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South Natick, MA 01760

Alexis: Hello, and thanks for joining us for the Prepped and Polished Radio Show. I'm your host, Alexis Avila. I'm a licensed guidance counselor, private tutor, and founder of Prepped and Polished, LLC Tutoring and Test Prep, in beautiful South Natick, Massachusetts. The Prepped and Polished Radio Show is your educational insider. Our show is brought to you by Prepped and Polished, LLC, where I'm the principal educator. To learn more about our firm, please visit preppedandpolished.com.

Thank you to everyone who is listening to the program. We appreciate you taking interest in the information we bring to families and educators around the globe. For future shows, updates, and ongoing relevant education news, please join our Facebook community by searching for Prepped and Polished and clicking "like." You can follow us on Twitter at PrepPolished.

Joining our show today, is Rebecca Donovan. Rebecca is a USA Today bestselling author, her debut novel entitled, "Reason to Breathe." Her "Breathing" series has resonated with readers, especially teens, around the world and continues to grow in popularity. Rebecca has a degree in Psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia. After graduating from college, Rebecca worked with teens in social services for over three years. She made a career change and worked within the event industry for 12 years, particularly, wedding planning. She's been a writer most of her life, and recently published her first book, "Reason to Breathe," in 2011.

We're delighted to have Rebecca on our show. She's going to share with us her experiences becoming a professional teenage fiction writer and give us a few tips about how kids and adults can tap into their creative writing potential and perhaps, one day become successful writers themselves. Before we start, I want to make sure our listeners have our contact info. Our email address is radio@preppedandpolished.com. If you'd like to submit a question at any time, you can use that email address. Often, our listeners will have questions as they're listening or afterwards. We always appreciate hearing from our listeners, so you can email us at any time at radio@preppedandpolished.com. Rebecca, are you there on the line?

Rebecca: Yes, I am. How are you, Alexis?

Alexis: Great. Thank you so much for joining us. How are you today?

Rebecca: Better, thanks. I have a little bit of sore throat. If my voice cracks, don't bother listening to that.



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Alexis: We won't hold it against you at all. When I was trying to schedule this interview with you, you were in the West Coast. I believe you were in Los Angeles. I know you were recently finishing your third book. What brought you to L.A.? What were you doing out there?

Rebecca: I like to call her my writing partner, now that I'm published with professional publishing houses, I have my own editing team. Before that, when I was an indie writer, she acted as my editor in all sense of grammatic and sentence structure and content. She's still a writing partner for me. She lives out in the Ventura County area, which is north of L.A. The third book, "Out of Breath," takes place in that area as well, Santa Barbara. There was great inspiration, and it was great to be able to work one-on-one with her versus over the Internet or through email. It was just a nice writing experience sitting right there on the ocean and having that to look at every day.

Alexis: I could imagine that is inspiration. Could you tell us a little bit, Rebecca, about your book series, the "Breathing" series and a little bit about your journey so far as a successful author?

Rebecca: The series is based on a girl who has a hard home life. She has a difficult past. She's coming to terms with all of that and displaying her life and her story enfold with repercussions of having to heal, having to make choices that are difficult for anyone that's in that kind of situation. It resonates with so many people because of the realistic way I've chosen to portray it. I didn't hold back in the abuse that she goes through and the trauma that she has to endure. I've received countless emails from so many people, so many survivors of child abuse who have thanked me for telling her story, giving her a voice and showing the world that this does exist. It's been an amazing journey because it's happened by word-of-mouth. It's happened because my readers are so passionate and so excited about this. As soon as they're done reading it, they have to tell the next person, or they can't wait to share it with someone else or to have someone else emotionally go through it with them. It's been surreal, and I've enjoyed every step of the process.

Alexis: That makes a lot of sense. When I was researching, looking at your blog and all the social media, you're out there. I could see all those letters in response to these characters that they're reading.

Rebecca: They truly connect with them like they're real people, and that's amazing.

Alexis: Can you tell us a little bit . . . I don't want you giving away spoilers or anything . . . who's Emma and Evan, these main characters I keep hearing about in your books? Why do you think teens relate to these characters?



