

## Amy Oestreicher

*author, multimedia artist, actress, musician, choreographer, educator, playwright, PTSD specialist transforming adversity into creative growth*

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### PROFILE

Highly skilled, dedicated and accomplished PTSD Peer-to-Peer Specialist, Artist, Author, Writer for the Huffington Post, Motivational Speaker for RAINN and TEDx, Award Winning Health Advocate, Actress and Playwright, survivor of 30 surgeries, and winner of Convatec's "Great Comeback Award" sharing my experiences to empower others to face and overcome challenges, cultivate resilience, and transform adversity into creative growth.

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### SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Accomplished Actress, Creative Writer, Dancer/Performer, Keynote Speaker, Private Coach, and Advocacy Program Leader.
  - Unbridled passion for teaching, coaching and mentoring others to overcome life's many obstacles and to lead a rewarding and fulfilling life.
  - Freelance Writer, Blogger and Public Speaker on a variety of health and wellness issues.
  - Compassionate, caring and empathetic.
  - Strong advocate of collaborative working partnerships with client organizations to pursue and achieve shared goals.
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### PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

- Use my special gifts to motivate, lead and inspire other by helping them to find their creative talents and personal passions.
  - Effectively utilize my animated and enthusiastic form of self-expression to attract and retain audience attention.
  - Persuade others to realize that life offers many opportunities, if you take the time to identify and capitalize on positive change.
  - Serve as benchmark for others to establish personal goals.
  - Never accept mediocrity or the status quo, choosing instead to consistently raise the bar and pursue personal excellence.
  - Share my personal tragedies and subsequent accomplishments so that the victims of trauma and disabilities realize that they have many options.
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### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Mental Health Advocacy, Overcoming & Managing Disabilities, Dealing with Trauma (i.e. PTSD, physical and emotional abuse), Sexual Assault Prevention, Alternative Medicine, and Establishing a Creative Mind Set.

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### EDUCATION

HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE, Amherst, MA

*Arts Degree with a focus on Playwriting, Theatre, Psychology, Expressive Arts, Theatre of the Oppressed*

**National Theatre Institute/Eugene O'Neill Theater Center**, Waterford, CT, Fall 2016 (Instructors include: Rachel Jett, Kristen Childs, Scott Murphy, Jessi Hill, Forrest McClendon, David Jaffe)

(20 Credit Hours in Directing, Playwriting, Design, Acting, Music, Movement, Song Composition, Stage Combat, Shakespeare and Voice)

**Training** venues include Amer. Globe Theatre, Shakespeare & Co., Fiasco Theatre, The Egg, Silvermine Arts Guild, Broadway Dance Center

NORWALK, COMMUNITY COLLEGE, Norwalk, CT

*Courses included: Creative Movement for Children, Creative Writing Fiction.*

GOTHAM WRITERS, New York, NY

*Courses included: Playwriting, Humor Writing, Creative Writing, Poetry, Screenwriting*

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY, Fairfield, CT

*Courses included: Sculpture I, Abnormal Psychology, Theatre History, Consumer Fashion*

### **Expressive Therapies & Mental Health**

- Expressive Therapies Summit, NYC: Voice Dialogues, Authentic Movement, Psychodrama, DBT, Holistic Circus Therapy, November 2014, 2015
- Movement Therapy Training with Toni Bergins: Dance Kinetics, 2004 – 2011
- CANY (Creative Alternatives of New York): Drama Therapy and Trauma training
- NAMI Ending the Silence/PTSD Peer-to-peer Specialist

### **SELECTED MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATIONS (full list of over 80 nationwide venues available upon request)**

