

**Audio Title: Nancy Torres Say It With Me (Dilo Connigo) + Embracing Our Feelings**  
**Duration Transcribed: 0:24:56**  
**Number of Speakers: 3**

### Transcript

**Rebekah Borucki:** Hello, neighbor! Welcome to our third season of *The Book Stoop*.

And if you are new here, let me help you get to where you're going.

So, you're gonna go past the corner of bodega and down the block from the fresh cuts barbershop, and there you'll find a brick row house at the intersection of Literature Place and Social Justice Blvd. That's where you will find our stoop.

Our host, Amanda Lytle, will be there to welcome you to the conversation. *The Book Stoop* is the place for the hottest takes on book culture, nerd culture, current events, with best-selling authors, change-makers, and risk-takers – our favorite people.

And I'm Rebekah Borucki, President of Row House Publishing. Now, come on in and meet Amanda.

**Amanda Lytle:** Thanks, Bex. Hey, friend. Let me be the second to welcome you to our spot, *The Book Stoop*. I feel incredibly honored to be the host of this podcast and I'm so grateful to have you here.

Today on *The Book Stoop*, I'm speaking with Nancy Torres. Nancy is an author, childhood educator, and meditation guide. She loves inspiring and supporting children in their academic and social and emotional development. Nancy has a BA in Corporate Communications and an MA in Childhood Education and Special Education. Nancy speaks both English and Spanish and lives in New York with her husband and her two sons whom they are raising bilingual.

In the conversation today, we hear about the back story behind and the creative process that has brought Nancy's book, *Say It With Me (Dilo Connigo)*, to life. Nancy shares how releasing her book baby was received by her friends and family and how that influenced her perspectives on the book and the ideas behind it. We chat about how a timer can change the game when it comes to a full system reset, the lessons that we learned from children, and how we can work together to embrace, honor, and express our emotions.

Before we jump in, I want to invite you to share *The Book Stoop* with your community. If you are loving this episode, grab a screenshot and tag us on Instagram @rowhousepub. Every share, 5-star rating, and written review helps us find more listeners and climb the charts. So we are super grateful for your help.

We start our chats on *The Book Stoop* with a rather fitting question, so what are you reading these days?

**Nancy Torres:** I've got a couple of books on deck that I'm reading through. First one is, *Raising Antiracist Children* by Britt Hawthorne which is I mean just a mandatory read for everyone I think, all parents for sure.

And also, *Greenlights* by Matthew McConaughey, really, really good. Totally recommend it.

And then the other book that I'm reading is by Taylor Jenkins, *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. Fantastic, fantastic read.

So those are my three right now.

**Amanda Lytle:** When you just said *Greenlights*, I listen to the audio. We started the audiobook and ...

**Nancy Torres:** That's what I'm listening to. I'm listening to ...

**Amanda Lytle:** ... it's so good, right?

**Nancy Torres:** So good, so good, so good, so good. I can't – so we've been doing a drive to DC, my father-in-law is there. And so when we are driving down there, that's what I listen to. That's long road trips, I do Audible. And listening to Matthew McConaughey read *Greenlights*, amazing.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah, the structure of it is fantastic. Britt's book, I cannot wait to get my hands on. And then I hadn't heard the other one, so yeah.

**Nancy Torres:** That one and then *The Nantucket Hotel*. So I like to do leisurely fun by Elin Hilderbrand I think. Yeah, Elin Hilderbrand. Very fiction, fun, summer reading. So that's like my beach read. But McConaughey is like my Audible driving and Britt's book is reading.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah.

**Nancy Torres:** And also, you need to take – she is so good at it because she talks about making sure you also take some time to self-care because it is, it's very, very – it's full. So ...

**Amanda Lytle:** So speaking of books, reading, writing, you are also an author and you've got *Say It With Me* or a *Dilo Connigo*. So I'd love to hear a bit of a back story and then we will jump into your creative process. So tell me the back story here.

**Nancy Torres:** So I've always wanted to write. I've always been – I've been journaling since I was 13. I'm 40 now, turning 41 soon. And I always thought it would be a memoir of sorts. And then I took this writing class with Rebekah Borucki. One of the classes was writing children's books. And I was like, "I could do this. I'm a teacher. I think I can do this."

