

## With Pleasure: Managing Trauma Triggers for More Vibrant Sex and Relationships

**August McLaughlin**

**Jamila Dawson**

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A comforting book for anyone navigating the effects of trauma, August McLaughlin and Jamila Dawson's *With Pleasure* is an inspiring guide to feeling good in one's body.

McLaughlin and Dawson are a sexuality journalist and a sex therapist, respectively, and their exploration of pleasure and trauma assumes both medical and emotional perspectives. It's a delicate book that opens with a statement of intention: its goal is to help people who have experienced trauma, and it notes that some distance is necessary for the work ahead.

Each chapter is framed by thoughts common among sexual abuse survivors, like "Why is this happening to me?" and "How can I get my life back?", and offers answers as well as suggestions for self-reflection. Sprinkled in are moving stories from trauma survivors, including a man who was abused as a child and found BDSM as an adult to help him recover; a woman whose mother never told her about her ADHD diagnosis, which was the catalyst to many of her life struggles; and a couple who both endured childhood abuse and learned how to use open communication to enhance their sex lives. Following these are thoughtful reflections from McLaughlin and Dawson, who note the commonalities between people who cite their therapists for having guided the way toward healing.

McLaughlin and Dawson's language is gentle, kind, and inclusive. They refer to "men, boys, and people with penises" and "women, girls, and people with vulvas," not simply "men" or "women," making their work accessible to all. Throughout are journaling prompts and mindfulness exercises, making this a book to participate with, much like a therapy session.

*With Pleasure* is a graceful self-help book about working through trauma to feel good again.

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