know what? ... you go sit and try to write a book and do that," and then ... - don't - don't judge.

Pleasance:

....

Emily:

People think ... - sometimes, I - I don't understand how people respond that way, but I am extremely proud of myself, for having done it not just once but twice. And it is a conversation starter. ... it - it has changed pretty much every facet of my life, both personally and professionally. 'Cause I - I'd ... go somewhere, and somebody says, "Well, what do you do?" and I tell them, and then, "You have a book?" It's a - it's a very interesting transformation.

Pleasance:

Okay. Two questions. One is, how do you use the book to do what you're doing now? ... because you weren't doing this before, can you talk a little bit about ... what you did do, and how you made that transition?

Emily:

Do you -

Pleasance:

Yeah. Does that make sense? Yes. Yeah.

Emily:

It was not easy. It's - to build it from scratch. ... most people who write a book with Angela have an established coaching business, and when you have an established business and you have some income, and it - it's - this just takes you to the next level. For me, it's been ... starting - it - it's - it was backwards. It was starting to realize that I really - I really just enjoy, and it's really meaningful to me to spread the message about intergenerational trauma and stopping the cycle, and so, that's been - it's been a bit of a - ... it - it's been hard. I'm not gonna - I'm not gonna lie.

Pleasance:
Yeah, yeah!

Emily:
... what I'm finding is something that really makes - makes me able to touch more people, even than just doing coaching, is speaking. And so, I have been focused on speaking and creating different venues, different types of speaking opportunities that I'm a - I'm - I'm trying to get out there, to raise the awareness, and then, ... people will say, "Oh, I got that, too! Gosh." 'Cause it's not just Holocaust survivors, it's

Pleasance:
Right. Right.

Emily:
So many different tragedies and traumas.

Pleasance:
So - and you're receiving the business support and coaching and mentorship through - with Author Incubator and with Angela, correct?

Emily:
Right. Right.

Pleasance:
Continuing. So, this - there is -

Emily:
... the Quill - yeah, been in the Quill, and sadly, my time is ending at the end of this month, and I'm really gonna miss it, but I feel like I'm ready to swim on my own. I've got some real

Pleasance:
And tell me, what's the - what's your second book about? Yes, tell us about your second book.

Emily:
So, my second book is in - is called *The Daughter's Dilemma: A Survival Guide for Caring for an Ageing Abusive Parent*. So, it really extends my first book into the last years of my mother's life, where you can ... see, in the beginning of the first book - I don't know if you read it, the - the chapter is called "The Flyswatter," and that was how she punished me. She would hit me with a flyswatter, sometimes she would pull my hair. So, that was ... the very first ... nuggets of abuse, and then, here I am, fifty years later, ha - feeling like I've got to take care of her. She's got dementia now, there's nobody else. I'm an only child, I have to do this, yet the resent - there is still some latent resentment, and it was really because, here I was, taking better care of her than I felt she did of me.

Pleasance:

Took of you. Yeah.

Emily:

And I'd actually heard that - I heard that exact statement echoed back to me, when I tell people about my book, and they say, "That's me with my mom," and - and they'll echo that statement back to me. It - it really was - ... again, it - it makes me realize that a lot of people need this - the book - this book and the ... between them.

Pleasance:

Yeah. I think it's super important healing work, right? So - and because you're living it through your experience and sharing through your experience, it's really powerful.

Emily:

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. I -

Pleasance:

So, when is that book coming out? When is your people - when's that book coming out?

Emily:

So, it's - in - as I like to say, "There are no coincidences." It is coming out on July 10th, in electronic form, the exact, same day that my first book is going to be in bookstores.

Pleasance:

Oh, awesome! That's so cool.

Emily:

Yeah. Karma.

Pleasance:

Yup.

Emily:

So, it's - yeah, really - really excited. It's ... wow, both of them, it's a double whammy!

Pleasance:

Awesome.

Emily:

So - but you know, I wanted to finish one thought, if it's okay with you,

Pleasance:

Yeah!

Emily:

Talking about people, and it resonating every time I give a talk about this, and I talk about my experience, people come up to me afterward and say - and I have had people - they - most often, they'll be crying, and they'll say, "Oh, my God, you could have been talking about me, that's exactly it." So - ... again, it - it - ... it's sad that people are in so much pain. But I understand, because ... was there. It was there. So, it's - i - it makes me feel good, that I could help them, They come up to me, and I'm ..., "Okay, I can help you."

Pleasance:

Right. Yeah. And that's super powerful, 'cause that's the work that you wanna be doing and you're able to do it. So, that feels good to be - and to be able to say, "I can help you," rather than, "Sorry, there's nothing I can do," ...?

Emily:

Right. Right.

Pleasance:

Also, I think that that's - for those of us who have that servant's heart, it - it's a really important part of sharing the work that we do, and not keeping it in isolation, ...?

Emily:

Right. Right.

Pleasance:

Okay. So, to wrap up, tell people where they can find you and how they can work with you.

Emily:

Sure. So, you can find me at the www.traumahealingcoach.com, and you can get my book there. You can actually pre-order the paperback there. You can get the electronic copy and pretty soon you'll be able to get the electronic copy of the new book, and there's also a link there to work with me. So, if you're interested, please apply and see if it's a fit! 'Cause I'd love to help if this resonates with you.

Pleasance:

Awesome. Emily, thank you so much, and thanks for the work that you do in the world, and I'm super grateful that I was able to connect with you and share your message! So, thank you so much, have a great rest of your day.

Emily:

Thank you. You too, Pleasance. Really honored to have been on here. Thanks!

Pleasance:

Okay, Emily. Take care. Thanks.

Emily:

'Bye.