

Episode 002: Your Emotions Are Not Going To Rule You - Amy Clover

Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.

Lindsay Kolsch [over music]: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. We'll be sharing stories and conversations about topics we tend not to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide.

Each week you'll be hearing stories from some amazing people. We'll talk about how mental health has shaped their journey, and you'll continue to hear ways how you can carry this conversation into your community. We hope you'll not only connect to the episodes and conversations in a meaningful way, but we hope that maybe this podcast will make it easier for you to have conversations in your own life.

[music playing]

Lindsay: On this episode I talk with Amy Clover. She is a writer, fitness personality, teacher, and mental health advocate. Amy shares part of her story and early struggle with depression and how calling a crisis hotline actually saved her life. I loved hearing how her recovery led to her passion for fitness and how movement helped rebuild her sense of self after struggling with an eating disorder.

[music playing]

Lindsay: A quick warning on this episode. There is some strong language used so please consider that before listening.

[music playing]

Lindsay: So I'm really excited to get to sit down with Amy Clover. So glad to have you here on the podcast. I want to give you a chance to introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about yourself, and then we're going to jump in and share a little bit more about your story.

Amy Clover: Sure. I'm Amy Clover, and it's really an honor to be on his podcast. I'm a writer, health coach, and a mental health advocate, and I am friends with you guys because To Write Love on Her Arms was the foundation that I wish that I had when I was really struggling. I'm so drawn to this, this foundation because it's, it really makes hope cool for the older kids, for the old people too, if that makes sense. Because back when I was struggling, I was diagnosed with clinical depression and obsessive compulsive disorder in high school and it was just...I was a punk rock kid, kind of like a punk rock raver kid, if that's a thing.

[Amy laughs]

Lindsay: Yeah, it was.

Amy: And um, and back then it just wasn't cool to hope. There were no...all the foundations back then were just like, you know, just feel better, just smile and get over it, and that kind of stuff. And it was just didn't ring true. It was really ingenuine, if that make sense.

Lindsay: Yeah. You didn't sense the authenticity or like the people were being honest, maybe.

Amy: Or the empathy.

Lindsay: Yeah, teens have a good way to suss out what's not being real honest or straightforward. So.

Amy: Oh definitely. Yeah. So it's, it's just, it's such a relief that you guys exist and do the work that you do now. But a little bit about my story. So I was diagnosed with diagnosed with clinical depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, and I just struggled so much through high school. I was, I was really, I was, I was never really offered another way of life. I was basically told like this is the way it's going to be, and you just have to suck it up and get over it. Like that was just kind of a theme.

Lindsay: Sorry. When did you get that diagnosis? Was it beginning of high school or the middle or end or?

Amy: Um, it was beginning, I believe it was freshman or sophomore year.

Lindsay: Yeah. And what was that like for you at that point? Like you were talking about hopelessness. Is that, would that kind of characterize that season?

Amy: Yeah, I think, I think I was diagnosed because of the hopelessness that had set in and it was, it was so all encompassing and so heavy and it felt like...because back then, we're doing a lot of work on mental health stigma now. Um, and I think we've come a long way. We still have a long way to go, but there was no work being done back then. It was just like, you know, there was so much stigma that when I heard that diagnosis I was just heartbroken. I was like, this is one more thing that's wrong with me, which I think is something that To Write Love on Her Arms is doing great with is reframing that it's not something that's wrong with you, it's just something that some of us have, and it's something we can live with as well.

Lindsay: Yeah. So where did you call home during that season?

Amy: I was in the San Francisco Bay area back then.

Lindsay: Did that mean you had support, like you were able to go to counseling or there were other people talking about it? I mean, you talk about the stigma, and I'm kind of curious if you

can just give us a little bit of a picture of what that season ended like or how it, how it kind of transitioned or if it...did it transition?

Amy: Yeah. Yeah. It definitely did transition, but it took years so it was so hard to talk about it to anybody. I was, I was so scared of what people would think of me that I didn't tell like hardly any of my friends. And unfortunately the couple friends that I did tell stigmatize me further, made me feel worse about it, said that I just need to get over it and that kind of stuff because there was so little understanding of what it was. Um, it was, it was really perceived as a character defect back then, and it just wasn't understood. Um, and it wasn't anybody's fault. It's just there wasn't any education about it. Um, and so because I would reach out about that, I did have some counseling, but I never related with my counselors. I felt like they were just kind of condescending to me and it could've just been my own frame of mind around it. I had just really given up about it ever getting better.

