



Stride: How I Walked Away from Trauma Toward Healing

Avra Wing

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An activist's enlightening memoir, Stride is about navigating life with a new disability.

Avra Wing's affecting memoir *Stride* is about the pain, shame, and self-awareness that followed from losing her leg.

In 1990, a few months before the United States enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act, an out-of-control sedan smashed into Wing on a Brooklyn sidewalk. She was holding her three-year-old son at the time; he sustained no physical injuries, but Wing's right leg was crushed. Later, it was amputated above the knee. Her recovery was wrenching, forcing her to uncover her deepest fears about her appearance, sexuality, and marginalization. The trauma continued to inform her roles as a writer, wife, mother, and activist for disability justice.

Drawing on witness accounts, police records, and medical files in addition to Wing's own memories, this account of the accident, the surgery, and the recovery period is visceral and comprehensive. Psychiatric insights are also used to articulate the extended psychological trauma of losing a limb and Wing's feelings of shame and disfigurement. The self-aware prose untangles months of denial without sentimentality.

Irony is also employed throughout the book to illustrate the often-absurd nature of the loss, as when another amputation patient receives a separate charge for replacing the blade used in the saw that cut her leg off, or when Wing realizes that phantom pain supports her denial by giving her back her leg. Elsewhere, she notes and critiques the fact that disability "is still often used to reference something negative." Suicidal ideation and obsessive relitigations of the accident day are also recounted in unflinching detail.

In reaching to represent a holistic perspective of traumatic injuries, amputation, and disabilities, the book stretches beyond Wing's story to include anecdotes about her family members, friends, and wider community, considering how each reacted to the accident and amputation. While some are illuminating, others, as with a digression to cover Wing's process of adopting a girl from China years after the injury, are distracting. More effective is the book's analysis of how Wing began to identify as disabled, and how a whole new community opened up to her when she became an activist for disability justice. Indeed, Wing's interrogation of her own ableist beliefs and behaviors, both before and after the accident, proves quite edifying.

Written in the aftermath of a traumatic injury and the irrevocable loss of amputation, the eye-opening memoir *Stride* celebrates community support.

MICHELE SHARPE (April 17, 2026)

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