- TEDx Talks: TEDx Syracuse (New York, April 2016) and TEDx VCU (Virginia, February, 2017)
- Keynote Speaker: Pacific Rim Intl Disability Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii, April, 2016
- Keynote Speaker: International School of Social Work Conference, Columbus, Ohio March 2018
- “Creative Collaborations in Patient Care” American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress, Washington DC, January, 2016
- Performance Artist/Presenter: “Media, Messaging and Mental Health”, Mental Health America Conference, Washington DC., June, 2016/17
- “Mixed Media & Narrative Healing,” Transformative Language Arts Conference, Kansas City, MO, September, 2014
- Creative Hands-On Workshop: “Detourism: You’re On the Road” International Youth Leadership Conference, Rhode Island, April, 2016
- “Art, Meaning, and Faith-Based Resiliency” Columbia University, Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, New York, January 2016
- Keynote Performance: First Annual Benefit for Eating Recovery Center Foundation, Denver, CO, 2014
- Transformative Language Arts Network Annual Conference, Kansas City, MO, 2014
- National Student Leadership Diversity Convention NYC, October 2016
- Mental Health America Annual Conference, Alexandria, VA, June, 2016
- 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary New England Educational Opportunity Association “Milestones” Conference, MA, 2016
- 5 Wound and Ostomy Continence Nurses Society Annual National and Regional Conferences, 2013-2016
- Keynote Speaker, “Take Back the Night” Pima Community College, April 2017
- Co-creator of medical/dramatherapy workshops with Adam Blatner, M.D.
- Mental Health Mindset: Student Presentation/Workshop for 40+ middle/high schools and colleges nationwide
- Storytelling Facilitation for Science and Medicine with StoryCollider (NY) Before the Abstract (D.C.) 2016

### **PLAYWRIGHT/ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE**

#### **Gutless & Grateful: A Musical Feast, A One-Woman show performed nationally at 100+ venues**

Writer, Director, Performer, Composer, Producer

- Toured as a mental health and sexual assault program to over 40 colleges nationwide, National Conference for Sexual Education Grant Honoree
- Headlined international conferences as a three-component trauma presentation and workshop, and three international keynotes
- Featured on TEDx, Huffington Post, NBC, CBS and Washington Post

- BroadwayWorld Award Nominee “Best Theatre Debut,” New York, 2012
- Woman About Town’s “Woman to Celebrate”, New York, 2014
- “Bistro Awards NYC Top Pick”, New York, 2014
- Finalist in New York New Works Theatre Festival, New York, 2016
- United Solo Festival Sold Out Additional Run “By Popular Demand”, New York, 2014
- Headliner in Tony-Award Winning Composer/Lyricist William Finn’s “Cabaret Series”, Barrington Stage Co., MA, 2013
- Presented for nurses, clinical staff and healthcare professionals in nine National Conferences, WOCN Eastern Regional Recipient, 2013
- Full show, and excerpts of original songs and monologues licensed to students to perform as academic projects and competitions in six states
- AMNY’s “Top Not to Miss Pick”, New York, 2012
- Featured in five international performing arts festivals including Sarasolo Theatre Fest, United Solo Fest

**PLAYWRIGHT** (*full list available upon request*)

- The Sky is Blue: Short Play Finalist (Manhattan Repertory Theatre, May 2016)
- Our First Family Dinner (Short Play Published in Eddy Theatre Directory, UK, 2016)
- Co-Creator: The Greeks Are Trying to Tell Us Something (Eugene O’Neill Center, December 2016)
- LEFTOVERS: Multimedia Drama with original score in development with director Susan Einhorn
- Factory Treasures: Two One-Act Plays (Thespis Theatre Festival, New York TBA 2017)
- IMPRINTS: Full Length Drama with original music (Hampshire College, MA & Producers Club, NYC, 2016)
- Resilience and the Human Spirit: Multimedia Arts Immersion Salon, Beechwood Arts (CT, 2015 & 2016)
- Playwright & Librettists Week: National Theater Institute (Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, Waterford, CT)

**THEATRE** (*full list available upon request*)

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Played lead or supporting roles in over 50 regional musical theatre and dramatic productions, including *Agnes of God*, *Agnes*, Pound Ridge Theatre, Company, NY

*Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, *Anne Frank*, Pound Ridge Theatre, Company, NY

