

Full Transcripts For
Writing To
Get Business

WRITING
TO GET BUSINESS
with Pat Iyer



C-SUITE
Radio

How to Turn the Wrong Book into the Right Book

Gillian Lockitch

A series of tragedies led Gillian Lockitch, M.D., to engage in a searching evaluation of life. What she learned about herself and concepts of aging inspired her to write a book. In this podcast she intertwines her writing with her private journey. It will leave you questioning your own beliefs about the aging process and what the numbers really mean. You may, like Gillian, conclude that they mean nothing.

- If a book helps only 200 people, it's still worth writing.
- How to turn the wrong book into the right book
- The importance of your own story
- If you're not prepared to be honest with your readers, why should they believe you?
- If you want to write—and live—successfully, keep your mind engaged.

Pat: Hi. This is Pat Iyer with *Writing to Get Business*. Our show includes interviews with authors who have had experiences writing books and share with you their wisdom about what they went through to accomplish that.

I brought on the show today a physician, Dr. Gillian Lockitch, who has written a couple of books. One is in its final stages, getting ready to be released. Welcome to the show.

Gillian: Thank you. I'm happy to be here. I'm delighted that you invited me.

Pat: Let's take you back, Gillian, to the point in your life when you did your first book. Tell our listeners about that kind of book which is very different than the one that you are finishing now. What is the first book about?

Gillian: I was a medical specialist in medical biochemistry and pediatrics for 30 years and a medical professor at the University of British Columbia. And in my work capacity, I was a director of a laboratory department at the Children's and Women's Hospital.

One of the things that happens when people go to have blood tests or any other kind of medical tests done, the results are reported relative to what is the normal range that is expected for these particular tests. So for example, if you have a blood test for one of the liver enzymes, it will say the normal ranges from here to there, and your result is either within that range or outside it.

Now, at the Children's and Women's Hospital, we tested blood from pregnant women. And one of the problems with this is that nobody knew how the ranges of normal tests changed during pregnancy.

So at that time, which was, gosh, 20 years ago, we undertook a study where we got about 60 pregnant women to enroll. And they donated blood over six or seven times during the course of their pregnancy and we were able to determine how a number of the things that you test for change during this time.

So we put this together in a handbook. It is called the *Handbook of Diagnostic Biochemistry and Hematology Results* and it was really the first big study that had undertaken this.

And as a result of this, I ended up going to international conferences all over the world to share our results so that we could help people in other laboratories know how to give the correct information for their patients. It was very medical. It's not a best-seller. I think we sold about 200 copies, but it was a very useful thing that I think changed a lot of lives.

Pat: As a nurse, I understand exactly what you're talking about in terms of the normal ranges. One of the things that I did for 28 years was help attorneys understand medical records and medical values. And I know those ranges varied from location to location depending upon who is testing the blood. But I never thought about the fact that they could vary based on pregnancy. So, it sounds like your book provided quite useful information to people in clinical roles.

Gillian: It did. And the important thing about it was that we were examining the physiology and the biochemistry, which is one of the things that sort of led me to develop my roadmap for becoming healthy, growing older and living younger.

Pat: That's a wonderful lead-in to the title of your next book. Tell us about that book.

Gillian: Okay. The book is called *Growing Older, Living Younger: The Science of Aging Gracefully and the Art of Retiring Comfortably*. And basically, it's a very personal story. It started out as a scientific tome of about 300 pages looking at what the science is behind how we age. And gradually, I realized that nobody's going to read anything like that.

So it really became a personal story of my journey from a catastrophic stage in my life to realizing that I could change the way I aged and become the vibrant, happy, busy person that I am today.

Pat: Let me reflect on what you said because part of me is saying, "Oh my goodness. I wrote 300 pages and now I can't use what I've written." What did you have to do to shift your perspective? Because my instinctive reaction is just what I said -- that desire to cling to the product that I've put so many hours into at months, weeks of time writing, studying, pulling in research studies and now... It's like giving birth to a baby and then saying, "What do I do now with this kid that I just spent all my time on?" Tell our listener what that felt like.

