

# Interview with Jo Mckee, Editor

## Bringing ideas to life: part one

Really, with all of the self-publishing resources online nowadays, we're spoilt for choice. There's absolutely nothing stopping you if you have something to say!

Authors — and, I suspect, most creative types — battle their own individual monsters while birthing and crafting ideas, and every time I begin work with a client who is a first-time author I'm asked a bunch of questions about the best way to plan the book's construction + get it out into the world.

So what better way to address this than ask others who have done it? Over coming weeks I'll bring you a series of interviews with authors I've had the damn good fortune to work with. Hopefully it'll be of use to you in some aspect of your own travels.

First, I'd like to introduce Annemarie DeSeriere, author of ***Will to Wonder***. The creator of Resolutions 4 Life, Annemarie loves seeing people understand that happiness is their right, and that each of us has the power to achieve our heart's desires. And, having worked with Annemarie and kept in touch since the book was launched, I know this is one woman who lives by example, seeks truth and is enthusiastic about self-transformation.



*Annemarie DeSeriere*

**When did you first think you might want to write a book?**

I don't remember ever 'yearning' to write a book. I just enjoy the creative freedom and healing power that comes with writing — I've written most of my life. This particular time, however, I was journaling more than usual and jokingly said to my partner, 'Looks like I'm writing a book!' Turned out I had lots to share with the world and ***Will to Wonder*** came alive.

**How on earth did you get started? Or was it easy to begin?**

The writing process was my most enjoyable part. When I started it was all easy; the clarity and realisations kept flowing so I kept writing. I would carry a notebook and pen wherever I went. When I was inspired, I would just write whatever came into my mind, then later would understand where it was meant to fit into the book. Other times I would begin writing and I would know instantly what part of the book that piece belonged to. The challenges started when I realised I had to set deadlines and get serious about publishing. Editing, designing, printing ... it was all new to me. Because I decided to self-publish there were some tough learning curves, but all in all I grew heaps in the process.

### **How long was it from that moment until you published your first book?**

Approximately eighteen months.

### **Was it scary to decide to spend money on producing a book? If so, what helped you overcome the nerves?**

Surprisingly — no! Even though at the time we didn't have the money, I found incredible faith in knowing that if the book was meant to be a tool to help others, then somehow the money would arrive at the right time. And you know what ... it always did! My partner, Colin, and I would suddenly pick up some extra work and so 'extra' money would flow in for a while (it wasn't handed to us — we had to work for it, but that was fine). If I did catch myself worrying, I would stop, breath ... and smile, knowing that all would be okay. And it always was.

### **How did you decide who to partner with for each aspect of producing your book?**

Again, it had a lot to do with faith — trusting that the right people would enter my life when necessary ... and in most cases, they did. I started to network and just kept asking different people different questions. Somehow I would be led to the right person, and I would just know.

### **How did you monitor your budget while creating your book?**

I do our budgeting and bookkeeping, so it wasn't that much out of the ordinary. Having said that, due to financial restraints at the time, I did have to do a lot of juggling. I identified one-off costs such as editing and designing, and ongoing costs like advertising. I kept a basic journal which changed daily due to all the juggling, so flexibility was again essential. I did an overall analysis then broke it down into doable pieces. I would make progressive payments where possible to stagger outgoing costs.

### **What was the biggest challenge you encountered in the process of writing?**

When I was literally working through 'life lessons' — trying to capture lessons that rose up during the writing process was a huge challenge. Afterwards, transforming my understanding into words that readers could identify with would also sometimes pose a challenge for me. There were many times where I experienced self-doubt. I've heard successful women call it 'imposter syndrome'.

### **What was the biggest challenge you encountered in the process of publishing?**

Not knowing the publishing lingo. Being a 'newbie' on the block, I had to learn many different facets. It was like learning different subjects in different languages simultaneously!

Another big challenge was timing — co-ordinating everything as a first time author/self-publisher can be quite stressful; regularly stepping back to breath was very beneficial. It was heavy going at times and I did have to check my sense of humour!

### **What was the biggest challenge you encountered in the process of distribution?**

Like many authors, I find distribution — the sales and marketing aspect — a huge challenge. Also, as a self publisher many retailers won't give you the time of day if you don't have a distributor, although I did manage to get my book into some stores quite early in the process.

Getting paid is another huge challenge. Lucky for me I'm not doing it for the money, though it's still frustrating. I terminated a contract with an Australian distributor because they caused me a lot of grief and to this day I have not seen a single cent from them.

I did recently get a 'win' though. A private publisher has accepted my book and ***Will to Wonder*** is not available at all Brahma Kumaris Centres in Australia and, I believe, in the UK.

One dream I'm working towards is to employ someone who will organise all sales, marketing and events for me. Then I can just focus on giving presentations. I enjoy those and it's relatively easy for me these days, since overcoming one of my past fears of public speaking.

### **What was the best thing you learned about yourself while writing your book?**

That I am an expert in the area of self-transformation — ha ha! No, seriously, the best thing would be that I now know that I ***can*** do anything I ***choose*** to do with courage and determination, as long as I believe I can! The other thing is confirmation: I realise just how much I have learned and applied in my life over the years. There's evidence all around me; it's magical. So I have experience, ability, proof, and therefore a duty to share this information with others.