*Fiddler on the Roof*, *Tzeitl*, Center Stage Players, CT

*Oliver!*, *Nancy*, Curtain Call, Stamford, CT

*Company*, *Marta*, Darien Arts Center, CT

*Playboy of the Western World*, *Pegeen*, Fairfield Warde Players, CT

*Les Miserables*, *Eponine*, Island Lake Arts Center, PA

*The Sound of Music*, *Maria*, PA Players, CT

*Into The Woods*, *Baker’s Wife*, Center Stage, CT

**OPERA/PERFORMANCE** (*selected*)

*La Boheme* with The Connecticut Grand Opera, Palace Theatre, Stamford, CT

*Henry the 5<sup>th</sup>* with Christopher Plummer, Shakespeare Festival Theatre, Stratford, CT

*Operatic Tribute to Broadway* w/ Charles Strouse, Stephen Sondheim, Steven Schwartz, Palace Theatre, Stamford, CT

*Original Songs for Children*, Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, NY, Denver Health Children’s Hospital, CO

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**PERFORMANCE** (*selected*)

*Our Time Cabaret*, *Featured Soloist*, The Catskills, NY

*A Night at the Palace*, *Featured Soloist*, Palace Theatre, Stamford, CT

*This is ME: Original Compositions*, Denver Health Children’s Hospital, CO

*Jazz Vocalist*, various jazz venues throughout CT

*International Artist Women Salon*, New York, NY

*Fringe Festival* Theatre Artist Workshop, Norwalk, CT  
*StoryCollider* (Mistakes Were Made) Union Hall, Brooklyn, NY  
*Your Time to Shine, Featured Soloist*, The Bijou Theatre, Bridgeport, CT

*Amateur Night at the Apollo, Tap Soloist*, Apollo Theatre, Harlem, NY

## **WRITING**

Regular Contributor to over 70 online and print publications including Huffington Post, Washington Post, Backstage, Elite Daily, and The Mighty (full list of articles available), Author of memoir, “My Beautiful Detour”

## **VISUAL ART**

Mixed media works displayed at over 50 juried exhibitions, galleries, museums, installations and public venues

**Residency:** Playwright/Artist/Writer, Art Kibbutz, Governor’s Island, NY, 2016

## **TEACHING**

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*Biology Teaching Assistant*, Dr. Andrew Bednarik, Fairfield County School District, CT

Teaching Artist/Assistant: Acting & Presence (Will MacAdams) Acting Seminar (Talya Kingston), Hampshire College

*Nursery School Teacher*, Greens Farms Nursery School, CT

*Dance Instruction/Physical Theatre*, Performing Arts Center of Connecticut, CT

*Art Educator*, Wildwood Elementary School, Amherst, MA

*Private and Group Art Classes: Show Me Your heART Workshops*, Westport Continuing Education

*Teaching Artist*, Wildwood Elementary School, Amherst, MA, 2013 – 2014

*ACTSMART Improv Company:* (Trained student Playback theatre troupes grades 6-12) Amherst, MA, 2014

*Private Coaching, Consulting, Lifestyle Strategist* (Corporate, non-profit, individual, referrals available)

## **HONORS/AWARDS**

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- “Post Traumatic Gifts” Featured in National Initiative for Arts and Health in the Military, 2016 (National, December 2016)
- Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor Scholarship Recipient (Orlando, November 2016)
- New York Playwrights Women in the Age of Trump Semifinalist (New York, December 2016)
- Convatec’s Great Comeback Awards Recipient (September, Nashville and Greensboro, 2014)
- Manhattan Repertory Theatre Short Play Finalist (New York, May 2016)
- She Rocks MEDIA Herstory National Honoree (Washington D.C., January 2017)
- “Top Mental Health Contributor” and “Top Creativity Contributor” for Medium
- United Way Community Outreach Award, CT, 2005
- Artist Honoree: Yale New Haven Smilow Gallery Breast Cancer Oncology Center, CT, 2016
- Medical Abstracts accepted into international conferences including International Case Studies (Dubai), Traditional Medicine (Netherlands, Bangkok) and Psychiatry (Los Angeles)
- WOCN PSA “You Deserve a WOCN Nurse” Honoree, 2015