Gillian: Well I didn't feel that I was losing any of the 300 pages of science that I had uncovered I wanted to distill that information in a way that people would relate to it and understand and be able to make choices in their lives based on what is real and what isn't real.

I have an ongoing blog which I plan to be more regular with where I will convey that information in chunks.

I discovered two important things during the course of my journey. The most important, probably, was that each of us is born with two important powers to change the way we live. And the first, of course, is our mind and our capacity to make choices -- change the way we think, change the way we move and we act. And every one of those choices that we make that is within our own power will affect the way we live and the way we aged.

The second important discovery that I made was learning about epigenetics, which is a power within each of us. I try to explain that in

the first chapter or the second chapter of the book by the concept that our bodies are mega factories that operate 24 hours a day non-stop throughout our lives.

And at the sort of cellular level, the cells are very busy all the time. Basically, they [churn up - 08:05] proteins which are coded for in our genes. And epigenetics is the power that we have to change the way those genes function in order to change systems and modulate systems.

I'm not sure how familiar you are with the discovery of the human genome in 2003. But basically, when the human genome was mapped, we came to realize that only about 1 to 2% of our DNA that we get from our parents... codes for genes, and the other 98% of it was originally thought to be junk DNA, which doesn't make a lot of sense from an evolutionary point of view. But in fact, we now know that it is that 98% that is actually really important because that DNA is what changes the way our genes express, and that's basically what epigenetics is.

So everything we do -- how we think, how we behave, how we move, what we eat -- can change the way our genes express. Does that sound--

So, basically, I distilled all the information that I had about that into a concept that I thought would make sense to us.

Pat: Mm-hmm. Let me pull a little bit of that apart because you shared so much that makes sense. I mean it all makes sense.

In the hospital, when we took care of patients, when I was working as a staff nurse, we would get change or shift reports. And one of the phrases that we used frequently was, "She's an 80-year old, admitted with congestive heart failure. But don't worry, she's a good 80-year old." What does that mean in the context of what you've been saying?

Gillian: Yes, that's an outstandingly excellent question because that basically is what my whole book is about.

So we know that the lifespan of all of us has increased whereas at beginning of the last century, maybe the average lifespan was about 50 years. Now we know many people are living into their 80s, their

90s, and we even have centenarians and super centenarians. But lifespan isn't the only issue. I don't want to be 90 years old and bedridden and ill.

So there's another concept that we can consider in that health span and that is aging well so that when you reach 90, you are still mentally active, physically active, and able to enjoy life and be healthy.

So my book focuses on how I wanted to modulate my lifespan in such a way that I was increasing my health span. And that's why I called it "Growing older but living younger."

Pat: It's certainly an issue that affects all of us regardless of our age, whether we're aging ourselves or we're helping aging parents and we're seeing the changes in their lives as they age.

When we go to the other piece, which I find fascinating... I have a son, for example, who believes that you can program your DNA and change your DNA. And this is a belief that he holds strongly. Is that possible within the context of that expression and your understanding of what that means?

Gillian: Absolutely. In fact, he's correct in that that's exactly what I mean by the "power of epigenetics."

Now, obviously, we don't have the capacity to change all genes. We know that as our cells divide through our lifetime, we accumulate more and more mutations in the genes. Some of them are what we call "silent." They're little changes that don't actually cause any change in function. But some of them do cause changes in function and these are the sort of changes that can lead to things like cancer, etc.

But there are things that we can do to change the way many of our genes express. And examples are what we eat, what we think.

So, he's absolutely correct. He is describing epigenetics. And I'm really curious to how he came by that information.

Pat: I don't know. I wish I could give you an answer to that question.

Gillian: Oh, I'd love to chat with him sometime. He sounds like a very bright young man.

Pat: He is. Let's go back to your book. We've talked about the fact that you put together a scientific book and realized at the end of that process or somewhere in that process that your audience had changed. Your focus changed. How did you transition in what you created into the book that you are now releasing to a different audience with the same focus but written in a different way?