Amy: I just thought it was something that I needed to suck up and get through, you know, which doesn't work unfortunately with clinical depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, it just makes it worse. And so I just stayed silent for, for so long and I had, I had a stint in the mental health hospital because I was afraid, I was afraid I should put myself in there. I was afraid of taking my own life. And that lasted very, that was a very short time in there, and it didn't seem to do anything because I didn't, I just didn't think that help was possible honestly.

Lindsay: Yeah. How old were you when that happened?

Amy: I was 16.

Lindsay: Wow.

Amy: Yeah.

Lindsay: And how, how did your family respond? Like you had mentioned your friends, but what was, was there a conversation about it with your family? With like people who loved you?

Amy: Yeah, and I think there was misunderstanding there too. It was, it was hard. I think for them to see me in such pain, they just wanted me to feel better and I don't think that they knew how to help me do that. And so while I could talk to them about it, I don't think there was full understanding about what it was like for me. And they did their best. They absolutely did their best. I don't think I did get the kind of support that's possible now with all the education and anti-stigma work that's out there now, you know. And so it really was very, very lonely.

Lindsay: So what happens next, because you're talking to me today, a mental health advocate, someone who uses movement and fitness to motivate to pretty much reshape people from the inside out. So kind of catch us up on, um, the next step or the next journey piece.

Amy: Yeah. So that continues, the way that I felt continued all through college. It even got worse in college. And then when I moved out from my family, who at least was trying to help me, I moved, um, I went to New York for college then I went to Los Angeles to live. And Los Angeles is about, um, five, six hours from the San Francisco Bay area. And so I was pretty far away, and I just, it just got progressively worse. The depression got progressively worse, and I also have had anxiety in the past and so it just kind of ping ponged between this extreme anxiety and this depression and I was just...I felt so untethered during that time and this was in my early twenties, um, and I was hanging out with all these people who were not supportive. I was into, um, I was drinking a lot because I was trying to self medicate.

Amy: I was, I was hanging out with a lot of people who, who were saying that that's the best way to go and that kind of stuff. And I had, I had just gotten through...I just went through a breakup with an ex boyfriend and I just felt done. I just felt totally done. And I was like, I'm done fighting. I'm done trying to make this work. I'm done trying to suck it up all the time. And I called my ex boyfriend who I was still really close with that I just said...I just reached out to him for support because he was the only one I knew I could maybe talk to, who maybe understood. And he, he begged me to call the suicide prevention hotline or lifeline. And I did and they actually saved my life that night. They talked me into the, they talked me down enough to go to sleep and they said if you don't feel better in the morning, you go to the emergency room.

Amy: And I don't know...I don't know what kind of state I was in, but it was, it was like the state that didn't, couldn't consider consequences, you know. And so I, um, so I did go to bed and the next morning I didn't feel better, so I went to the emergency room just because that was the next indicated step. I was just like, okay, they told me to do this, I'm just going to go to this and I didn't know what to expect. And I was put into the mental health hospital against my will. And I told you already, I was kind of a punk rock kid. I have never, ever been so angry in my entire life as I was when I was put in there against my will. And it really woke me up a lot. When I was in there, you know, at that time.

Amy: And I hope mental health hospitals have changed since. You don't have choices. A lot of your choices were stripped from me. Um, I, you know, I didn't have a choice whether I was taking medication. I didn't have a choice when I was going to eat. I didn't have a choice when I was going to wake up or when I was going to sleep, all of these things. And I really realized that maybe I had more freedom than I was actually taking advantage of. Maybe I had more choices than just to accept this hopelessness as the rest of my life. And so when I got out of there, I determined to try to find ways that might actually work for me. And it was a really rough and tumble time for the next few years after that. I would like try and fail hard, try and fall on my face.

Amy: But every time I did get back up, um, So that was a really, the determination is I'm just going to keep getting back up; I'm just going to keep trying. And it wasn't until I found movement combined with the therapy that I was doing that I really started seeing positive changes that stuck. So movement really came into my life and made this, served as a catalyst for me to really be able to hold onto everything that I was working on with my therapist. It really empowered me

in a deeper way than I'd ever felt before. And it was just wonderful.