## **AFFILIATIONS/COMMUNITY ACTIVISM MEMBERSHIPS**

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Theater Artist Workshop League of Connecticut; International Center for Women Playwrights; Coastal Arts Guild; Fairfield County Cultural Alliance; Ridgefield Arts Guild; League of New England Storytellers (LANES); League of Professional Theatre Women Regional Associate Member, New York Gotham Writer’s Workshop Member, Artemis Theatricals (as composer/lyricist), Founder of #LoveMyDetour, inspiring individuals to flourish not in spite of, but because of obstacles, Founder of the Online Community “Fearless Ostomates Thriving Together,” “Federation of Chronic Illness Bloggers”

**Amy Oestreicher**

**Narrative Bio**

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*Celebrating Life's Beautiful Detours*

**AUTHOR, GLOBAL SPEAKER, ACTRESS, ARTS ENTREPRENEUR, DETOURIST-OF-MANY-TRADES AND LOVER OF STORIES**

*"I learned that the human spirit feeds off of hope, and hope is fuel we can cultivate ourselves. Ultimately, I learned that with resourcefulness, creativity, and unwavering curiosity, we can transform any adversity into personal growth and a resilience that is uniquely ours."*



Amy Oestreicher is a PTSD peer-to-peer specialist, artist, author, writer for The Huffington Post, speaker for TEDx and RAINN, health advocate, award-winning actress, and playwright. As a survivor and “thrivor” of multiple traumas, Amy eagerly shares the gifts of life’s “beautiful detours” her educational programming, writing, mixed media art, performance and inspirational speaking. Amy has headlined international conferences on leadership, entrepreneurship, women’s rights, mental health, disability, creativity, and domestic violence prevention. She is a *SheSource Expert*, a "Top Mental Health" writer for Medium, and a regular lifestyle, wellness, and arts contributor for over 70 notable online and print publications, and her story has appeared on NBC’s TODAY, CBS, Cosmopolitan, Seventeen Magazine, Washington Post, Good Housekeeping, MSNBC, among others.

To celebrate her own “beautiful detour”, Amy created the *#LoveMyDetour* campaign, to help others cope in the face of unexpected events. Her passion for inclusion, equity and amplifying marginalized voices has earned her various honors, including a scholarship from the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor Professionals, the first annual SHERocks Herstory National Performing Artist Honoree, a United Way Community Helper award, and a National Sexual Education Grant honor. To creatively engage student advocacy efforts, Amy developed a trauma-informed program combining mental health education, sexual assault prevention, and Broadway Theatre for college campuses, organizations and conferences. She has designed a creative curriculum for "Detourist Resiliency," an outreach program taken to schools, hospitals and at-risk youth. She also has launched Detourist peer-led chapters on college campuses, Detourist creative arts workshops, and an online community to creatively fight stigma in society through storytelling. “Detourism” is also the subject of her TEDx Talk and upcoming book, *My Beautiful Detour*, available December 2017.

As the 2014 Eastern Regional Recipient of Convatec’s Great Comebacks Award and WEGO Health 2016 “Health Activist Hero” Finalist, Amy is a passionate voice in the ostomy community, founding the online community Fearless Ostomates, speaking for National and Regional WOCN conferences, and writing for the official print publication of the UOAA. Her presentations on alternative medicine, and patient advocacy and healthcare have also been accepted to international conferences on patient care, internal medicine, medical trauma and therapeutic humor in hospitals. She has devised workshops for the Transformative Language Arts Network National Conference, the Eating Recovery Foundation, the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary New England Educational Opportunity Association *Milestones* Conference, the Annual National Mental Health America Conference, 2016 *American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress*, and others. She was the 2016 keynote speaker for the Hawaii Pacific Rim International Conference on Diversity and Disability. and will be the featured keynote speaker at the 2018 *International School of Social Work Conference* in Ohio.

