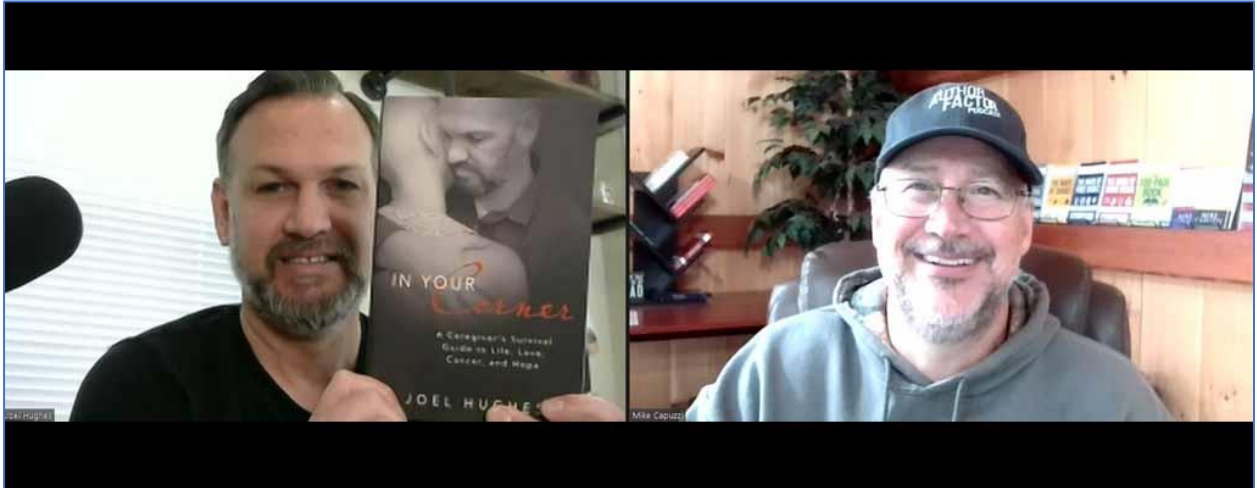


# **The Author Factor Podcast**

## **Ep:174—Author & Cancer Hope Advocate, Joel Hughes**



**Mike Capuzzi [00:00:00]:**

Welcome to another profitable episode of the Author Factor Podcast. I'm Mike Capuzzi, and I want to thank you for joining us. My guest today is Joel Hughes. Joel, along with his wife Rebekah, is the founder and director of Rebekah's Hope, which exists to help cancer fighters find hope through his authentic, hope filled media. He's the author of six books, including the one we're going to focus on today *In Your Corner*. Joel. Welcome to the Author factor podcast.

**Joel Hughes [00:00:27]:**

Hi, Mike. Thank you. It's a total pleasure to be here.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:00:31]:**

I appreciate your time today. And I know you and I were getting to know each other kind of offline and have some similar things that we're doing, so that's very cool. So, Joel, before we jump in and talk about *In Your Corner* and your other books that you've written, can you share a little bit more about what you do, how you serve your clients and all that good stuff? Because it's interesting because, again, we have some similar background here, but share that information, please.

