

Confessions of an Ex Hot Mess: 10 Steps to Beat Stress and Feel Your Best

L. K. Elliott

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In this innovative self-help book, an “ex hot mess” shares how she pulled her life together.

In *Confessions of an Ex Hot Mess: 10 Steps to Beat Stress and Feel Your Best*, L. K. Elliott shares the story of her transformation from a “hot mess” into a self-assured, confident, and loving woman. Combining the best of memoir and self-help, Elliott brilliantly uses examples from her own life to inspire others to make a change.

Elliott has organized her message into ten important lessons, including “Finding Faith,” “Accepting Vulnerability,” and “Conquering Fear.” Each chapter also includes a helpful summary of the topic called “The Gist of It” and a section of written exercises called “The Fix for It.” At the end of the volume, Elliott offers more details about her past as well as information on the process of writing her first book.

Elliott’s testimony puts an innovative spin on the self-help genre. One of the strengths of the text is Elliott’s transparency throughout. Her stories, especially those about the chaos and violence in her childhood, provide a welcome level of intimacy. Her insights into the connection between childhood trauma and coping mechanisms used in adulthood are precise. She promotes meditation as a path out of depression and as an alternative to overmedicating.

With a friendly and nonjudgmental tone, Elliott clearly accomplishes her goal of providing a guide to healing and self-love while demonstrating how each of the ten steps presented helped her to become a better person. She has an intelligent sense of humor, a fact that is evident from the book’s title. Many concepts and quotations from popular self-help books are included along the way, and a reference section is provided at the end of the book with print- and web-based resources.

At the beginning of each chapter is a photograph of the author, some of which are sexually suggestive. In a few instances, these photos seem disconnected from the topic at hand. Perhaps if the author provided a context for the images, the juxtaposition would make more sense.

In *Confessions of an Ex Hot Mess*, Elliott provides a step-by-step guide to transforming one’s life while offering stories of her own experience as examples. Young adults who are in the process of healing from past trauma or are working to form healthier relationships would be inspired by this book.

GABRIE'L ATCHISON (July 29, 2015)

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