

i wrote a book



You Are a Gardener

by Shanna Truffini
illustrated by Kelsey DeLaney

[Inspiring]

By: Tatum Garino

At 38-years-old, Shanna Truffini became a published author. Along with "published author," Shanna's resume includes mother of two, wife, and full-time General Manager and Creative Director for a women's clothing and gift boutique in New Jersey. How did she manage to publish a book amidst her mom, wife, and boss babe duties? I was wondering the same thing – so I asked. And Shanna answered with stories of inspiration, persistence, and hard work.

Tatum Garino: So, you're a published author – how does that feel?

Shanna Truffini: It feels like I am standing at the base of a gigantic mountain and I am just getting ready to start my climb. Self-publishing my book was easy compared to what I would like to accomplish now that my book is in hand but needless to say, I am ready for this new adventure.

TG: Tell me about your book.

ST: I look at my book as an invitation to embrace the importance of teaching emotional education to young children. I feel it is just as important as teaching them their ABCs. You Are a Gardener uses 'gardening vocabulary' such as flowers, seeds and weeds to help children relate words they are comfortable with and understand how they feel. My goal is to get this book in the hands of elementary educators, counselors, parents and therapists across the country so we can all speak the same language when it comes to encouraging kids to talk about how they feel, especially the 'weeds' that can make them not feel their best. It is time we give our children a voice and empower them with knowing they have the tools it takes to control the way they feel and in turn create a generation of emotionally healthy kids who knows what it takes to #pullyourweeds!

TG: Had you always planned or dreamed

of publishing a book or did the idea come out of nowhere?

ST: They say necessity is the mother of invention and often that is how I view the inception of my book. When my daughter was five, our family experienced an "unforeseen obstacle" in our path which resulted in her having post-traumatic stress and as much as we did to stay ahead of it, her stress manifested into anticipatory anxiety. I was desperately looking for alternative options to help her cope and it wasn't until I was working with my friend one day she made the comparison that stress and anxiety are like watering your weeds. This was my lightbulb moment as all day I found myself watering my own weeds and I realized how often I was thinking about things that stressed me out. That night I sat my kids down to share with them what I had experienced that day (my daughter was seven and my son was five) and I started by telling them that they were gardeners growing the most beautiful gardens inside of them. The flowers were the happy things like snuggling and baking cookies and the weeds were the things that make them feel sad or scared or mad. The rest of it all fell in so naturally but when I asked them if they had any "weeds" that day at school I was shocked to hear them so willingly want to tell me the weeds they had experienced that day. I was so taken aback at how these were conversations I was not having with my kids on a daily basis. We talk about who they ate lunch with, gym class, sports, dinner, homework, etc. We were not talking about what they encounter on a day-to-day basis that may stress them out. It was that night after my kids went to bed I wrote You Are a Gardener.

TG: How long did it take you to write You Are a Gardener?

ST: It took me 15 minutes to write the book "poem". I knew what I wanted to say and the message I wanted to accomplish. I was so inspired that the words and the rhymes just fell right into place – like they were always meant to be there.

TG: How old were you when it finally published?

ST: It was March when I wrote it and I was 38 and since that day my family started to 'garden' everyday talking about flowers and weeds and seeds. Slowly but steadily my daughter was improving and the benefits it had on my son who was in kindergarten at the time were remarkable. I always say my kids inspired me to write this book but how it started to change our lives is what motivated me to self-publish it. My dear friend and creative collaborator, Kelsey Delaney, started illustrating the book via watercolor on paper in June and finished by October. Together we laid the book out for print and by December the first run of books were delivered to my door, I was still 38.

TG: How has the response been?

ST: Steady, encouraging and inspiring. I call this the planting 'seeds' phase. As of right now, you can only purchase my book via my website youareagardener.com or I will sell my books locally when I do a 'gardening workshop' or book reading. I also have an Instagram/Facebook page as well as a YouTube channel.

TG: Have you had a lot of support?

ST: Apart from the tremendous push from my kids, husband and family, yes I get so much support from

so many people it is overwhelming. With all the parents, teachers, counselors and therapists

Plant shape to grow flowers!
Seeded paper is embedded with seeds. Tear up seeded paper and soak for 1 hour. Spread and cover with 1/4" of good soil. Keep soil moist until seedlings are well established. Paper will recycle into the soil.



I meet with everyone is in agreement that kids' stress level is at an all time high and they are seeing it younger and younger. There appears to be a strong pattern emerging with this generation of kids becoming emotionally disconnected with all the distractions and pressures put on them. I feel it is our responsibility to put it back together. What I am offering helps and when I get the opportunity to discuss what my system can do to help, the positive feedback and support is unbelievable!

TG: Have you had any haters?

ST: I wouldn't say haters but I have definitely encountered those who aren't 'weed pullers'. I can tell pretty quickly and I just move on. All people process differently and I don't expect for everyone to embrace this (yet).

TG: Was there ever a time when you felt like you wanted to quit?

ST: I've been tired and questioned where I will find the time to continue working a full time job, raising a family and simultaneously build the You Are a Gardener brand but quitting never crosses my mind. My family and I were meant to do this. This is the time.

TG: What kept you pushing through?

ST: This is needed right now. Kids needs this right now, parents needs this right now, teachers needs this right now. What I am offering helps. I am constantly inspired with new ideas on how to plant new seeds of the 'gardener' lifestyle. We are consistently making videos and coming up with new ways to get our message out there. Every month my kids make a video YouTube series called Hello Gardeners, which is similar to a Dear Abby for kids while using our gardening vocabulary and solidifying our message (Stay tuned we have big plans for this!). I have also written a curriculum that infuses with most elementary classrooms and I offer in-service workshops to train teachers and staff on how students and schools will thrive from the program.

TG: Did the journey ever take a toll on you or your relationships or other responsibilities?

ST: If not for nothing this book has brought our family closer together and that in itself is enough for me to call it success story. The bonds that we have because of it are deep rooted, strong, and growing.

TG: What advice do you have for anyone else with a dream that may seem impossible?

ST: I always say to my kids, "If you can see it in your mind then you can hold it in your hand". When you feel that passion deep in your gut you have to listen to it and keep looking for the path to get you where you need to go, even if it means carving out your own way. Your passion will never let you fail as long as you learn from every opportunity. Stay YOUR course!