And the idea started with board books and then picture books and it evolved. It evolved from this first being like a meditation to then playing around with this – what me and my son who at the time was 2. I had been home with him for the first two years. I was on childcare leave. And we would do these affirmations. I am smart. I am this. Because before I had him, I was so solid on my confidence, on who I am, and all of that. And then I became a mom, and that rocks you on a whole new level and really needed to make that practice a daily practice of affirmations for me but also very much wanting my son to be raised with this as the same way we brush our teeth, taking care of – saying our affirmations, mindfulness, meditation.

And so when I was writing, trying all these different ideas of what this children’s book is, I just began to go up what me and him do. And it was like, “Say it with me. Say it with me. Say it with me.” And it evolved into *Say It With Me (Dilo Conmigo)* and it being bilingual is super important because we are trying to raise our son to be bilingual and having it accessible to people who want to learn Spanish, who want to learn English, just making it more accessible.

And also, it’s funny because I learned English, me and my parents came here when I was 6 months old and so I learned English with Sesame Streets, school. And using this book for my son who is learning Spanish, the reverse way, and so that was kind of a very full circle experience and really beautiful, really, really super beautiful.

**Amanda Lytle:** I bet.

**Nancy Torres:** Yeah.

**Amanda Lytle:** The affirmations are super, super powerful. Just being able to say those out loud and to – as an adult, you are starting to rewire the patterning.

**Nancy Torres:** Oh, a hundred percent, a hundred percent.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah.

**Nancy Torres:** And I needed that, and I still need. I mean it’s still – depending on what flavor of the day we are at, right? OK. This is the zone I’m in, and the affirmation that is going to help be that tool.

**Amanda Lytle:** Tell me a bit about your creative process. When you get into a writing groove, what kept you going?

**Nancy Torres:** Music. Music. I write to music. When I find a great song or a good song or just a good – it becomes white noise to me and it’s on repeat. I’m always – the best thing that happened for me was that repeat button. The worst thing that happened to my husband and people who live with me is that repeat button because they are like, “Can we please not listen to it?” And I’m like, “Just two more times.”

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah.

**Nancy Torres:** But when I was writing *Say It With Me* or any time I write, I often have it to a good song and I always wish I remembered what song it was because it's like I know at some point I probably have a screenshot of it somewhere but it's normally a good song that has moved me somehow and then I just sit on my laptop and kind of like the laptop is my keyboard. That is how I write. And then – and I say this to my students all the time, my outline is old school second grade who, what, where, and why. Who is the character? What's the character doing? And that is what I use and that's the process.

And then reediting – then reading it, rereading it, reading it to my sister or my family, sending it my best – reading it and that's the most like – and this went through a couple of reads where it was too long, it was too short. We had it and that – that's another part of the creative process, right? It's like releasing your baby and being like, “Hey, check this out. I think this is really good. Help me tweak this here.”

And then what was so wild about *Say It With Me* is I did not know that this was the book. I had tweaked it. I had tweaked it. And then my girl friends came over and they are like, “Oh, so you're writing a book. We want to hear about it.” And I was like, “Yeah.” And they were like, “Can you read it?” And I was like, “You want me to read it?” And I was like, “OK.” And so we were like a summer day at my table, and I read it and I did not think and then they're all crying. They're all moms and they're all crying. And they were like, “Oh my God! That was so beautiful.” And I was like, “Wait. What?” I did not expect that at all.

And they were like, “Oh my God! I want to buy this book.” And so, I had sent it to Bex. I said, “Hey, this is the reaction I just got from this table read.” And she was like, “Send it to me.” Because we had been talking about another book and she is like, “This is the book we are going with.” And I was like, “OK.”

So it was – you never know what is going to be it. Something that you think is super special sometimes isn't received or sometimes you're like, “Oh, regular. No big deal,” is received and you're like, “Oh!” So there is a lot playing around with it.

And then I mean the other part of it is the pressure, right? The pressure of you want to make this solid. You want this to be received well. But I would say music is the beginning for me. Feeling a lot of feelings, feelings like I need to get this out, I need to – I'm feeling a lot or I'm feeling really creative or I'm feeling like I've got this jam going and wanting to get into that.

