

Amy Oestreicher is a PTSD Specialist, Audie award-nominated playwright, performer, and multidisciplinary creator. Amy overcame a decade of trauma to become a sought-after trauma-informed teaching artist, author, writer for The Huffington Post, international keynote speaker, RAINN representative, health advocate, and representative of the National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military.. She has given four **TEDx Talks** on transforming trauma through creativity, and holds the record for the only woman to give TEDx Talks for three consecutive years, reaching nearly 15K views. Her story has appeared on NBC's Today, CBS, Cosmopolitan, Seventeen Magazine, The Washington Post, Good Housekeeping, and MSNBC, among others and she's contributed to over 80 print and online publications. A singer, librettist, and visual mixed media artist, she dedicates her work to celebrating everyday miracles, untold stories, and the detours in life that can spark connection and transform communities. Amy has toured her autobiographical musical, [*Gutless & Grateful*](#), to over 200 venues from 54 Below to Barrington Stage Company since its 2012 NYC debut, as well as a mental health program for colleges, conferences and organizations. She is currently developing her full-length play, *Flicker and a Firestarter*, on the dichotomies that emerge after trauma, and *More Than Ever Now*, a play based on her grandmother's story of survival. She most recently premiered her one-woman multimedia musical, *Passageways*, at HERE Arts Center, for which she created music, book, lyrics, and artwork. As the 2014 Eastern Regional Recipient of Convatec's **Great Comebacks Award** and WEGO Health "Health Activist Hero", and WeGO Health Expert, medical community, speaking for National WOCN conferences and the *American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress*, and writing for the official print publication of the UOAA. She has devised programming for the Transformative Language Arts Network National Conference, the Eating Recovery Foundation, the 40th Anniversary New England Educational Opportunity Association *Milestones* Conference, three Annual National Mental Health America Conference, and others. She has been the featured keynote speaker for national conferences including the Pacific Rim Conference of Diversity and Disability, the International School of Social Work Conference, and Women of Resilience. As a [playwright](#), Amy has received awards and accolades for engaging her audiences in dynamic conversation on trauma's effects on society, including Women Around Town's "Women to Celebrate" 2014, BroadwayWorld "Best Theatre Debut," Bistro Awards "New York Top Pick, and the "Singular Award" at the Sarasolo Theatre Festival, presented annually for a "performance that is exceptionally uncommon, groundbreaking, original and inventive." Amy has performed excerpts of her solo oral history Play, *Divers*, as part of Brooklyn's immigrants and Exile, Beechwood Art's Giving Voice, Dixon Place, Seekonk Storytelling Television Special, and Museum of Jewish Heritage Festival of Untold Women. She is a cabaret and theatre reviewer for BroadwayWorld, Her essays and monologues have been published in Creative Pedagogy journals, as part of a theatre curriculum for high school students in the Philippines. Her play, "We Re-Member" honoring the immigration stories of her grandparents, has been performed in twelve states, and her plays have been published by the Eddy Theatre Company and finalists in Manhattan Repertory Theatre's Short Play Festival, as well as NYC Playwright's Women in the Age of Trump. Amy's collaboration with Beechwood Arts on the immersion salon, "Resilience and the Power of the Human Spirit", has traveled around the world to health and arts facilities as a public installation, incorporating her monologues, art, writing and recipes to express the life-altering detours and ultimately the invaluable gifts of her resilient journey. Amy is also an active artist and teacher in the Jewish community, being honored by United Way in 2005 for her music programs at Hollander House, completing artist residencies at Art Kibbutz, and delivering "Hope, Resilience & Biblical Women" keynotes for synagogues and religious schools. She is a teaching artist with Brooklyn's Community World Project, and trained ACTSmart, a Playback Theatre troupe in Amherst, MA. She is also a passionate arts education advocate, a successful mixed media visual artist, a continuing education studio arts teacher, and her *artwork* has been shown in esteemed galleries in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Chicago, San Diego and New York, as well as published in national publications including Conquer, Topology and Cargo Literary. Her memoir, [*My Beautiful Detour: An Unthinkable Journey from Gutless to Grateful*](#), was awarded Best Autobiography at the 2019 CT Press Club Awards, and the newly released audiobook features an afterward by Tony Award winning composer

and lyricist William Finn. She currently serves as the ASSERT and SMART Recovery project coordinator for teens and young adults in 14 regions of Connecticut.