Pat: That's a very interesting question. And I have to thank my wonderful daughter who is an actor, director, teacher, [inaudible - 00:14:16], etc. She was saying to me, “Mom, people don't really care about the depths of the science. What they really want to know is what happened to you. How did you get from point A to point B?”

So when she said that, it suddenly opened for me what the thread of the book would be. And it turned out to be actually much more personally revealing than I had planned originally.

So basically, what the book is about, it talks about how, when I was at 50...55, I had everything. I was sort of at the top of my life. I had a great career. I was happily married to the man I fell in love with when I was 15. I had three wonderful children. I was struggling a little bit like many other 55-year-olds with, you know, [creeping - 15:17] weight gain but I was generally in good shape, good health.

And then a mere 10 years later, my life had turned around like a catastrophic 180 degrees. My husband died prematurely of kidney cancer. My mother passed away a year later right before my eyes. I was unable to resuscitate her. Guilt feelings were immense. My sons had moved to the U.S. to work. My daughter was off in Toronto doing a PhD. I had downsized from our family home, moved into a condo where I was living by myself.

I had taken up ballroom dancing and loved dance cruising. But then overnight, I had an excruciatingly painful attack of sciatica and I was unable to move or to walk for almost four months. During that time, I was a couch potato. I was depressed. I didn't want to see anyone. I ate constantly. I put on 40 pounds. I thought I would never be able to walk properly again, never mind dance. And life was just more than I really wanted to deal with. And then fortuitously, I ended up having emergency surgery for my back. I had a seven-hour back operation.

Pat: Oh wow.

Gillian: It left me with, you know, rods and things in my back. But it was actually the best thing that happened to me because for the first time in my life, I didn't have low back pain. And I made up my mind that I needed to get back on the dance floor. And so I think that illustrates the most important thing that I discovered about my roadmap and that is “mindset.”

So I'd recount the various aspect of my journey to what I am now -- you know, happy, proud of myself, at peace and wanting to help others, energetic, vital, not on any medications and back at my target weight.

And I realized that there were three key things that I had to do. And the first thing, of course, was mindset. I had to make up my mind that what I wanted to do was fix the terrible downward trajectory of my health and aging that I was on.

The second key thing was that I had to change the way I ate and discount all the information that I've been given as to the guidelines of what we should and shouldn't do.

And the third thing was I had to rehabilitate myself so that I could get back to the degree of physical activity that I had enjoyed before this catastrophic back injury had occurred.

And during the course of my journey, I then discovered that there were three more things that were really important to consider.

One was the importance of connection and social interaction. The second one was the importance of keeping oneself always challenged, never thinking, “I'm too old to do this” or “I'm too tired” -- always keeping curious and busy and learning. And then the third extra thing that I discovered is really pay attention to how you present yourself to the world because there is ageism out there, and one wants to show that regardless of whether you're 60, 70, 80 or 90, you're a powerful strong person and you still have things that you can contribute to the world.

So that's kind of how the book evolved. And as I said, it does share a lot of my very, very personal thoughts and things like that. But, you

know, if you're not prepared to reveal your own humility, why should people believe you?

Pat: Powerful stories.

Gillian: Mm-hmm.

Pat: Tell us about where you are now in this book production. You've taken the scientific book. You translated that into your story with information that deepens these concepts for the reader. Did you decide to self-publish this book or are you going to a traditional publisher? Where are you in that process?

Gillian: No. The book is actually in the hands of a publisher. It's in the pre-publishing stage. I'm hoping that it'll actually be out sometime in the early fall. But in the meanwhile, we are taking pre-orders.

And also, I wanted to let your readers know that I'm available for consultation. And as a special sort of offer to the people who view your podcast, I will be offering a complimentary consultation to help them see if there are ways in which they can unfold their own roadmap to help the aging and growing older but living younger.

And where they will find me or contact me is at the website www.gillianlockitch.com. And that is "Gillian" -- G-I-L-L-I-A-N (dot) Lockitch -- L-O-C-K-I-T-C-H.com. -- Actually, there may not be a "dot" in it. It may be just gillianlockitch.com.

