

In Body I Trust

by Lauren Dow

Excerpt: Preface

What will I leave behind?

I used to believe in the false narrative that the world should exist without me in it, that there was no future beyond age twenty-nine when I attempted to take my own life.

I'm not sure when it all started—the impulsivity during a state of anxiety and over the top emotional highs, the deep depressive spells that sucked me into bed for days on end, or the disordered eating thoughts and behaviors which dictated my life for years. However, recovery is not a linear process with a clear beginning or an obvious end.

When I originally started writing this book, it was a means of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy suggested by my therapist. I wrote in “I” statements and worked through a cyclical motion of different emotional scenarios to dissociate feelings from food. I was trying to discover what control really meant to me and learn how to navigate this world of recovery alone. I had to know what it would take to come out the other side alive.

It was never intended for anyone’s eyes but mine.

But as I continued to write, the masks I wore every day were slowly removed. I was tired of hiding behind a façade. I made the decision to share my experiences on my blog and social media. I soon realized there were far too many others who were experiencing the exact same thing, regardless if there was a diagnosis or not. A blog would not be enough. I turned my personal, therapeutic word dump into a book.

I shifted the story to a third-person perspective. By removing myself personally from the narrative, I became a viewer of my life instead of the one living it. I turned my eating disorder into a living, breathing person with a face, a story, and a name.

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What you'll see throughout this book is what lies behind an average day in the life of someone with disordered thoughts, someone for whom mental illness has become their driving force. You'll be exposed to parts of myself I never thought I'd share because I believed there was no point. But now, I understand that I needed to fall in order to show others that it's absolutely possible to get back up.

This book is a transparent and authentic depiction of who I am and what I've overcome. It's the realization that it was never about body image or my weight. It was something rooted far deeper below this leafless tree I called a body.

The characters you'll meet are not one specific person, but rather conglomerations of the every-friend, the multiple abusers I've been with, the embodiment of loneliness through mental illness, and the truth behind my personal journey of recovery.

As a special note to those who suffer from mental illness and eating disorders, I love you. I unconditionally adore you for exactly who you are. I wrote this for you. I wrote this so you would know you're not alone. Recovery is possible. It's a lonely road but it leads to somewhere beautiful. It's a vista you can experience, too.

Before you continue reading, take a second and breathe. Open your eyes to see the world around you for what it really is. It's not about what happened five minutes ago, it's not about what happened five years ago. It's about what's happening right now and how you plan to move forward.

It's like hiking a trail in the mountains. Eventually there will be a fork in the path where you'll have to make a decision. You can take the clear, definitive trail you've seen time and time again but leads you nowhere new. Or you can take a turn off the beaten path, towards the thin trail covered with overgrown trees and brush, the one without any indication of

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where it's going. It might seem daunting, but you're never going to know how epic the destination might be until you try.

Don't punish yourself if you're afraid to take the uncharted path just yet. Don't beat yourself up because you need to walk that steady, clear, concrete trail ahead of you for a little bit longer. Someday you'll find the strength and vulnerability to explore the wilderness. And no one else will be able to do that for you except yourself.

I fought tooth and nail through recovery to be able enjoy the simplistically beautiful things life has to offer. All I want is to bring a sliver of that light into someone else's darkness.

When you're ready, walk that path with your eyes wide open. Put your heart out into the world, live through the wisdom of your higher power, and lead with love. The rest will fall exactly into place.

This book has given me the gift of closure. This book is what I will leave behind.