

My Beautiful Detour: An Unthinkable Journey from Gutless to Grateful

By Amy Oestreicher

An estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives and up to 20 percent of these people go on to develop posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. An estimated 5 percent of Americans—more than 13 million people—have PTSD at any given time.

Amy Oestreicher was one of them. So, what happens when an ordinary teenager has to turn into a warrior just to survive? And can the journey through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder really become an “adventure?”

Amy had ambitious plans for college and a Broadway career, until her stomach exploded the week before her senior prom. Months later, she awoke from a coma to learn that she might never be able to eat or drink again. After years on IV nutrition, her first bite of food awakened her senses to life’s ordinary miracles but also brought back memories of being sexually abused by a trusted mentor for months, just before the unexpected rush to the emergency room that fateful Passover night. With determination, imagination, relentless resilience, and an inner “hunger” for life, Amy created a roadmap where none existed. Her journey through life’s unthinkable detours is nothing short of miraculous, but the creative path to healing she forged is accessible to anyone. As a survivor—and “thrifer”—of abuse and extensive medical trauma, Amy discovered sources of resilience she didn’t know she had but it turns out we all possess. In this book, she creates a tapestry made from each of each thread of her journey, empowering others to find gratitude in every setback and discover their own infinite inner strength. Amy’s search for “home” proves to be the greatest test of cultivating resilience after near-death, and reclaiming identity after both sexual assault and medical trauma. Amy’s journey is ultimately a celebration of ordinary and extraordinary challenges and miracles.

In this coming of age story, Amy shares her struggles and discoveries living with both visible and invisible illness, the tremendous gifts to be reaped from trauma, its lessons which have illuminated her path, and how these gifts can be discovered as a unique, yet universal way to navigate any kind of uncertainty.

Interwoven through her remarkable story are insights on navigating any kind of uncertainty, including:

- What is a “detourist”— and why is it important to take those detours?
- The importance of detours for college students
- How to transition from being a “survivor” to a “thrifer”
- Amy’s “Four Hardcore Skills” to resilience
- Finding your own uniqueness not through what’s happened to you, but what you choose to do with it
- The power of art to heal
- Our innate ability to be artists, and why creativity is an essential mindset
- How sharing your story becomes imperative to healing
- How humor is a way through
- Turn messes, mistakes and setbacks into creative detours

My Beautiful Detour offers practical strategies for individuals and unexpected tools for the families of trauma survivors, helping communities build new, limitless futures. The book includes numerous “trauma insights,” and is enriched with humor, art, poetry, and useful takeaways for readers. Reading one woman’s heroic adventure through trauma, recovery, and discovery of new directions in healing the body and the mind is an empowering tale of not just getting through, but thriving.