And then for me, it has always been paper and pen that helps me release whether it starts off as a journal entry. And a journal entry will then sometimes evolve into like, “Ooh, this could be something.” This is something really good that I think would help others relate or it helped me relate and that something that – I'm always like, what is it that I can help someone else with through my experience? And combining the teacher, combining the mom, combining me, my inner child, all that and then sometimes it came out to be a children's book.

And so, that one was dedicated to my son and to my husband, my first son. And since then I now have a second son, Lucas, and there is this internal pressure that I'm putting on myself that I need to write a book for him. So there is hopefully a second book in me somewhere which I know there is, but having – I want to let go of the pressure, and I want it just to be like as creative and flow as it did with *Say It With Me*. And I have it. I began to have it but it's going to be something about present. I don't know. Being present, maybe kicking back to meditation, five senses. I don't know. Something in that space because Lucas is so unbelievably present.

**Amanda Lytle:** That's incredible. And when you just said that, the presence thing, I'm the eldest of two and I think about like even just pre-recording, we were both just sharing our own realities of chaos and to sit down in a meeting. It's like, "You're not going to believe how my morning is going." It's like, "Well, I can because ..."

**Nancy Torres:** Yes. I'm the oldest too. I am the oldest of three.

**Amanda Lytle:** OK.

**Nancy Torres:** And it's like you normally feel this immense like it's all on you.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yes! And the pressure like you just said pressure too.

**Nancy Torres:** The pressure.

**Amanda Lytle:** I get this. So my question was going to be, in the idea of a presence, when we talk about that chaos, and I know that meditation has been a big part of your own life and your own journey. So I wanted to know how between the pressure and meditation you are able to just kind of keep that when things feel chaotic? What brings you back into that pressure-free zone?

**Nancy Torres:** A timer, a timer. I have to – the morning that we were having, I have to pause for a second and just get myself on the ground whether it's lying down if I'm home or whether it's – but like on the floor and not even on my bed, something about the floor that is grounding for me and being, "I'm going to set the timer for 3 minutes or 2 minutes or I'm going to play this one song and this is what I need. I cannot do anything." Even in my head, I'm like I don't – you don't have these 2 minutes to find this adaptor. You need to find it like now.

But I'm like, "I know myself well enough to know if I don't take these 2 minutes, this is going to be the entire day." I need to shift. I need to pivot super, super – even if it says gentle of just moving the arrow a little bit to the left or whatever. But it's for me knowing 2 minutes, 3 minutes, a timer, yeah.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah.

**Nancy Torres:** Whether it's just my iPhone, setting the timer there. Whether it's just saying, "Alexa, play this song." And I know that the song is 2 minutes and 49 seconds. It's *Emancipation* by Helios. That's like my go-to meditation song. And so, I'll just play that.

**Amanda Lytle:** I love this timer idea because I realized in certain aspects or certain areas of my own life that I have used a timer whether it's like, "Amanda, focus. You have to do this 20 minutes." It's almost like the Pomodoro method, if you've heard of that.

**Nancy Torres:** Yeah.

**Amanda Lytle:** Where it's like after that, you can have a bit of a break. But even just the idea of a couple of minutes just to be like, "This is what you need."

**Nancy Torres:** Yeah.

**Amanda Lytle:** Even when you say like, "I don't actually have the time." It's like, "But you need it."

**Nancy Torres:** Yeah. I'm all about timers. And this is ...

**Amanda Lytle:** Oh, the classroom ones, yes!

**Nancy Torres:** Yes. Yes. And it's like I use this for my son. I use it for myself. I bought a small one for me. Me and my husband were planning a trip and we were like going off tangents and I said, "We are setting this timer." And I put it in front of us. And so yeah, timers are a big thing.

**Amanda Lytle:** I really like those ones because they are visual.

**Nancy Torres:** Yes.

**Amanda Lytle:** It's just the visual aspect of it for me is – and even like you said in a classroom. So I want to know even a bit now that we are talking about classroom and teaching and stuff, what do you teach? Where do you teach? How do you teach?

