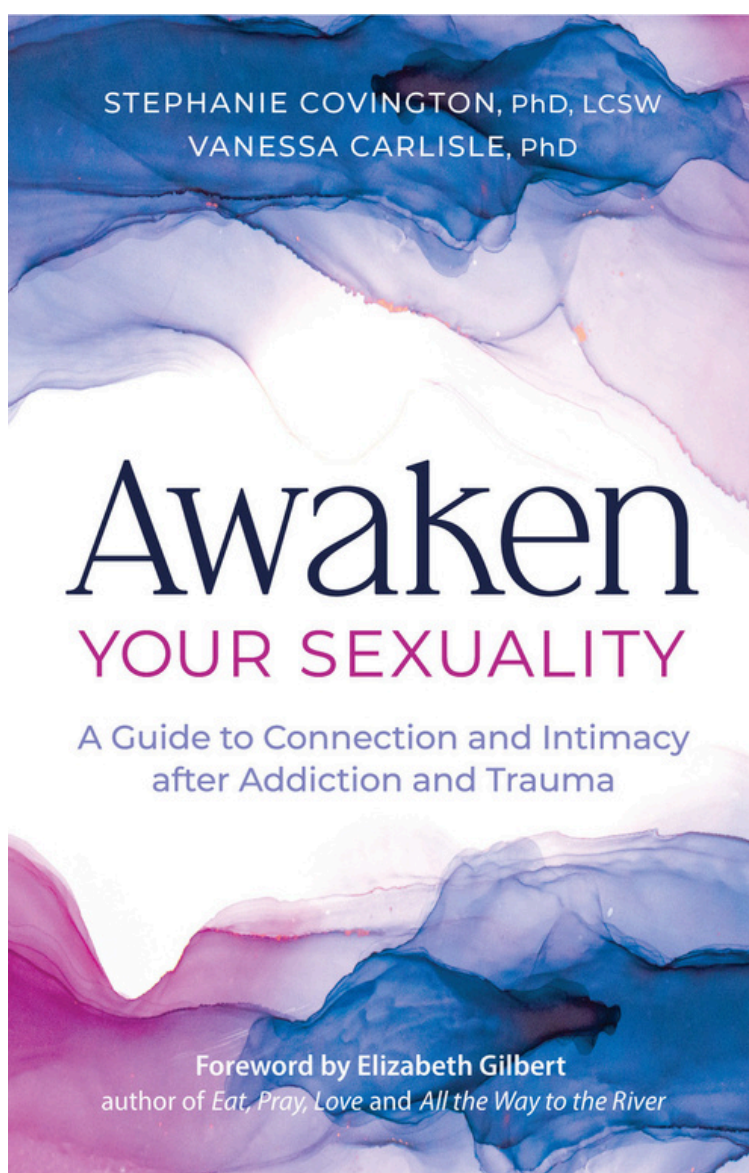


**“We need this book *yesterday*. . . a treasured resource”**  
—from the foreword by Elizabeth Gilbert

# **Awaken Your Sexuality**

## *A Guide to Connection and Intimacy after Addiction and Trauma*

**Renowned experts in the fields of sexuality, gender, addiction, and trauma  
deliver answers, hope, understanding, acceptance, peace and pleasure  
in this groundbreaking new work**



Stephanie Covington, PhD, LCSW and Vanessa Carlisle, PhD, offer all of us who seek to reconnect with our sexual selves (or connect for the first time) all the resources we need in ***AWAKEN YOUR SEXUALITY: A Guide to Connection and Intimacy after Addiction and Trauma*** (Hazelden Publishing, October 7, 2025).

**Our sexual recovery starts here.**

Compassionate and comprehensive, filled with honest, moving, personal stories and examples, ***Awaken Your Sexuality*** addresses the complex intersections of trauma, addiction, and sexual healing with depth and sensitivity. Written by leaders in their field, this one-of-a-kind, non-judgmental guide unlocks the path to pleasure, intimacy, connection, and self-understanding.

Addiction, trauma, and shame can shatter your experience of intimacy and sexual joy. But healing is possible. **As Elizabeth Gilbert says in her foreword, “Nobody is judged in these pages;**

**everyone is welcomed, and everyone is understood.”** Whether straight, queer, cis, trans, gender expansive or questioning, readers of all relationship styles and life stages will discover inclusive and invaluable information.