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Rebecca: Emma is the main character. It's first person through her perspective. She starts in the first book. She's 16. She's a junior in high school. She lives with her aunt and uncle. Her aunt is not welcoming of her invading her life and her home and is abusive towards Emma. Emma has to hide this from everyone with the risk of losing her two younger siblings to the foster care system or being removed from the home. She doesn't want that life for them because their parents truly do love them. So she's basically sacrificing herself in the hopes of getting through high school, getting off to college, and just being done with them.

Evan is a love interest, in truth. He's a transfer. He doesn't know anything about her, doesn't know anything about her personality, her style of life. He's intrigued by her. The rest of the school [inaudible 06:58] someone that works in the shadows, doesn't participate. She excels in everything, but she doesn't give a sizeable contribution so that she's recognized by any of her peers socially. Evan is intrigued by her. He wants to know more about her. I think that because I surround them by the essence of what high school is, the football games, the parties, the day-to-day gossip that keeps them grounded in this real world of what high school is. The characters themselves are not the normal teenagers.

Obviously, the average teenager doesn't have to endure the type of abuse that Emma has to go through. There are teenagers that do, but that's not the average high school experience. Evan travels, he goes from school to school, and he has had to age beyond his years because he's always thrust into these adult situations. That's one of the reasons he recognizes Emma as being different. There's something about her, and any other teenage boy would have dismissed her as stuck up, or she's just not interested. He sees more of her than she's letting the rest of her peers see. I let them be different than what the average high school experience is. I think that's what draws readers to them, because they're just so intense. I guess that's the best way to put it.

Alexis: Absolutely. You have to go for the jugular to make it resonate with people. Rebecca, let's find out a little bit about you. Did you read and write a lot growing up?

Rebecca: I've always read. It's funny, because YA was never my particular genre of reading. When I wrote for it, it was kind of ironic. I was more of a horror-fiction, crime novel, realistic crimes actually. That was my take on the world of my readership. I'm a huge Stephen King fan, so that was what I read growing up. Writing, I was in journal. I was always very imaginative. Even as a child, the stories that I would create in my head or whether I was able to write them down for assignments and such, I was always writing. I never took the chance to write a novel until a couple years ago, but I've always considered myself a writer. I've always been very expressive, very imaginative.



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Alexis: I think that answers the question what you were like as a teen. You were submerged in books.

Rebecca: Right. I have a bit of Emma-ism, I suppose, in the early part of my teen years. I was quiet and not really social. I was in advanced placement classes in my first couple years in high school. Then, it tends to be the opposite that the more social I became, the less my grades were as stellar. I was still up in advanced placement English, bio, math classes, and such. I loved school, and I totally immersed myself in it. I was the editor of my high school paper. I did some photography for it. I was able to draw from my experiences, and that's where my comfort zone was when I created Emma, but giving her a completely different world. It was me growing up. I was a little bit awkward at first, and then I grew into myself, as probably most teens do.

Alexis: Absolutely. We work with students here at Prepped and Polished, and I'm always thinking about them. Do you have to be someone who was always a writer to become a writer, or can you learn it?

Rebecca: I think it's part of you. You write because it's who you are. It's a need that you have, a story in your head that keeps going on and on. The only way you can get it out, you get it on your paper. If you're acting it out, it's some sort of art form. It's a form of expression, I consider it art. I consider it an art, whether writing, painting or acting, it's a way of expressing what's already inside of you. It's your essence. Your talent that can be molded. That can be taken either through creative writing classes, groups, teachers, and educators. Taking something that's already there and helping you shape it, so that the world can be a part of it. That's how you can become a writer.

Alexis: I really understand, and I love that analogy with the art form. You don't hear enough of that, that writing is an art form where you have to feel it from within, and you, also, have to own your craft and work on it.

Rebecca: Exactly. You just don't write something, put it out there and the world takes it and says, "This is brilliant." It would be amazing to happen, but there are more rejections than there are acceptances. That doesn't mean that you should give up. You write it because that's what you need to do. Whether the world accepts it, you can't control that. That's outside. That's subjective. What you put on paper, how you create it, the effort, the time, the love you put into it is what you have control over.

Alexis: Right. Do you have any tips for students who love to write and want to make a career out of it?