Pat: Mm-hmm.

Gillian: Yeah. And there, they will find a link to... This is the book.

Pat: *Growing Older, Living Younger*. For those listening on the audio, she's just holding up a picture of the cover that will be part of the book.

Gillian: Yes. *Growing Older, Living Younger: The Science of Aging Gracefully and the Art of Retiring Comfortably*.

Pat: And that certainly fits the needs of many of the people who are listening in terms of our audience. I think we're all focused on those points whether it's ourselves or affects our parents or we've got

children who are thinking about us and how we are aging and retiring or not retiring as the case may be.

Gillian: Right. I've never retired. I redeployed and I'm on my third career.

Pat: “Redeployed” -- that sounds like almost you're a battleship, Gillian, who's been diverted from being stuck in the harbor to going out at sea again. That's what I think about.

Gillian: [Laughs] Yeah. Well, actually, what happened was I transitioned from being a scientist focusing, you know, on facts and science to developing the artistic side of myself through my website. I founded a lifestyle website which is called reviewfromthehouse.com and it focused on travel, dance, theater reviews, food and wine and just general lifestyle. And then my third career came actually directly as a result of the website and I'm now an entrepreneur in the area of health and anti-aging and beauty.

Pat: Mm-hmm. Wow, that's such a nice combination of skills and interests.

Gillian: Thank you.

Pat: I know that you've given your website for our listeners who want to find out more about you, the services you offer, schedule a complimentary conversation with you, look for your information about your book which they can pre-order at this point. Any last tips that you want to share with our listener before we end this program?

Gillian: I think the one thing that I would like to share is I never want to hear anybody say, “I'm too old to change” because all of us have the capacity to choose to grow. And I think when you stop moving and you stop growing mentally then you become old.

Pat: What a great point. And I know that the person listening to this can think of an individual in their life who might be chronologically in their 80s but perhaps mentally in their 50s and 60s.

My husband does a lot in the stock market and has been working with a man who has just turned 97 who, in the last couple of months, has started to show some signs of dementia. But up until a couple of months ago he was actively managing his account.

He was forced to give up flying a couple of years ago because the licensing bureau in California decided they didn't want to have a 95-year old behind the wheel of a plane. He was skiing until his late 80s - just a marvelous example of what you're talking about of living younger at that point in his life.

Gillian: One of the interesting things with respect to mind, before we finish this, there's been a lot of interest in things that can delay the onset of dementia or delay the progression. And there was a very interesting study some time ago that showed... when they looked at a number of activities, both cognitive activities such as reading, board games, puzzles, etc. and physical activities, one of the key physical activities that actually was one of the most important things was partner dancing which was quite an unexpected finding for me.

But one of the ways in which I basically am attacking that issue... And yes, it is a battleship. I want to avoid, you know, mental deterioration. My mind is the most important thing to me.

So, I do online computer training. I do cryptic crossword puzzles. I read voraciously. I play board games. I'm battling to be a good bridge player but one day I will succeed at that. So yes, I think that's--

As I said, everything starts with the mind and that's one of the most important assets that we need to keep young.

Pat: I know that my mother, who died when she was 83 of metastatic cancer, told me, in the last year of her life, that she specifically did puzzles to keep her brain sharp. And my husband who is now 80 is always sitting in front of his computer, managing our brokerage accounts, learning new techniques, keeping his brain agile. I think if he stopped doing that, he would be at risk of deteriorating quickly.

Gillian: I absolutely agree, yeah.

Pat: You have given us so many insights today. I appreciate what you have shared with us. And thank you for being a guest on the show.

Gillian: Well thank you for inviting me. I truly enjoyed talking to you and I love to chat to your son. He sounds so bright.

Pat: It sounds good. And thank you to you who's listening to this show on the audio channels or watching it on the Pat Iyer YouTube channel. We appreciate you giving us the time and hope that you've gotten some tips today that will affect how you think about aging or it may be validating everything that you already believe.

Thank you so much and be sure to come back next week for a new interview and a new show.