

THE WORKSHOP

- XXXXX -

CONCEPT / MARKETABILITY:

While your story sounds like a compelling one, you need to highlight “evidence of need” and how your book is unique from others earlier in your proposal. The initial overview of your proposal is far too vague. Agents and publishers could very well pass after reading the overview simply because they wouldn’t know how it differs from other memoirs of mothers dealing with autistic children. While the overview is supposed to be a general description of the subject matter the book will explore, it should still advocate for how your story is different and why it is needed; this often requires specific examples of your journey and/or personal discoveries.

One line that did stand out as unique and intriguing was: “...they were also due to her inability to accept him as he was.” Being more specific with your struggle and denial could be an interesting angle to pitch from the very beginning. Even if this is not what you want to focus on, there needs to be some differentiating factor from the otherwise very general overview.

Furthermore, your overview states, “It is living in a pure state, not sweating the small stuff, yet embracing each day by loving each other as we are.” You then describe how your book differs from Maurice’s in that there is no cure for autism, and it is about acceptance and hope for living a full life with this disorder. However, the sentence that reads, “XXXXX make(s) it clear that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that the journey is worthwhile.” Saying that there is light at the end of the tunnel feels somewhat contradictory to your other statements, inferring that there is an endpoint you must reach or strive for, rather than accepting each day as it comes. It is important not to muddle the mission of your story, especially earlier in the overview. I recommend rewording to something like, “XXXXX makes it clear that raising a child with autism doesn’t mean that both parents and children can’t live a full and wonderful life.”

For your “Markets” section, while the statistics are great, it is still albeit general. For example, you write, “XXXXX will help parents of autistic children feel better, be inspired, and be motivated to continue their journey.” Be more specific here. How is your story different from others and how will that inspire your readers? Perhaps you could discuss how your spirituality plays into the book. For the psychology, social work and education section, speak to how your book fills in the gaps. Rather than simply stating that there is a lack of resources in which your book fulfills, actually state how your book fulfills that need? In other words, what are these other books missing that yours touches upon? When you write in general terms and leave the reader wanting answers, they are more likely to pass on the project, assuming that it is no different from the many other books out there that cover the same subject.

Your “About the Author” section is very impressive. It clearly states that you are qualified to write on this subject, which pairs nicely with it being a memoir where you share your personal, emotional journey. Your Author Platform is also very impressive. Agents and Publishers like to see that nonfiction writers have a big following, because it makes their jobs much easier.

However, be sure not to repeat information from the Social Media Statistics in the Additional Platform elements. There are some other areas in the proposal that repeat information that was already stated. Try to avoid repeating too much information. Each section should typically emphasize new information that will further sell your book. Additionally, in the “Author Platform” section, I recommend linking to your books and articles, making them easily accessible to the reader.

Regarding your “Mission Statement,” I do not believe what you have included actually is your mission statement. The mission statement is the thesis of your book, i.e., what you want the reader to learn or come away with after they read your book. What you currently have for your mission statement is more of a “why I wrote this book.” This information is already inferred in the overview. I think your mission statement would be closer to what you mention in the overview about “learning to accept autism and hope for a full life.” Or, later in your “Competing Books” section, you write: “Families need a book that can help them learn how to be unified as they contend with the “loss” of the child they expected to have and the acceptance of a new “normal.” Accepting autism is not giving in to a lesser standard of life; instead, it is collectively choosing to live with the loved one in a way that is healthy and honourable for each member.” This reads like the mission statement of your book.

For your promotion plan, use stronger language. For example, rather than writing, “Plan on getting XXXXX to give my book an endorsement...” it would read, “In contact with XXXXX for a book endorsement,” or “XXXXX is currently reviewing XXXXX for endorsement.” I also do not believe that your plan for spin-off books and children’s books should be mentioned in the pre-publication promotion plan. For the purposes of this proposal, it isn’t a good idea to promote other books before XXXXX is even released. Use this section to dedicate promotional efforts to XXXXX.

I would also include social media promotion here. I know you mention it in your post-publication plans, but you have a huge social media following, so exhibiting how you will utilize that to drive pre-sales would be good to include. I would also be more specific in this section. For example, what author would you do a podcast with? Do they already have a podcast? Are you starting your own podcast? The same could be said for the post-publication promotion. What are the TV and Radio stations you mention?