**Nancy Torres:** So I teach elementary school. I've taught first, second, third. And this past year, I taught second. This coming year, I'm going to teach third again. And I love it. I teach in New York City, in Queens. And I teach very much through storytelling, the curriculum but very big also on social and emotional learning and that's where the meditation aspect comes in, the journaling, the affirmations, the dance parties, all of that is very big SEL.

At my school, I'm the one who does the school-wide guided meditation in the morning right after morning announcement so the whole school pauses for about 3 minutes and we just meditate. And I lead it or throughout the school year, we will have different students who are like, "Ms. Torres, can I?" And I'm like, "Yeah. If you are ready, go for it."

And so, very much through storytelling, very like interactive and fun. I think kids are really funny and I think if you are real with them, they get it more than if you are like, "This is what we

are going to do today.” I found that kids relate more when I’m like, “You know what? Ms. Torres did not like counting money.”

Because I remember being a kid and being like, “I’m never going to be able to count anything but quarters.” Adding dimes and nickels and pennies to the mix and they are like, “Really?” And I’m like, “Yeah.” Or telling them like, “I did not like meditation and now I teach.” All these things because it makes it real, and I think kids can really relate to that and they know what’s up. Kids always know what’s up.

**Amanda Lytle:** They do. I can relate again to that so deeply. And when you are talking about being real, this is when they can see the humanity in you. It encourages the humanity in them.

**Nancy Torres:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Amanda Lytle:** So moving forward, I guess in the teaching space, isn’t it interesting too how, and I don’t have children of my own, but I’ve been surrounded by them for my entire life, isn’t it so interesting how children whether under your own roof or under the school’s roof, in your own little classroom, I call them I’m their school mom.

**Nancy Torres:** Oh yeah. Even before I became a mom, I’m like, “My kids.”

**Amanda Lytle:** Yes!

**Nancy Torres:** And I’m like, my kids are my students. Yeah.

**Amanda Lytle:** It’s like I have 28 children. Whoa! Yeah. Isn’t it incredible that they teach us the things, or they constantly remind us of the things that we need to hear the most?

**Nancy Torres:** Oh my gosh! Yes. Yes. Yes.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah. Whether that is sit on the floor or drink your water or have a hug. You need a hug.

**Nancy Torres:** Yes. I remember, I was teaching third grade and this one student came up to me and she said, “Ms. Torres, you’re so smart.” And it was never an adjective I would have ever describe myself. I mean at that point, I was probably 36 or 35 and I was just like – I remember it made me pause in my tracks. I was like, “Wow!” I knew I was smart, but it was never – very different than my childhood. The names I was called to now be like someone else seeing me as like this is the adjective they would assign to me. And I was just like, “Wow! This is like a hundred percent something I need to work on.”

And seeing myself being like, “I am smart.” And that was an affirmation. That was like legit. I jotted it down on a post-it on a mirror and it was like, “I’m smart.” And kids will definitely remind you of where you need to grow, where you need to be more graceful, where you need to be more kind to yourself. If someone – I had this one student who has gone through a tough time

with body image. And these are children. This is like a second grade, which is so heartbreaking when that happens, but it's also OK. Let's be – all of us adults need to be mindful of what we are saying to ourselves and how we are – what we are modeling, what we are – even if we are not saying it to them. And so yeah, kids are incredible teachers.

**Amanda Lytle:** Yeah. So speaking of those reminders and the affirmations and just the importance of that, I keep thinking even with compassion and empathy and having had a conversation with Nōn Wels a couple of weeks ago, the importance of that and I know that that really rings true within your own heart. So can you elaborate a little bit on that just wide open, just about emotions and children and the importance of that?

**Nancy Torres:** I think it's so important for children to know that every emotion, every feeling that they are feeling is valid. I think the biggest gift that as adults, one of them is validation, is validating children's emotions, their feelings, their experiences, knowing that it doesn't mean that you agree with it, disagree with it. You are just saying, "Hey, I hear you. I see you." And that for a child I think is just such a beautiful gift that will help reduce anxiety, will help them feel seen, build their confidence. It's just a gift that I just keep on giving because these children will one day grow to be adults, right? And that is really what we need to keep remembering.