See all VIRTUAL programs for campuses:
<https://www.amyoes.com/virtual>

Amy Oestreicher

International [Speaker](#) and Founder of [LoveMyDetour](#)

ASSERT Project Coordinator The Hub: Behavioral Health Action Organization for Southwestern CT (A division of the Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership)

Published Works (selected)

At the Intersection of Disability and Drama: A Critical Anthology of New Plays (McFarland Press)
My Beautiful Detour: An Unthinkable Journey from Gutless to Grateful (Singing Tree Publications)
Nevertheless She Persisted (Tantor Audio)
Creativity and Gratitude: Exercises and Inspiration for a Year of Art, Hope, and Healing (Apollo Publishers)
Project SemiColon: Your Story Isn't Over (HarperCollins)
I'mPossible Project (Changing Minds)
The Things We Don't Say: Chronic Illness Truths (Three Barrell Bluff)
Trigger Points Anthology (Brandt & Daum)
The Narcissist's Playbook (Morningstar Media)
Performing Arts Academic Textbook (Philippines)
See [WTNH-8 News](#) Segment on "My Beautiful Detour"

Certifications

- *SMART Recovery Facilitator*, Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership
- Creative arts therapist #CAT-0009 Creative Alternatives of NY dramatherapy model
- Certified Humor Professional, Amer. Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor Academy
- NAMI Ending the Silence/PTSD Specialist
- QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper
- Mental Health First Aid Certification

Booking History (Keynotes, Virtual [Programs](#), Performances) *See [Speaking Reel](#)

College Programs: *(selected colleges 2012-2019)*

Mental Health Mindset: Hampshire College, Boston College, Central Penn College, Russell Sage College, Haverford College, Fulton Montgomery Community College, New York University, College of St. Benedict & St. Johns, Columbia University, Southern Connecticut State University, Clark University, University of Maryland, Northeastern Oklahoma College

Sexual Assault Prevention: Pima Community College, Central Connecticut State University, Wesleyan University, Hudson Valley Community College

Accessibility and Ableism: Mercy College, Fulton Montgomery Community College

Middle School and High School Workshops *(selected)*

- Storytelling & Empowerment, LiveGirl Summit (Boys & Girls Club, CT)
- Detour Navigation, Youth to Youth Leadership Conference (Rhode Island)

- Social Emotional Leadership, Girls Leadership (Manhattan and Fairfield County)
- Community Word Project Teaching Artist Project (NYC)
- Ping Chong & Company Oral History Residencies with Middle School Students (NY)
- Hope Builds Resilience Wellness Assembly (Religious Schools throughout CT, NJ and NY)

TEDx Talks:

TEDx Syracuse (New York, April 2016), TEDx VCU (Virginia, February, 2017), TEDx FSCJ (Florida, 2018) TEDx UCONN (Connecticut, October 2020)

Keynote Speaker:

- Pacific Rim International Disability Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii
- Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor Conference, San Diego
- Transformative Language Arts Network’s Power of Words Conference, Goddard College, VT
- International School of Social Work Conference, Columbus, Ohio
- Interfaith Sukkot Luncheon, Congregation Beth El, Fairfield, CT
- Inaugural Health & Medicine Conference, Zucker School of Medicine, Quinnipiac, Hamden, CT
- ***Selected Speaking/Presentations:***
- American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress 2016 Washington, DC
- Mental Health America Annual Conference 2016, Alexandria, VA (Media & Messaging)
- Mental Health America Annual Conference 2017, Washington D.C.
- Mental Health America Annual Conference 2019, Washington D.C.
- NYU Theatre and Health Education Forum, NY, 2019
- Transformative Language Arts Network Power of Words Conference, Kansas City, MO, 2014
- Transformative Language Arts Network Narrative Medicine Conference, Sacco, Maine, 2016
- Eating Recovery Center, (Mental Health, Acceptance) Denver, CO
- Heart of the City: Turning Passion to Business B:Hive, CT
- New England Educational Opportunity Association 2016 (Higher Education & Inclusion) Cape Cod, MA
- Three-Day Integrative Wellness Retreat (PTSD & Creativity) Canyon Ranch, MA
- NYU Theatre & Health Education Forum: Healing Trauma Through Theatre
- Great Comebacks Eastern Regional Recipient (Convatec) WOCN Conference, Greensboro, NC
- Wound and Ostomy Continence Nurses Society Conference, Meriden, CT
- Great Comebacks (Convatec) National WOCN Conference, Nashville, TN
- Wound and Ostomy Continence Nurses Society Annual Conference, NJ
- Wound and Ostomy Continence Nurses Society Regional Conference, Tarrytown, NY
- League for Advancement of New England Storytellers Annual Conference, MA
- 2016 Diversity Conference: The College at Brockport, NY
- Modern Femme Conference, VA
- National Student Leadership Diversity Convention, NY
- Common Ground Conference, Fairfield County Arts Association, CT
- Sharing the Fire LANES Conference, MA
- Coastal Arts Guild, “Make Art Monthly” Art & Leadership, CT
- Resilience and the Power of the Human Spirit, Beechwood Arts & Innovation, CT
- NAMI Ending the Silence Presentations, CT
- International Women’s Art Salon, NY
- Creating Community as Artists, Art Kibbutz, Governor’s Island, NY
- Art of the Abstract, StoryCollider: Science and Storytelling, NY
- Accessibility and Inclusion in the Arts and Culture Panel (CT Office of the Arts)