**Joel Hughes [00:00:59]:**

Sure. So I have two companies that I run. The first one is called Rebekah's Hope, and that exists to help cancer fighters or anybody on the cancer journey to find hope. And we do that through our hope filled, authentic media that we've created, meaning books. We spent two years, hired a professional videographer, and we filmed a documentary that's won a bunch of awards and film festivals around the country. And that's about my wife's life and her story. We have the books, we have the documentary. We have some courses. We have about 50 different T shirts that we've created, mugs and all that kind of stuff. And then we have a number of smaller eBooks that we give away for free. And we also offer cancer coaching and counseling. So that's Rebekah's hope. And the story behind that is my wife. Rebekah has stage four breast cancer, and she was first diagnosed when she was 23 years old. Before we met, she had had a double mastectomy and chemo and was declared cancer free. And then we met a couple of years later, got married. Eight months into our new marriage, she was re diagnosed with stage four breast cancer, and the cancer had spread to her brain, liver, lungs, kidney, spine, and lymph node. She was given about four to six months to live by one oncologist and consider. She was 26 years old at the time. So it was devastating news, and it just completely turned our world upside down. And our new marriage, we got her admitted immediately into the city of Hope in Los Angeles, which is we lived in Orange County, California, at the time. So they aggressively fought the cancer with chemotherapy, radiation, surgery. And it's been about eight years now, and she is fairly stable, but it's been a journey up and down, journey scans and cancer coming back here. And then we have to do radiation, and then chemotherapy consistently for almost eight years takes its toll on you. So it's always that. And we moved recently well, a couple of years ago, we moved up to Southern Oregon from California and our hospital. It's an ongoing journey, but she's doing very well at this point. So that's Rebekah's Hope, and we know how important hope is, especially when you get a terminal diagnosis. And so we write and create products to help give people hope through that. My other company is called Newbie Book Writer, and that is aimed it's an online course, and I do coaching to help inspiring authors newbies how to write, publish, and launch their first book.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:03:48]:**

Very good. So that's the similar part we have, and it's neat to see someone else doing that. So very good. The journey that you described with Rebekah, which obviously you're still living, I mean, this is still obviously an ongoing now, is that a business, Joel? Rebekah's Hope is it a nonprofit?

**Joel Hughes [00:04:08]:**

It is a business.

**Mike Capuzzi** [00:04:11]:

Okay.

**Joel Hughes** [00:04:12]:

Yeah. And so it's rebekahshope.org, and that is a business. And it grew we could talk a little bit later, but it grew out of my first book.

**Mike Capuzzi** [00:04:22]:

Okay, so let's talk about your book journey. Six books. What was your first book?

**Joel Hughes** [00:04:29]:

This one right here called help. Someone I Love Has Cancer. How you can really make a difference. And I've been writing for about the past 20 years. Prior to meeting Rebekah, I'd gone through a terrible divorce, and my life fell apart, and I gave up writing, and then I married Rebekah and the cancer came back, and I felt compelled to start writing again. It was a way of a means of catharsis for me, but also it was a way to fight back. As a man, my instinct is to want to go fight the bad guy, and I say I want to just put my hands in her and just rip it out of her, but I can't do that. So a lot of times you feel helpless. And so I started writing. The impetus to this first book was that when she was rediagnosed, a lot of people come out of the woodworks and offer you suggestions, and they try to help you, and they tell you, you need to eat this because it cures cancer, and you need to stop doing this and start doing this. And all these people come out of the woodworks and try to help you. And a lot of people end up doing more harm than good. And so the first book was kind of like, hey, if you know somebody who has cancer, here's how you can really help them. Because there were people that offered a lot of real help that really did help us, and there were a lot of people that offered help. And I call the well intentioned dragons in the book. They mean well, but they sting you with their tail. And so that was my first book I simultaneously wrote my second book while writing the first book. And so that would be the main book we would talk about here, which is called In Your Corner. And it is a caregiver's survival guide for life, love, cancer, and hope. And I would say about two years into the cancer journey, I began to think of myself as not only a husband, but a caregiver. As her needs began to increase, I was doing a lot, a lot more for her. And I became a caregiver is kind of what it was. And the person who has the terminal illness or the sickness, they typically get 99% of the attention and the focus and the help, which is great, I'm all for that. But the caregiver is right there with that person. And they are what I call the unsung heroes. And they have their own unique stresses, fears, angers, frustrations, grief, loss, and temptations that come along with that. And so I was dealing with all

of that kind of stuff. One study that I read from a medical university, they surveyed like, 750 couples and where one of them had a terminal illness or a serious illness. And they found that women were seven times more likely to be left by their male counterpart than vice versa. And so I recently wrote an article for a cancer website that I write for, and I titled it men are Not Made to be Caregivers. Women are just much better at it Than we men are. They have that nurture instinct. And so really, I wrote this book for anybody in a caregiver role. It doesn't have to be cancer, but anybody who's taking care of somebody. And especially for spouses, if you're in a relationship, there's a lot of challenges there. And then I guess the most detailed target would be male spouses taking care of a sick wife. Because a lot of times our emotional toolbox is not equipped to handle such big emotional issues. And our instinct is to run and flee and hide a lot of times or to resort to unhealthy tactics to cope. So I wrote this book to help people with that.