Lindsay: It sounds like you were just mentioning, you used a word that really struck me. You used the word untethered. It's interesting then to think of something grounded, the opposite, which is what you're talking about movement. Tell us a little bit about that journey because did you just decide I'm gonna go to the gym? Like when you talk about movement, I think that's—maybe you can talk about the journey there that changed the nuances of movement versus I'm going to go workout, you know, like, tell me a little bit about that. Um, and that journey, because that's really, really interesting and I think a lot of people are going to relate to the struggle of, maybe they're at that first part where it's just, I should just go work out, you know, and then I want to hear some more about that. Yeah.

Amy: Yeah. That, I mean that like should feeling is like, it's just not helpful necessarily. like it can, it can be really detrimental if we “should” ourselves into anything, you know, because we think that it's the way that we're supposed to be and that kind of stuff. But I, I actually started working out because I thought I needed to lose weight because something else I've dealt with is an eating disorder. And back then it was running rampant. I, I didn't. Um, I didn't get into full on recovery from my eating disorder until just a few years ago actually. So I wasn't even aware that that was fueling it. Not Me, but I did get the benefit out of the movement I was able to do was really grounding for me. I love that you used that word, that grounding and centering for me. Um, and I really felt that when I started to explore different kinds of movement and really find out what I liked to, that's when it was really beneficial. It wasn't just when I was like doing the stuff I thought I should do, that was beneficial. It was what I really found something that aligned with how I wanted to feel. Something that felt freeing, not punishing, you know what I mean? That's a big difference in movement.

Lindsay: Yeah, so did you have anybody like a mentor? You talk about a therapist. Did you have anybody kind of guiding you into, into figuring out what movements did feel healthy? Which ones didn't? Or was that something you had to figure out on your own?

Amy: I had to figure it out on my own and it took me years, honestly.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Amy: Because I, I weaved in and out of, um, really unhealthy amounts and kinds of movements and back into not working out at all because I thought it all had to be that way and that's a very common thing to happen to people with eating disorders or perfectionism, which is very related. Um, so it, it really took awhile for me to realize what healthy movement really was and how to even connect with my body because for so long I felt like I just was forcing my body into things just like when I was a teenager. And I thought that I just had to suck it up and force myself to be okay. You know, I got the same thing about my body. I just need to force it to be this way.

Amy: I had to force it to look this way. I need to force it to be able to do this amount of movement and eat this little and all of these things that I really didn't...break apart for me until I did enter eating disorder recovery. Um, back in 2015, which is pretty recent. Um, and I, I realized that after I had actually been preparing for this fitness shoot with a really big company and I was like, oh, I need to prove to the world how good I am and how good I was was how good I looked in my mind. And so I got really unhealthy at that time. Um, and I don't want to say too many specifics because it might be triggering, but I got really unhealthy at that time and really realized that after the fitness shoot was done I felt like I had no purpose and then just went the other way into bingeing and it's happened before with me like that, but never as extreme as this.

Amy: And I had a mentor at the time and I just remember crying to her and just saying I can't stop. I don't know what to do. Like I, I feel completely helpless. And she was like, you need to get into recovery. And you know, I'd heard it many times in the past from therapists and things like that. But I'd never taken it in, like I did from her and thank God I did because that really...I feel like that saved my life. Being able to go back into eating disorder recovery and broke all of that stuff apart about feeling like I need to be good enough through the way that I looked or the amount that I could lift or the speed that I could run and it's really helped me direct were Strong Inside Out, my business, is now.

Lindsay: That's awesome. Amy, I really appreciate you sharing that part of your journey. I know that it sounds like it's kind of interesting when you tell it because first movement provides you like a haven, right? Like something to anchor you in, tether you and then as you're moving forward, as many of our stories are, it's not maybe in just one direction and you sorta realize that there's like a little bit of a fork in the road. You've taken that road maybe in a direction that no longer is serving you, so it's really. It's really cool then to hear you say like in that seems to be something so core to your identity, but clearly a passion of yours. So then how did you, how did you suss out what was like, what was healthy and what, how you could kind of integrate that? It sounds like you had to do a lot of work, like self work, a lot of, um, was there counseling, was it, was it a program? We do hear from a lot of people who are struggling with an eating disorder and, and it's, it kind of takes a lot of different support team members. So I'm curious from you what that looked like.