- Expert/Features on NBC's Today, CBS, WNBC, News 12, Cosmopolitan
- Co-creator of dramatherapy workshops with Adam Blatner, MD (NY)
- Multidisciplinary Art Forms & Trauma Recovery (Dragon's Egg, Ledyard, CT)

Selected Author Talks:

- Barnes & Noble (Westport, CT)
- Palette of Sisterhood Gallery (Stamford, CT)
- HERE Arts (New York, NY)
- Norwalk Public Library, CT
- Stamford JCC, CT
- Westport Library Books & Bites, CT
- RJ Julia Booksellers Author Night Reflection (Madison, CT)
- Bank Square Books (Mystic, CT)
- Writers for Immigrant Justice (Bridgeport, CT)

"Gutless & Grateful" (Mental Health & PTSD Education) One-Woman Musical Theatre Keynote Performance, Discussion, and Q & A Three-Component Program (selected)

- Triad Theater, NY
 - Stage 72, NY
 - The Bijou Theatre, CT
 - Barrington Stage Company, MA
 - United Solo Festival, NY
 - Emerging Artist Theatre, NY
 - Chenango Equity Theatre, NY
 - Midtown Theatre Festival, NY
 - Metropolitan Room, NY
 - Statera Women and Theatre Conference, CO
 - Sarasolo Performance Festival, FL
 - New York New Works Theatre Festival, NYC *Finalist
 - Feinstein's/54 Below, NY
 - HealMeToo Festival, IRT Theatre, NY
 - Atlas Intersections Performing Arts Festival, DC
 - Alliance for Jewish Theatre Conference, MA
 - Association for Applied & Therapeutic Humor Conference, FL
 - Firehouse Arts, MA
 - Marsh International Solo Fest (Award: Best Autobiographical Musical)
- * Licensed to regional monologue competitions and college theatre departments as an academic senior project, campus event, and competition performance piece*
- o BroadwayWorld Award Nominee "Best Theatre Debut"
 - o NYC Bistro Awards/AmNY "Top Pick"
 - o Woman About Town's "Woman to Celebrate"

"FIBERS" (one-woman docudrama created from oral histories exploring the relationship between history and memory, and storytelling's role in communal healing and social activism)

- Untold Stories of Jewish Women Festival (Museum of Jewish Heritage, NY)
- Giving Voice to Untold Stories (Beechwood Arts & Innovation, CT)
- Immigrants & Exile 20th Anniversary Benefit (NYC)
- Seekonk Storybug Hour (Seekonk News 7, MA)
- International Women Arts Salon, (Dixon Place, NY)

- 80 Minutes Around the World Immigration Stories (Caveat, NYC)
- Julia's Reading Room (Grand Central Library, NY)

Passageways'' (multimedia one-woman musical exploring the Internal and external landscape of PTSD with over 200 mixed media paintings, story, and an original score.

- HERE Arts Center, NY (with Facilitated Talkback with New York Art Therapy Association)
- Triad Theater, NY
- Dixon Place, NY
- Marsh Theatre, "Solo Arts Heal" CA

Professional References:

"Recently, Amy Oestreicher performed Gutless and Grateful, to a packed house at Hampshire College, framed around her remarkable life journey from teenage ingenue to survivor of trauma and countless complicated medical procedures and finally to a place of gratitude. The production, which received rave reviews in its off-Broadway debut, contains beautifully sung musical theatre numbers as well as honest personal narrative. Gutless and Grateful was co-sponsored by the Theatre Program and the campus wellness center, a useful tool to talk to students about mental health issues and a powerful testament to the healing potential of the arts. Amy's seemingly unlimited energy and enthusiasm is infectious." – Talya Kingston, Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre, School for Interdisciplinary Arts Hampshire College

"You are what every campus needs right now. If we had more people with your desire to get the student body talking, a lot of issues could be brought to light." – Aaron Ferguson, *Disability Counselor, Hampshire College*