**Mike Capuzzi** [00:08:19]:

And then the other four books, are they also focused?

**Joel Hughes** [00:08:24]:

They're all similar. My third book would be epic. Hope and this is finding the only hope that Can Heal Our deepest hurts. I guess you would want to know that my background is in theology and philosophy. I was a Christian pastor at two different churches during the first marriage. So when my life fell apart, I kind of dropped out of that and went from the pulpit to sitting in the back of the church kind of feeling like a failure and kind of gave everything up. And my goal at that point in life was I just wanted to survive. Honestly. I struggled with drinking a lot, and I just went into depression. And a lot of times I just wanted to die. I was so hurt. I didn't want that marriage to fail. And I was so broken up by that experience, and I was just drunk all the time and depressed, but I made my way out of it, and really, it was back, getting back to my faith in God and finding that kind of hope. And I have two kids, and my kids were a huge hope and inspiration to me. So that's what kind of this book is all about. It's all about finding hope through the hardest times. Then we had another friend who my fourth book, we had another friend who got diagnosed with a serious cancer, and she was asking questions, mike, why does God allow this kind of stuff? If he's all good and he's all powerful and he's all loving, why does God allow it? So that got me thinking, I'm going to write a book on that. I have the background in the theology, and I have degrees in philosophy, and so I wrote Why does God Allow things like Cancer? And this is more of it's, both academic and pastoral. So it's comforting. And the would be my four main books, and they're all, in a sense, cancer related, but they're all kind of hope related, too. Our documentary I have a DVD copy here is called A Brave Hope, and our company is called Rebekah's Hope. So everything's about hope. And so that's why I wrote that book. Epic hope is I wanted to define and defend what I believe hope really is.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:10:25]:**

So you have really again, you're going through it, so it's not like it's in the rear view mirror. Parts of it are. But you have built a platform, a business. Obviously, you're helping a lot of people around the turmoil that you're going through and all the challenges you're going through. I'll ask a sort of obvious question with probably an obvious answer, but you already mentioned it earlier a little bit. How much has writing these books, Joel, been therapeutic for you?

**Joel Hughes [00:11:00]:**

The Author yeah, I would say life changing, and I say that because, like I said when I remarried Rebekah, and I still had not prior to when I was doing all the pastor stuff and going to school, and I had such a driving purpose in life. I was going to save the world at that time. I was speaking at conferences, getting invited to speak at different conferences, and I was doing large scale public debates, and I was writing on blogs and things, and I was kind of a hotshot up and comer right in the Christian world. And then everything fell apart, and so I totally almost lost that purpose. Rebekah's re-diagnosis kind of lit that fire under my butt again. And writing that first book, it gave me a new sense of confidence, gave me pride in finishing the work, but it opened up a whole new world of possibilities to me. And I could write another book. I could write another book after that. I love writing. I've always loved writing. I've always dreamed of being an author, but it just always seemed so other people do that kind of stuff. And then I actually did it, and then we filmed this movie, and I'm like, I could actually form and build a business out of this, and I could actually create products that minister to people and help people and get paid to do so. That's kind of like your dream, right? So when I work on my projects and I do all this stuff, it's not work. I'm in the flow. I'm in that zone, and I'm doing what I love doing. I'm doing what my gifts are I'm good at. And if I can help people and get paid to do so, that's a win win. And that's kind of a dream come true. So it really gave me this new, I think, refined purpose in life. And it all started from that one little book, and then it's opened up tons of doors, like this podcast right here. We've been featured in blogs, in different cancer magazines, websites. We've been on other podcast. We got featured a few months ago on a major app. They told our story to and I think they have, like, two point something million active users in this app, and they told our story in the app. So writing books has opened doors of opportunities like that. But just internally, what it's done for me is huge. Just given me that purpose again.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:13:42]:**

That first book on cancer, how long ago was that, Joel? Just to give me a timeline, I.