What I am planting in my – what I am teaching, what I am modeling, all that, this child in front of me, student, niece, nephew, son, daughter, whoever, this child in front of me is going to be an adult one day. So this adult can be compassionate, can be kind, can be empathetic to everyone including themselves. And that is such a game-changer in the world. And that's what we want. We want more empathetic, kind, compassionate adults.

**Amanda Lytle:** Oh, it's so important. I love that that's also something that you are able to bring in. And again, back to just like what kids teach us is the conversations that kids bring into their own homes and just the way that every single conversation that's had just continues to spread. It's like the best little kind of ...

**Nancy Torres:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Amanda Lytle:** It just keeps going and going.

**Nancy Torres:** Exactly. Exactly. One hundred percent.

**Amanda Lytle:** I just have one more question before I ask you about the shout-out. And that just comes from the heart, and that is, what kind of lesson have you learned recently from your boys?

**Nancy Torres:** Oh, pause. I've had to learn how to pause. My 4-year-old can go from feeling big feelings. My 4-year-old can feel big feelings at the same time, my 10-month-old is also feeling his feelings. And at that moment and it's just me sometimes, and that – I have to pause and just say, "Hey, I think I need a moment. I need a moment." And just to teach that to my kids saying like, "Mommy needs a moment. I don't know how to handle this right now."



And just being completely honest like, “I don’t know how to handle this right now. Mommy needs a moment. Can we all just ...” and just like sitting with them and hugging and saying, “You know what? I can’t – we are going to be late to that appointment. I’m going to be late to this.” And I need to pause because if I rush this, I am invalidating everything – I’m invalidating this whole moment and saying, “None of this is important. We have to go.” And nothing is more important than – as long as we are all safe and we are good, everything is OK.

And so, realizing – I had to do this yesterday with my son. He was feeling all these feelings. He just woke up. I had to move him from the car to the house and he is crying, and Lucas is crying, and I just like wanted to react. I wanted to – but I know better and that was work. That’s the moment that’s work. That’s the moment. It’s so easy to react and say, “Sebastian! Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah.” But I don’t want to do that. That’s not who I want to be.

And so, it’s like – and I just took him, and we sat down. He was crying. And I said, “I know this is really hard.” I said, “And I think we both need a hug because mommy is also feeling super big feelings.” And we just sat there and just felt our feelings. And then we were able to – after breathing, lowering my whole cortisol levels and stuff, I was able to say something funny and we both laughed and I said, “Let’s go inside.” And I don’t know. I forgot what it was. I think maybe it was like, “Let’s go make popsicles or have ice ...” I don’t know. Ice cream always makes things better.

So pausing and validating, those are my big go-tos these days a lot, the pause. And I have to be present. I have to be present for Lucas. Lucas is just like Mr. Present.

**Amanda Lytle:** Right. And there you go, back to the idea of your next book, no pressure. [Laughs]

**Nancy Torres:** Oh, Amanda. Thank you.

**Amanda Lytle:** Oh, Nancy, this has been fantastic. OK. I’ve got my last wrap-up question for you, which is, if you could give a shout-out to an account, or a person, an organization, a disruptor, an activist, or a change agent, who would that be?

**Nancy Torres:** Right now, I’m like on to Christopher Rivas who is also a Row House author. I am so interested in his podcast, Rubirosa. So, so into that.

Emily Auffrey, she has got amazing tips for like DIY design tips and all that stuff on the house. She is doing fantastic.

And Britt, Britt Hawthorne right now just – I mean really, really great with that. And Julieta Torres, Julieta Torres, she is doing awesome like fashion but also like advocacy, activist work. And all four of them are – Emily, Christopher Rivas for sure, Britt for sure and Julieta Torres, really, really great. You can find them all on social.

**Amanda Lytle:** I will link them up.

**Nancy Torres:** Yes.

**Amanda Lytle:** Nancy, this has been so great. Thank you for being a guest on *The Book Stoop*.

**Nancy Torres:** Amanda, thank you. I super appreciate you and this was so much fun. Thank you.

**Amanda Lytle:** Thank you so much for being with us. Please be sure to check out [rowhousepublishing.com/podcast](http://rowhousepublishing.com/podcast) for full episode transcriptions and guest image descriptions and the show notes for all the links. Talk soon.

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