"Amy Oestreicher not only shows us the power of the purest kind of perseverance, but she does so in song and dance, telling her astonishing story of surviving a daunting and lengthy medical nightmares without allowing her challenge to strip her of her dreams. She brings to life the transformative power of music, theater, dance, and storytelling along with many other arts to educate and inspire our souls as to what is possible. It was a privilege to have her perform her breathtaking one-woman show at the Power of Words conference." – Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Kansas Poet Laureate 2009-13, and founder of Transformative Language Art at Goddard College (See reference letter from TLAN Coordinator, Terri Grunthaler: TLAN Letter)

One part moving testament to human indomitability, the other a thoroughly satisfying evening of song. While each element is strong enough to stand on its own, combined they illuminate and enhance each other. Rarely have I seen narration and song so artfully meshed, and Oestreicher's likeability, good humor, interpretive skill, and manifest commitment to what she is saying and singing make us not only understand her story, but also feel it on a very deep level. -Roy Sander, critic for BistroAwards.com

I have worked with Amy for several months and truly have seen her aim to make a difference in the college community come to fruition and take form. Amy has a uniquely innovative idea of combining mental health, sexual assault prevention and Broadway Theatre as a way to address the gap between mental health resources and students. Amy is a force of so much that is good in a person and an artist – Josh Rivedal, *Founder, Executive Director of The i'Mpossible Project, International Speaker on Suicide Prevention and Mental Health*

"Through her theatrical performance of Gutless & Grateful, Amy Oestreicher invites us along for her personal journey through challenging medical, social and emotional experiences in her life, all the while dancing—not walking—on the eggshells that typically come with discussing tough topics like eating

disorders. Amy's narrative brings her life challenges into perspective, allowing the audience to contemplate life's possibilities amidst their own pitfalls." – Leslie McKay, Executive Director of the [Eating Recovery Center Foundation](#)

"We loved your show...it was a wonderful example of how drama is therapeutic. Congratulations, Amy. What you're doing is not only making a difference in your life and healing, but making a difference in so many other lives as well." – [Rebecca Greene Van Horn](#) – *Lesley University Adjunct faculty*

"I find you an inspiration. You are proof that we all need to tell our stories. Then your story becomes intertwined with another's and whether we ever know it or not our personal story may just be enough to give another HOPE." – Robin Nasitir, [Friends of Ostomates Worldwide Foundation](#)

"She is, at once, one of the most independent and one of the most collaborative people I know. She is an inspirational figure to be sure, but her creativity expands well beyond her story." – [David Friedman](#), *film and theatre composer*

"Amy has continued to inspire and surprise me, our patrons and other artists through her consummate, ever-flowing creativity, incredible message of strength and resilience, her overwhelming joy and love of life against great odds and her dedication and passion to her creative work. If I were reading this letter, I would think this was hyperbole, but I would be mistaken. She is a force of so much that is good in a person and an artist. She knows what she wants to say, and is so prolific in her art and capacity in which she shares her message." – [Jeanine Esposito](#), *Founder, Beechwood Arts*

"Amy Oestreicher did an amazing presentation to a large group of Jewish high school students at a one night a week Hebrew High School meeting at Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, CT. The course title is 'Hope and Survival' and was extremely fitting to her inspiring story. Students felt comfortable enough to reach out to her after her talk, and she was a tremendous support and much-needed lift. " - Carole Rubin, Professor at Mercaz Hebrew High School, Bridgeport, CT

It was an honor to have Amy Oestreicher's presentation of Gutless and Grateful on our campus. Her performance was riveting in its candor. Her technique, delivery and artistry were all impressive and equally effective. She took a unique and deeply personal story and turned it into something that every person in the audience could identify with. - Larry Berger, Technical Director, Hampshire College

"She uses her triumphant tale to inspire others to reevaluate their approaches to life." – [Boston College](#) (Contact [UGBC](#) for a personal reference)

Audience Testimonials:

I want to thank you for sharing your story from that perspective as well. I hope lots of medical students hear your words, and understand that behind every "interesting" condition or disease, there's a real person, with a real story. Thank you for spreading kindness and light. We need more of it. (Mindy, Medical Student, New Zealand)

I have worked as a social worker with interpersonal violence and I am a survivor myself. Interestingly enough, one of the audience members asked someone what they thought the play's message was, which started a meaningful dialogue. I know that this one conversation above signified the importance of your play - that one person will leave with a better understanding of how trauma not only affects the individual but the family as well. The more people talk about it, acknowledge it, the better people will learn to deal with it in a genuine way. That is why this play needs to be seen. (Roni, Survivor Advocate, NY)

You are the first person I have heard of that has been through something similar, although much worse than I can even imagine and I just had to tell you our story and tell you how much I admire you. I will never stop thinking about your performance. (Jenni, Oncology Patient, DC)