**Joel Hughes** [00:13:48]:

Believe I published that in 2018, just.

**Mike Capuzzi** [00:13:51]:

A couple of years ago. Okay.

**Joel Hughes** [00:13:53]:

Yeah.

**Mike Capuzzi** [00:13:55]:

So this hope, Rebekah's Hope, this business that you've created, these books, tell me a bit more about you're on podcast. You're on this app. I mean, how have you gotten the word out about these books? What are you doing? Because, again, most of our people I interview for this, they're more of a, quote, traditional business. They're talking about teaching how to write a book or something like that. But what you're talking about here is such a unique niche. I'm interested in hearing if someone's listening to this and has this kind of book that they've written a memoir or something about their own challenges. What are some smart ways that you've used to get the word out there?

**Joel Hughes** [00:14:39]:

I would say first, it's very challenging, and it's something I completely underestimated when I got started. I would say it's one of my biggest mistakes, because I just didn't know any better, is that I'm really good and I'm really strong at creating products and good products. And as far as marketing them, I was under the naive assumption that if you create a good product, everyone's going to come to you. Right?

**Mike Capuzzi** [00:15:06]:

Put it up on Amazon. Right?

**Joel Hughes** [00:15:08]:

Exactly. And you know what? It just doesn't work like that. It doesn't and then I'm usually off to my next project and I'm like, oh, this is going to be the one that gets me on Oprah, right? This is going to be the big one. And then that one doesn't. And so I'm onto the next project. And then

all of a sudden I look back and I had this litton me of all these great products and no real game plan for the and so the last couple of years, I would say I've really focused. In on marketing them and actually making money from the and so I would say, if you're an author, number one, I would say take the time and try to do a book launch. That would be the basic first place, a grassroots book launch. You and I share a friend, Paul White, and I helped him with his last book launch. And we got his book Using My Strategy to hit number one bestseller in one category. And then I think he was number one new release in three or four categories on Amazon, which was very cool. And his book sales are still going well. And I helped him last night on a zoom call to launch his first Amazon ad, which was kind of exciting. So I'd say number one, do focus on a book launch. The most profitable thing that I am doing right now as far as selling my individual books is running paid Amazon ads the way I've learned how to. I've tried paid Facebook ads for my books. Nothing works. That doesn't work for me. Running paid Amazon ads has been kind of a little game changer for our books. And I learned first from Dave Chesson, from Kindlepreneur.com, I read all of his stuff and taken his online courses like five times. And I bought Publisher Rocket, his software so you can assemble the hundreds and thousands of keywords and phrases you need to build your different back end for your ads. And so I've been doing that with two of my books and they have become instantly profitable. So that is good. Another strategy that we use is I've written two or three small eBooks, about 20 to 25 page eBooks that we use as lead magnets. One of them is titled Power Through Chemo. Like a badass. Even if you feel Mike a wimp. And the other one is something about Cancer fighting Ninja Secrets or something like that. We run paid ads on Facebook offering these free eBooks. And then those basically once people download those, obviously they're going to go onto our email list and then they get onto our automated email list where we can pitch all of our other products over time through a series of nurture and sales emails. That's been very profitable. I wouldn't say profitable, but it's been very effective to build our email list. I am not good at social media. I'm not the guy that posts all the time creating huge fans of followers. I honestly just suck at it. I wish I was better at it. I wish I was like I tend to think it might, I don't know, like younger people might be a little better at it, but Paul White's all over it. Paul white's all over it. Okay, yeah, I guess not an age thing. I so admire those people who can just rally, like, the thousand true fans, right? And they have an email list of 70,000 or 100,000 people, and I'm working on it. And so I just run these paid Facebook ads very inexpensively, and I just let them run, and they continue to perform. And I would say we probably get 50 to 60 new subscribers every month doing that. And so that's slowly building our list.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:19:03]:**

And this is all for one Rebekah's Hope.