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," and Bistro Awards "New York Top Pick." Amy has written, directed and starred in a one-woman musical about her life, Gutless & Grateful, touring theatres, schools, festivals, conventions and organizations since it's 2012 New York debut. Gutless & Grateful is currently being licensed to students across the country for academic projects and competitions. Amy spent Fall of 2015 participating as a playwright and performance artist in the National Musical Theatre Institute at the world-renowned Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, where she helped to develop the full-length multimedia ensemble piece, The Greeks Are Trying to Tell Us Something, and was a writer, actress, composer and set designer for "Playwrights and Librettists" – a festival of 27 30-minute plays in five days. Her original, full-length drama, *Imprints*, exploring the physical and psychological impact of trauma, premiered at the Producer's Club in 2016, and is currently in development for a full New York production as *Flicker and a Firestarter*. Her short 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. After studying Theatre of the Oppressed in her studies at Hampshire College, she helped to train 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 an active member of the League of Professional Theatre Women, League for Advancement of New England Storytellers, Fairfield County Cultural Alliance, Theatre Artist Workshop, and several art guilds throughout Connecticut and New York.

Amy is currently developing a multimedia performance project incorporate her original music compositions with the oral histories of her grandmother, a holocaust survivor with musical director David Brunetti. She is also working on a full-length play with music, LEFTOVERS with director and dramaturge Susan Einhorn, based on her life after the surgical ICU. She is leading mixed media creativity workshops to promote creativity as a mindset, an essential survival skill. Amy also offers creative coaching and consulting services help others navigate their own "life detours," and prides herself most on ending each night with a gratitude list. Amy is currently preparing for her second TEDx Talk this year at Virginia Commonwealth University on February 25th, 2017.

*"Everything became possible once I was willing to intentionally wander from the life I planned and embrace this 'detour' as an opportunity for discovery. This is not the life that I planned for myself – but does anyone's life ever work out exactly how they plan it?"*

#### **DIRECTOR, PLAYWRIGHT, ACTOR — GUTLESS & GRATEFUL — 2012–PRESENT**

A one-woman show based on my experiences through nearly 30 surgeries, a coma, and untold challenges. The show has been performed to audiences as large as 500 in 15 different locations, off-Broadway to college campuses. It has won over 5 critical awards and has been featured on NBC's Today, CBS, CT News 12, Cosmopolitan, among others.

#### **FOUNDER, LEAD ORGANIZER & COUNSELOR — #LOVEMYDETOUR — 2015-PRESENT**

Developing from peer-to-peer PTSD counseling & mentoring workshops on sexual assault, mental health, and other issues, #LoveMyDetour is now a movement including 12 major partners in the mental health field. Our goal: empower individuals to use their own circumstances and challenges to build up rather than hinder the lives they want to lead.

## Testimonials/References

“Amy led 19 senior theatre majors through a 1-hour workshop, in which she reprised a monologue from her performance in order to demonstrate what she terms ‘life’s beautiful detours.’ Her own honesty about her difficult life journey inspired students to share problems they had experienced. I felt tensions and competitiveness leave the room as the students began to move through each other’s journeys. Amy’s seemingly unlimited energy and enthusiasm is infectious.”

– *Talya Kingston, Professor of Theatre, 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*

“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. 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.”

– *Josh Rivedal, Executive Director, i'Mpossible Project; Speaker on Mental Health*

“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 '09-13, founder: Transformative Language Art (Goddard College)*

“She delivered a moving talk and performance at the JOFA conference, and I am confident that that her efforts paid off. We are so grateful for the experience, passion, and enthusiasm she brought to us. Her strength, story and resilience have surely moved and empowered the members of our community.”

– *Dr. Sharon Weiss-Greenberg, Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance Conference*

"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*

“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, international film and theatre composer, vocal arranger*

“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, yet is open to input to shape her output and to collaboration with many art forms. In her case, it is a benefit that she is so prolific in her writing, her art and her music. They all inform the work she is doing and it makes her an empathetic collaborator.”

– *Jeanine Esposito, Founder, Beechwood Arts*