

SEX ON FIRE

FINDING EMBODIED INTIMACY
AFTER TRAUMA



LEAH RS BRAUN

Sex on Fire

Finding Embodied Intimacy After Trauma

Leah RS Braun

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All names of abusers have been changed — not to protect them, but to protect me from possible libel.

All names of 12-step sponsors have been changed, as anonymity is one of the cornerstones of all 12-step groups.

All other names have been changed to minimize the collateral impact on those persons directly involved in my story, except where express permission was given to use real names.

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SAMPLE EDITION

To learn more about the author and her work, visit
leahrsbraun.com

*This book is dedicated to every woman who doubts her power
and strength. May you claim it, may you speak it,
may you believe it.*

And, to B and D.

*Let this legacy forever be transmuted with your generation.
Have strong and compassionate voices and use them to protect
your children from things no child should have to endure. Raise
your kids to have voices and to speak up for those who don't.*

College in the trauma soup

OFF I WENT TO EXOTIC IOWA. I was so relieved to get out of my home town and be on my own. The school I chose was small, picturesque, and expensive. My grades and activities got me a decent financial aid package for the first year, and I think all members of our household needed a break from each other, so it was a good idea to move away for a while and to still be in the somewhat controlled environment of college.

I did the normal college things — I met all kinds of people, took classes, practiced being a beginning adult. I loved my studies and found a loose circle of friends, though I still found it very hard to be close with women. I couldn't understand why that was. I had one close friend and a bunch of acquaintances. I played in the jazz band and played pick-up volleyball on Sunday nights. I was still kind of lonely, so I filled that space the way I learned so well — with men and sex.

It seemed that the only men I found or who found me were committed to someone back at home. I was a welcome distraction and a space-filler for them, but no more. I am so sad, still, that this was okay with me. That the attention and the sex were enough to offset the fact that I was never anyone's priority. I was never my *own* priority.

I was so afraid of losing the “fix” of the attention by setting a boundary and saying *no* that I just made it all okay. I was cool. I wasn't outwardly jealous. I was available. I said yes a lot. I never knew how to just date someone. I never knew how to build an actual intimate relationship built on respect and honesty. That's not to say I didn't experience love or caring in my way — I fell hard for one of these men and he seemed truly torn about whether to choose me or his at-home girlfriend. I wish today that I would have chosen for *myself* and said “No thanks. Call me when you are a free agent.”

I think that's the root. I kept waiting for others to choose me because I never learned how to choose myself. It was such a strange contradiction — the confident, poised, intelligent young woman who could hold her own in any room full of guys was pretty much a doormat when anyone offered up the slightest compliment or gave me the head-to-toe suggestive eyeball. That was the attention I had learned was best, so that's what I sought out. I was always surprised when that kind of attention turned out to be the worst in the end. The result of that kind of attraction was universally damaging. By the time I figured that out I was in so deep I could not escape or change on my own.

Bryan was still lightly in the picture during freshman year. I wrote him a few letters, and he came up for a very short visit. It was okay,

but over in a day or two, and then we drifted apart for a time. Instead, I found other older men to fill the gap he left. I became an expert in what is called “running energy.” It is a way of talking to someone to find out what their receptiveness is to flirting and building attraction. Healthy people with strong boundaries are not generally susceptible to this sort of thing, so one can imagine the type of men I was finding.

I had a biology professor who was willing to get close to me, though he stopped short of having sex with me. There was a guy at my summer job between freshman and sophomore years in college who was playing me and another woman on staff at the same time. Real winners, all of them.

Then, there was Jack.

About the author

Leah RS Braun is nearly always uncomfortable talking about herself, but is working hard on not dimming her light, because that kind of thing really doesn't serve anyone.

Leah provides professional development on inclusivity, leadership, intuitive training/teaching methodology, and the general skills of the job.

She lives with her (amazing) husband, two kids, and two cats about a half-mile from the studio in a regular house. She dreams often of ways to make the regular more sparkly in many areas of life. Leah *really* likes talking to groups about fitness, trauma recovery, dancing, yoga, and lots of other stuff, so if you want to schedule an event, what are you waiting for?

Go to risingserpentstrategies.com to keep in touch. And remember, nobody will tell your story as well as you do, so buck up and own it. Blessings be. Ah-ho.

SEX ON FIRE

FINDING EMBODIED INTIMACY AFTER TRAUMA

How one woman overcomes her traumatic past to become a strong leader, a good parent, a healthy relationship partner, and an empowered woman, sexually and everywhere else.

Leah is a typical woman in society today — a mom, a wife, a small business owner. She is also typical because she is a survivor of rape. That rape and other sexual trauma are now typical in our society is tragic.

By telling her story, Leah shines light on our current rape culture, as well as outlining a powerful path toward healing traumatic wounds, finding the strength to tell her truth (and perhaps shades of many other women's truths) as well as claiming her right to a full and embodied sexuality. By her brave example, Leah hopes to help many other women do the deep work of healing sexual wounds, hold their wounders accountable, and claim the lives and the healthy sexuality to which we are all entitled.

Join Leah as she walks us down the path of her trauma, the butterfly effect of that trauma, and her crawl, step by tumultuous step, out of the depths of shame, addiction, and codependency into a joyful, imperfect, triumphant, fully human life!

Given the fact that someone experiences sexual trauma about every two seconds in the United States, it is quite obvious that there are millions of stories of trauma and healing out there. What is the big deal about THIS particular story?

The only big deal is that I'm telling it.



LEAH IS A NATIVE MINNESOTAN WITH A LOT OF RELOCATIONS UNDER HER BELT. A YOGA STUDIO OWNER BY TRADE, LEAH HAS BEEN A CERTIFIED YOGA AND FITNESS INSTRUCTOR AND PERSONAL TRAINER PRACTICALLY SINCE THE GODDESS WAS A KID. SHE LIVES TO HELP ALL HER STUDENTS AND CLIENTS CLAIM THEIR POWER, STRENGTH, AND BALANCE IN MYRIAD WAYS, IN THE PHYSICAL BODY AND BEYOND. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LEAH, HER BOOKS, AND HER SERVICES, VISIT LEAHSBRAUN.COM.