Amy: Yeah, I'm glad you asked because I'm so happy to share about it. I got into, I got into a specific eating disorder support group. I was seeing my therapist who actually ran a support group once a week, um, and I was in another recovery group, um, and I was just really dedicated because I was just sick and tired of feeling that hopelessness. I was just so tired of it and I really, I feel like I hit my rock bottom and that, that just pushed me into this space and I've always for the last, you know, at least 10 years or so, I've been a huge proponent of, um, of self development and so I was like, I need to practice what I preach. I just threw myself in and it really, really helps. But yeah, there was a lot of um, a lot of journaling. There were a lot of exercises I need to learn, a lot of self talk that I needed to reframe and become aware of that I wasn't even aware that I was talking to myself in that way, you know?

[music playing]

Lindsay: I was kind of thinking and on your website Strong Inside Out and, and looking at some of your writings you've written for To Write Love, I think a couple, maybe five different blogs in different parts of your journey. And one thing that struck me about, at least your website, is that you, I saw that you had taken some things down like things that you know, you, and maybe you can speak about it because I would love to hear your insight, but I thought it was a really, um, honest thing to do, you know, like sometimes we, at least in this environment of social media, we're all guilty of wanting to get a little bit of affirmation for how we look. Uh, that's me, yes. And everybody else on the planet right now. Um, but then trying to figure out, well, am I contributing to that? And it sounds like, at least with your blog, like you realize there were some things there that weren't really, they weren't serving you or other people. So what was that process like?

Amy: Yeah, I'm so glad you asked that because it's, you know, most of us feel that way and that's not bad because it's just our conditioning, it's our programming. The society teaches us that that's important. And I mean, I'm not saying that it's like you shouldn't ever worry about how you look or anything. That's just not even like feasible. Right? Especially in our society now. It's just, it's just that when that rules our every action and it takes up so much space...it took up so much space in my brain ever since recovery, I couldn't. I couldn't even fathom that I could have this much space in my brain to think of other things

Lindsay: come

Amy: I've become much more creative and like much more like open to new experiences and things just because I, I released a lot of that old stuff that the eating disorder was taking up. But back to your question about removing the posts from my site, there was a lot there that I had written from this kind of perfectionist, extreme all-or-nothing point of view that I didn't feel comfortable...I mean if anybody just stumbled upon it and read it, I wouldn't want them to associate that with me anymore and I just effing took it down because I was like, I'm not contributing this to the world anymore. And I actually did another comb through just recently because I just want to make really sure that everything I want Strong Inside Out to be this beacon for people who were like, I'm done with the extremes and I'm ready for balance. I don't want them to come to my site and be like, oh wait, but you said this and that's kind of extreme, so what do you mean? I really want to be that safe space for people to come who are ready to really look at their health and be able to go about health in a way that's different than we're taught to go about it...so a much more heart-centered way, if that makes sense.

Lindsay: Yeah. Can you tell me a little about Strong Inside Out and kind of the formation of that and then maybe just talk a little bit, like you said, some of the heartbeat of Strong Inside Out because I feel like that really reflects who you are as a person in the story and the journey you've been on, so I would love to share that with the listeners.

Amy: Yeah, of course. And it's so interesting because we've been through such a huge transition in the last few years because we started as a site, we started as basically a fitness site and I was just talking a lot about fitness and I had all of that stuff. And then when I went through the, um, the recovery with my eating disorder, when I really dive into that I was like, wow, a lot of what I'm talking about isn't healthy, isn't really healthy in the way that I want people to believe health is, you know, the way that I believe health is now. And so we rebranded about a year and a half ago now. Um, and now what we do is we help people release shaming, metric-based health standards and build individual health without scales or judgments instead. It just feels really freaking good because it's kind of like, I kind of like taken back and reclaimed that kind of like punk rock irreverence. But with the health industry, because who says that the health has to be so freaking serious. It needs to be like, it's this like do or die thing that I think a lot of people, talk about—

Lindsay: It's Hunger Games.