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Rebecca: The career part, I can't say it's going to exactly pay your bills. It could be something that, in time, as your talent grows, if it's something the world is ready for, there are so many ways of exposing your writing through independent publishing, through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Apple. You don't have to put any money forward for it. You just have to have your polished manuscript. With that being said, write, get critiqued by everybody, especially if you have English teachers or peers that you respect. Get opinions, help create it and make it better. I did it some more, because there's never enough editing. Have it professionally edited. You can create a story, let the world read, and see what happens. Once you put it out there, it can either go right to the top, or it's just going to be out there. You just have to have that confidence and just keep persevering.

Alexis: I think that transcends to a lot of careers.

Rebecca: It does.

Alexis: Rebecca, what do you do in your off time when you don't write?

Rebecca: I'm a huge music fan, so I go to concerts a lot. I will travel to concerts. I went to Austin this year, to Austin City Limits. I think I'm going to Coachella next year. I usually go to, at least, two or three concerts a month. I'm a huge music fan. It's also another art for me. I'm such a huge fan of lyrics and just listen to the music and what is being said, the poetry behind the words. I'm in awe of the musicians. As much as I'm a writer myself, it's just a completely different realm, so I love it.

Alexis: Are we going to be hearing Rebecca Donovan, the singer, after your writing career?

Rebecca: No, you do not want me to sing. I promise you that. I would like to get to know that world a little bit more. One of the projects that I'm working on in the future, and I'm still at the very, very beginning stages of it, is bringing awareness to child abuse. Part of that is, perhaps, creating my own foundation to do so. I would love to bring some musicians on board and have benefit concerts. That will be my two worlds and doing that to bring awareness and do what I love and have that be a part of raising that awareness and raising the money for it.

Alexis: Absolutely. I noticed on your website, you have a link to the Child Help USA and National Domestic Violence Hotline. These two organizations are, obviously, important to you.

Rebecca: Yes. Writing such a serious topic of child abuse, it was just a responsibility I felt I needed to share with anyone that's in that situation. If they're able to connect with the story



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because it's something that they're going through, or know someone that is going through it, and they're going to explore my site, I want them to know that these organizations exist. There's help, that they're not alone in any of this. There's someone out there that can guide them. They're nationally recognized organizations, and I just wanted to make sure that they had the information there if they're involved in the story, the Emma story.

Alexis: Awesome. When will your third installment of the "Breathing Series" come out? I know you have two that came out. The first one is "Reason to Breathe." The second installment is "Barely Breathing."

Rebecca: "Out of Breath" will be out in June. I just got signed by Amazon publishing. They will be re-releasing both "Reason to Breathe" and "Barely Breathing" in the spring and launching the new "Out of Breath," which no one will have read before then, in June. It's just a new process where they take what I've written, and they just go through their edits. There's never enough editing, so they're going to go through their editing process with those two books that have already released and resubmit them. Because it's publishing, I'll be in print form more than I am now. Right now, most of my sales and distribution has been through e-books. That's insane considering I'm bestseller, but it's all been electronic. Knowing that the print version hasn't even been released yet, I can only imagine that it's going to get that much better and have that much broader release into the world. I'll soon have been signed with other international publishers in different countries, in the UK, Russia, Hungary, and Brazil. It's going to be worldwide pretty soon. Pretty exciting.

Alexis: Since 2011, you've put out three books. I just can't imagine how many books you're going to have put out in about five years.

Rebecca: I'm a slow writer in comparison to my fellow authors. Some are putting two or three books out a year. I intend to put out one a year, so that's a little slow in the perspective of the writing world. Before I've had to divide my time with a full-time job in writing. This year, I'm grateful having to just concentrate on being an author and writing. So 2013, I'm hoping to put a couple books out and continue on that avenue of creating more for my audience.

Alexis: That is incredible. We are all supporting you and we're big fans. Thank you very much, Rebecca.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Alexis: Thanks for coming on today.



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Rebecca: It was my pleasure.

Alexis: This wraps up our show today with Rebecca Donovan of the successful "Breathing Series." Please visit rebeccadonovan.com to learn more about Rebecca's writing and books. I also highly recommend checking out Rebecca's blog, which can be found on her site. Join her Facebook fan page to get updates on her work. You can purchase all of Rebecca's books by going on her website or on Amazon. Thank you for joining us on the Prepped and Polished Radio Show.