I saw your show and was moved by your honesty and your bravery. I was a general surgeon (I now do wound care) and so I can fully appreciate your struggles. I am inspired by your pursuit of life and all you can experience. You do not let being an "intestinal cripple" keep you confined. (Marilyn, Surgeon, NY)

Thanks for inspiring us to look at the problems we face down the road as detours. I'm not sure what sense to make of the current detours I'm facing and it's hard to love your detours when they sometimes hurt so much. However we can't let those detours determine where we'll end up simply that they've made the trip a little longer to where we want to be. That's what I got from your show, and then I found your TEDx Talk, and it came right on time for me to have a new perspective on the issues currently sending me down another road. Your New Fan and Fellow Human (Daniel, NJ)

This was theatre unlike I've ever seen. I just want to say Thank you for having the courage to let others know about your issues- as a 47-year-old survivor it is always good to see others talk about it – especially younger people- letting others know they are not alone and though a struggle, we can still function. (Roger, RI)

I was drawn to your show because my son had similar issues for several years. I wanted to reach out to you and thank you. There are many of "us" who can relate to your story, and I hope you hear from others, for your own encouragement as well as for the great tips that many often share along the way. You are a brave, inspiring person and I hope that your show reaches even more. We need to hear this daily. Thank you again for sharing your story and for your example of strength and hope. (Janet, PA)

.....

LoveMyDetour

Starting the Conversation on Mental Health:
Fostering Resilience Through Creativity Through The Four Essential Skills
<https://www.amyoes.com/speaker>



See Amy's Four TEDx Talks at
<https://www.amyoes.com/tedx>

As a teen, Amy Oestreicher thought she had her life all figured out. She was all set to go to college for musical theater sexual abuse and emergency stomach pains took her “planned-out” life on a different path...

Rushed to the emergency room the April of her senior year, Amy’s stomach literally exploded followed by months in a coma. After 28 surgeries and nearly seven years unable to eat or drink, Amy's digestive system was miraculously reconstructed and she was able to finally digest food.

As a survivor and "thriver" of trauma, included a year of sexual abuse by a trusted mentor, Amy became a "Detourist" - discovering the "flowers" on her unexpected path, starting college at 25 and learning how to take an empowered approach to wellness on and off campus, launching the *LoveMyDetour Movement*: a campaign inspiring individuals to thrive not in spite of, but because of obstacles.

In the [LoveMyDetour](#) program, Amy discusses how we can all become "Detourists," in order to thrive through any obstacles we may face. Learn how to take an empowered approach to mental

wellness on campus, and navigate any life "detours" through creative strategies and healthy coping skills.

- Take an Empowered Approach to Mental Health
- Explore the Eight Dimensions of Wellness
- Learn Healthy Coping Skills
- Storytelling and Support Systems
- Living With a Visible and Invisible Illness
- Build Your Personal Resiliency Toolbox
- Develop Leadership Skills Through Creativity as a Mindset
- Navigate transitions and unexpected change as a "Detourist"

"I've been strong, determined, and willing to do whatever it took to stay alive. Yet I still wrestle with being grateful that this happened to me, wanting answers, wanting my old life back, being ambivalent, and just being confused. But the one thing I refuse to be is numb. I am changed by all of this, but alive nonetheless. With creativity, passion, and that little spark, anything is possible."

How to Thrive, Not Just Get Through

Gutless & Grateful starts a dialogue on any "detour" in life, whether than detour be a physical condition, a mental illness, or an everyday stress of a college student. As someone who has lived through various detours, including sexual abuse, PTSD, medical conditions, illnesses, and more "typical" unexpected twists and turns in life, Amy provides a safe, open and honest forum where we can reduce the stigma and make it acceptable for people to talk about mental illness, depression and suicide as well as physical health conditions, traumatic past experiences, and feeling of alienation on campus. Amy paints a picture of a vulnerable teenager struggling, yet also a picture of recovery to prove that with resilience, trust, creativity and the cultivation of inner resources, one can work toward that through use of tools for resiliency and coping skills.

Gutless & Grateful is based on an action plan to help students cope with their own detours in life, from the everyday struggles to more concerning health issues. Gutless & Grateful is a celebration of the *detours* that unite us all.

The Power of Our Stories

"It's about learning how to occupy your own story to control it. It's not about the "uniqueness" of my story or a life-threatening crisis, it's about owning an unexpected event, turning obstacles into opportunities and learning how to dance through the detours."

**Contact: Amy Oestreicher Lovemydetour@gmail.com
(203) 209 –4948 www.amyoes.com**