For the Competing and Complimentary Books section, there are similar issues as I mentioned about the overview. You need to be more specific in how your book is different. For example, you write, “XXXXX differs from other books on the subject because it is written for families to help them understand the underlying, often misunderstood issues they are faced with as a family unit.” – what are these misunderstood issues? You also write, “There is a gap in educational and real-life example books dealing specifically with the impact that autism has on an immigrant family unit.” This probably shouldn’t be the first time this is mentioned. I think it is briefly touched upon earlier in the proposal, but if this is an element of the book that helps it stand out from other books dealing with similar subject matter, then it should be emphasized earlier. Similarly, the part where you write, “XXXXX exemplifies how life goes on even if your child will be a lifelong dependent, unable to function alone. The reality that many parents will have to care for their child for the rest of their lives can be paralyzing, if not downright terrifying. My story gives a glimpse into a future that can put readers’ minds at ease by showing them how to willingly embrace each family member’s gifts,” does a good job highlighting how this book is slightly different. It is more specific and helps show how your book may be different from other

“inspirational” memoirs about autism. Because of this, I recommend mentioning this in the overview.

PLOT/ STRUCTURE / CHARACTERS:

The synopsis is well-done. It highlights who you are, your desires for yourself and your children, the obstacles you faced, what was at stake, and how you overcame those obstacles. It then transitions into how you want your story to help others. It really highlights the emotion of the story.

Because your book is about you raising a child with autism, XXXXX needs to be mentioned in the summary for chapter 1. Also, after going through your chapter summaries, it seems as though Chapters 2 – 4 could be consolidated into one chapter. When the story is about your journey mothering a son with autism, and some of the first chapters don’t mention that, it makes them feel irrelevant. Even though your family background information is very necessary to the story, it should all relate to your “thesis” or mission statement. A reader naturally wants to get into the main story as quickly as possible. It almost feels as though Chapter 6 might be a good place to open on your story. It places the reader right in the conflict of this part of your life, and it will quickly allow them to invest in your story. The background information can always be shared later throughout the rest of the book.

Similarly, while the opening pages do a great job painting the picture of you struggling with newborn twins and two other children, I feel as though opening on a different scene would immediately get the reader into the story of XXXXX. Perhaps opening on XXXXX’s diagnosis and your reaction to it would better suit what the story is about. Then you can work backwards to this scene.

The only other “writing” note I have about your sample chapters is that, in Chapter 31, make it clear why you thought he went outside. Was the door ajar? Unlocked? Maybe show that his shoes were gone before sharing with the reader that you feared he went outside. This simply adds a trail for readers to more easily follow. Other than that, your writing is beautiful. You do a great job portraying your emotions and the daily grind of having so many kids and one with autism. So great job there.

My fear for the sample chapters is that from chapter 1 to chapter 31, there is no growth. While I’m sure this growth is exhibited in other chapters, you chose to showcase two chapters where “the main character” – you – are in similar situations: stressed, overwhelmed. Perhaps showcasing a different chapter that focuses on the hope and inspiration promised from the proposal would better highlight the mission of your book. The sample chapters should be representative of the different levels your memoir touches upon. By submitting chapters that explore different emotional themes or life moments will show the reader the variance of emotion they will be experiencing if they commit to this book.

VOICE:

The voice in your pages and synopsis are excellent. They really highlight your emotional journey. Good job there. If you could further infuse this voice into earlier sections of your proposal, like your overview, I think it would make the proposal that much stronger.

MECHANICS:

My biggest note here is to put your proposal in the first person. I understand that nonfiction proposals are often written in 3rd person, but memoirs which expose the personal life of the writer, should be written in first person, just as the book itself is written. You are selling YOUR story, YOUR life. Therefore, YOU need to come across the page in a personal discussion of what you are selling. Putting your proposal in first person will do that. You later switch to first person anyway, so putting the rest of it in first person will better unify the document as well.

I do recommend additional proofreading. There were some errors in comma placement, spacing, quotation spacing, and a few typos as well. My only other note is that your alignment for the chapter ten summary is currently centered. It should be flush left, like the rest of the chapter summaries.

EMOTIONAL RESONANCE:

I have no doubt that your book will resonate emotionally with people. You do a great job highlighting your struggle, sharing obstacles you face, and how you overcome them. I think your story is one that many in similar situations will relate to, but also bringing your family dynamics and cultural background into the story makes the emotional resonance extremely potent.

OTHER THOUGHTS:

N/A