### **What useful things did you learn while in the publishing process?**

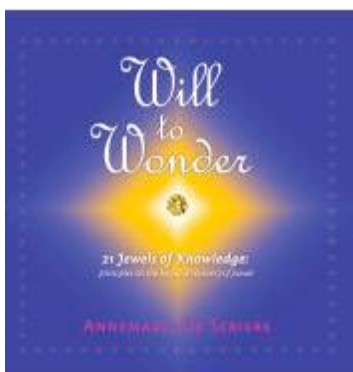
I learned to not be deterred by the 'non-believers'. I also learned that mind-mapping is very useful when tackling large goals. It de-cluttered my mind and brought everything together in bite-size pieces. It gave me an overview of the whole process: what was happening, what was to happen and when things were to happen. It was a great tool to keep an eye on the whole picture while letting go of the outcome. I regularly mind-map now; it's great for prioritising and for note taking as well.

### **What useful things did you learn during the distribution phase?**

I learned resilience — not to be frightened off, but to stay committed. And to keep using my inner tools to not get caught up with 'the small stuff'.

### **How do you 'get the word out' to sell your book?**

Lots of promotional (leg) work, networking, phone calls, emails, physical visits. Started a [blog](#), created a [facebook page](#), turned *Will to Wonder* into an ebook and did internet advertising. I offer free public presentations, library author talks, book signings etc. I always carry a book and bookmarks with me, just in case. We've even promoted it at some markets — I offer a free 'virtue scope', which is like a horoscope reading but based on choosing individual virtues to practise each month. People love it. I also sell natural soaps and essential oil blends, so I get to talk with different people who often end up wanting a virtue scope and then purchase a book. The market stall is also great for handing out flyers to upcoming talks. I enjoy those days ... so I just keep going.



### **How does your book fit into the wider picture of what you do?**

It's my life! I live and breathe the contents of my book every day. It's the crux of all the change and all the possibilities in my life. It motivates me to share with anyone looking for alternative ways to make deep, lasting changes in their life.

**Did the experience of writing and publishing enlarge your world? Has it changed you? In what way?**

It has given me lots of experience (it's the best authority in life) and a broader audience, which is slowly but surely growing. My list of subscribers for my monthly 'WonderFull Living' newsletter is steadily growing. It's given me credibility, confidence, and strengthened my faith. As for change? I'm developing all the time. I guess this is all part of it. You can't remain the same if your thinking has changed!

**Did the project have any bigger impact on your family, or those closest to you, than your usual activities?**

Absolutely. It's been so lovely to be able to share it with my family and friends, and see the benefit it has brought some of them. Some family members were quite surprised, but I've noticed they seem to pay more attention to what I say. It has also renewed my relationships with some family members.

**How did you celebrate when the book was complete?**

Quietly. I was rather shy about it. I think it had to do with the belief that I didn't write the book; that I was simply an 'instrument'. (I'm working on this one!)

**What kind of feedback have you received since your book was launched?**

The feedback has been absolutely amazing. Many readers have told me that *Will to Wonder* has changed their life. One woman said that it saved her life, and several mentioned that their teenagers were picking it up and reading it. Some even said that often they would find the book on their children's bedside table. Seminar attendees regularly comment on the simplicity of the material — that it makes sense, that they can easily understand it and that it's doable.

**Has writing led to other opportunities that you hadn't expected?**

Yes. It has given me confidence to step into more of a teaching role, which I love. But you know, you get found out pretty quick these days if your actions don't match your words — no-one will listen to you. When people show clear understanding of what you are explaining, you know they are paying attention. So for me it's a real bonus to get these regular opportunities to practise my 'walk'. Others learn and I get double learning; I get to consolidate my inner growth with my outer world and I have a live audience to remind me if I fall off track. How fortunate am I?!

### **What are your top five tips for anybody who'd like to write and self publish a book?**

1. Be open to ideas and ask lots of questions, especially of people 'in the know', but at the end of the day listen to your inner voice. Don't be swayed by the opinions of others.
2. Learn to mind map.
3. Keep a notebook with you. Inspiration comes at the weirdest times. Take lots of notes; write all your ideas down because it's easy to forget them.
4. Pay for professionals to help with editing, proofreading, design and typesetting.
5. While writing, set a clear date to publish, then do something practical each day towards that goal.

And one more I can't leave out: no matter how many times you fall down, get up ... and just keep going!

### **Can you let us in on what's next for you?**

Ha! Many, many things. The downside of self publishing and DIY distribution + promotion is that it still takes a lot of my time and tends to stifle the creative process. Despite that, I've been working on two books. One will be a 'study companion' for ***Will to Wonder*** and the other is about managing chronic pain.

I'm also working on a deck of cards to accompany ***Will to Wonder*** for daily inspiration.

I'm creating a meditation CD, where I write the commentaries and Colin creates the music.

I'm also working on some photography and travel writing, which is great while we travel around Australia.



***Thanks so much, Annemarie, for stopping long enough to share part of your experience.***

***What about you? What have you learned so far in your own creative process? What kind of challenges have you addressed and how did you do that? What are some of your 'wins'?***