Drawing from cutting-edge research and decades of clinical experience, ***Awaken Your Sexuality*** goes beyond traditional recovery literature and considers sexuality an integral part of what it means to be whole and well. Statistically, 1 in 6 women experience sexual violence, and many turn to substances or compulsive behaviors to cope. This book is a lifeline, a compassionate guide to reclaiming one’s sexual agency, joy, and power.

***Awaken Your Sexuality*** is a must-read for survivors, therapists, counselors, anyone committed to sexual healing and empowerment, as well as for anyone interested in their own bodies, desires and sexual truths.

**We deserve pleasure. We deserve healing. We deserve connection.**

# PRAISE FOR *AWAKEN YOUR SEXUALITY*

As a woman in long-term recovery, I know how often sexuality and pleasure are left out of healing. *Awaken Your Sexuality* is a brave, necessary invitation to reclaim what addiction, trauma, and shame may have silenced. It centers intimacy as essential to recovery and affirms our right to connection and joy.

—Dawn Nickel, PhD, Founder of SHE RECOVERS Foundation

Covington and Carlisle balance honest explorations of harmful sexual history and seeking sexual safety with an invitation to explore sexual pleasures. *Awaken Your Sexuality* is essential reading given the slumbering state of American substance use programs yet to wake up and become curious about the sexual lives of the people they treat.

—Douglas Braun-Harvey, MFT, CST-S, Co-founder of The Harvey Institute

Drs. Covington and Carlisle guide their reader through reconnection to self while deconstructing systemic myths and increasing survivors' hope and pleasure. This book is a needed tool for anyone exploring connections between sexuality, healing, and recovery.

—Theodore Burnes, PhD, Professor of Clinical Education and Licensed Clinical Psychologist University of Southern California

*Awaken Your Sexuality* puts women and nonbinary people at the center of a topic that too often leaves us out: how to thrive as a sexually authentic and vibrant human being, no matter the specifics . . . I wish I'd had this book during my eating disorder recovery —when I needed, more than most anything, to reconnect with my body, desires, and authentic sexual self.

—August McLaughlin, Author, Journalist, and Host/Producer of *Girl Boner Radio*

*Awaken Your Sexuality* is a wise, gentle guide for women on the path of sexual recovery. Bolstered by decades of research and grounded in lived experience, Covington and Carlisle welcome readers into a transformational process of self-reflection. Everyone will recognize parts of themselves in the collected stories of women and nonbinary people who have developed self-compassion and learned to embrace their own pleasure. With helpful exercises and plenty of encouragement along the way, this book is a must-read for all of us who want deeper connection and intimacy in our sexual lives.

—Lisa Cypers Kamen, MA, Adv. CASAC, CADC II,  
Harvesting Happiness Lifestyle Management Consulting



Vanessa Carlisle, PhD and  
Stephanie Covington, PhD, LCSW



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Stephanie S. Covington, PhD, LCSW** (she/her), is an internationally recognized clinician, organizational consultant, lecturer, and author in the fields of addiction and trauma. Dr. Covington serves as the co-director of the Institute for Relational Development and the Center for Gender and Justice. For nearly four decades, she has created gender-responsive and trauma-informed programs and services for use in public, private, and institutional settings. Author of the first manualized treatment program for substance use disorder treatment, Dr. Covington went on to create twelve trauma-informed, gender-responsive treatment curricula. Her most recent works include the 30th Anniversary edition of bestseller *A Woman's Way Through the Twelve*

*Steps* and *Hidden Healers: The Unexpected Ways Women in Prison Help Each Other Survive*. Learn more about her at [www.stephaniecovington.com](http://www.stephaniecovington.com) and [www.centerforgenderandjustice.org](http://www.centerforgenderandjustice.org).



**Vanessa Carlisle, PhD, MFA** (they/them), is an author, coach, and educator in the fields of gender, sexuality, and trauma. Dr. Carlisle's lived experience includes over twenty-five years in sex work and fifteen years of advocacy for the sex-working community. As a survivor of both intimate partner and institutional violence, Dr. Carlisle now crafts programs that combat stigma and improve conditions for their communities, including trauma-informed self-defense training, somatic coaching, and end-of-life care services.

Along with many essays and articles, Dr. Carlisle authored the award-winning novel *Take Me with You* about a queer sex worker who must face her grief to be able to build the life she wants. Learn more about them at [www.vanessacarlisle.com](http://www.vanessacarlisle.com).