**Joel Hughes [00:19:06]:**

Rebekah's hope.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:19:07]:**

Yeah.

**Joel Hughes [00:19:08]:**

And that's another problem, is I also have newbie book writer, which is what I intended to be my main money source. But I have so many dang projects. I have other projects on the shelf that I created too many projects at once. And so I literally need a team to be helping me with all this stuff. And it's just me doing this. So I try to stay focused on one thing at a time, but one thing that I'm really learning as far as my books go and moving in our books and then our other products. I just finished reading a book by Russell Brunson, and he said something in there, and he's teaching a concept about turning your product into an offer. Okay, that's been a real big thing for me. So what he does when he comes to a company like mine that has all these products is he'll find the product that sells the best and then use that as a free lead magnet. And then through the checkout process, there's a number of upsells or down sells. So that's something. And you create that sales funnel. That's something that I'm going to be trying down the road. I'm going to be offering probably in your corner as a free digital download. You can get the ebook, but then through the process, I'm going to pitch people, hey, if you like that, get the movie. We have this documentary. If you like that, why don't you grab a T shirt or a mug or something like that? So that's a strategy I'm going to be working on, is to create my products and make them into an offer.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:20:35]:**

Yeah, we do that now for our clients, too. As a matter of fact, we're working on several book funnels. Yeah, it's a big opportunity for you. You'll get just as confused and overwhelmed as everything else because I'll tell you, there are so many things, but Russell is a good example and there's others. Actually, one of our clients wrote you should check it out. It's called the book funnel formula. It's up on Amazon. Gary White, it's a shook, and he worked with Russell, and it's a book just focused on book funnels.

**Joel Hughes [00:21:07]:**

Wow.



**Mike Capuzzi [00:21:08]:**

Yeah. So, yeah, there's a lot of opportunity there for you, Joel. Just real quick, before we get ready to wrap up here, Joel. Now, is Rebekah at all involved in the business? Is she able to or is she interested?

**Joel Hughes [00:21:24]:**

Yeah, she is. Not as much as I guess, in the beginning, because last February, she had brain surgery up in Portland, and it was the open her head and full on brain surgery to take out a couple of tumors that actually turned out not to be there. Coming out of the surgery, she had some side effects that kind of messed things up a little bit. So she's still working on recovering from that a year later. Doing very well. But no, it's I would say 90% me in that.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:22:06]:**

I'm thinking, like, maybe we have to do a second episode here because we're just barely touching on this. But I think what you're doing, Joel, there's so much more we can even dive in just to what we talked about today, not only from you, the author's point of view, and the therapy for your own self, but also helping a lot of thousands of other people that are suffering like you are in your family, but also the whole business side of things. But you and I will talk offline about that. But in the meantime, how can our listeners learn more about you, Rebekah's Hope? Where's the best place to get the books?

**Joel Hughes [00:22:43]:**

Yeah, you would just go to our website, [rebekahshope.org](http://rebekahshope.org), and Rebekah is spelled like it is in the Bible. It's Rebekah, and so it's [rebekahshope.org](http://rebekahshope.org). I think I bought the domains to the misspelling, too, so you'll find it either way. So all of our products, everything's there, and then my book writing course and coaching all is [@newbiebookwriter.com](mailto:@newbiebookwriter.com) obviously Amazon, too.

**Mike Capuzzi [00:23:14]:**

Very good. Well, listen, I do appreciate your time today and encourage listeners to go check Joel's book. So thank you very much, Joel.