Amy: Yeah, it's literally Hunger Games. You know, I call it performance health, this the kind of like judgy shaming stuff that you hear in the health industry that like you can't eat this and you have to move this way and you have to look like this, like all of that is bull I think, you know, health is really about you feeling good. That's what really matters. And if you're not feeling good because you're not eating enough or you're working out too hard or you're trying to base your worth on external validation through how you look, then that's not okay. I really want to help people just blow that shit up.

Lindsay: Speaking of that, you talk about...F metrics is, is the, is the title of a post on your website? Um, and I would love, I feel like that kind of encapsulates what you've been talking about, but I'm curious of how that conversation in your own head has happened. And then how that, how does that play out with the people you're working with or people you encounter?

Amy: Yeah, I mean it comes up all the time with my coaching clients and in my, um, my groups in courses. It really came from a place of, like when I first went back into eating disorder recovery - and it's also for my depression recovery as well - you're taught so much how you're programming teaches you that you're not enough as you are, you need to fix yourself, you need to be better, you need to look better, you need to be faster. All of these kinds of things. And when I started going through eating disorder recovery, I'm just freaking in love with my therapist. She's just so wonderful and she's really guided me to...back to a, in a, a deep profound sense of self worth that I didn't know was actually possible. You know, I heard about it, I'd read about it in books and stuff like that.

Amy: And I was like, oh, that's a nice fantasy. Like they're just selling me, kind of thing. Like, no, it's actually really possible. And when I learned about self worth and what it takes to really have that sense of self worth, I had to peel away a lot of the layers that were keeping me from it. And it was when I was peeling away these layers and learning what, what I had been taught was okay and was not okay. I just got freaking angry, like really angry. And that's where F metrics

came from was like F all these statistics and standards that are put up on us to be enough when that has nothing to do with your self worth, absolutely nothing to do with your self worth. It's like all judgment shit and it's not...It really has nothing to do with you feeling good because feeling good takes more connection with yourself than connection with others, if that makes sense.

Lindsay: Yeah, no, it does.

Amy: Yeah. A lot of, um, a lot of what I realized about myself was that I was trying to control how other people felt about me by looking a certain way. And that's a very common thing with not just eating disorders but across the gamut. Anybody who's at least at all interested in health.

Lindsay: Yeah, and I feel like one thing about control, speaking of, especially when we're talking about mental health and mental wellness, there's a sense or a maybe a like a, a feeling that maybe you're out of control. And so I wonder if these metrics or just all of the systems we put into place are really kind of the illusions to give us some sense of control and then it ends up, like you said, becoming a shame cycle and a judgment cycle and I actually don't measure up to that and I can't control that and you know, and it's...And I just wonder, what would you say to someone if they were in that cycle, if they were struggling specifically with how they felt about themselves or their body? Um, what kind of advice would you give to them today?

Amy: I would first let them know that whatever they're feeling is valid and it's okay that they feel it. And I think that's the biggest thing for so many of us. I love what you said about control. A lot of it is that we're so uncomfortable with these emotions that we feel this lacking self worth, that we feel that we don't know how to deal with it any other way, but to try to gain control back. And that's where a lot of the eating disorder comes in and that's what also triggers depression to get worse, triggers anxiety to get worse. A lot of different mental health stuff can be triggered to get worse when we just don't feel like in our minds we live up to whatever everybody else expects us to live up to or to, to our own expectations. Um, so I would just say, you know, your emotions are not going to, they're not going to rule you, they're not going to overtake you there. They're a part of you, they're your, your body trying to experience something and to talk to you. Um, and with, you know, with a therapist, because I needed a therapist help in the very beginning, learning how to feel my emotions as well. Hopefully getting in touch with those more could really help me maybe release a little bit of that control.

[music playing]

Lindsay: I'm curious, I want to make sure we get to talk a little bit about some exciting news in your world. You actually posted recently on instagram - one of my favorite posts I think I've seen in awhile actually - and I hope I'm not making any large announcements, but you are pregnant. You're pregnant.

[Amy laughs]

Amy: Everyone knows.

Lindsay: Everyone knows. Great. With a little girl, right?

Amy: Yes.

Lindsay: So we're so, so excited for you, Amy and, but I, but I loved what you wrote on the post because, you know, it wasn't the um, the typical here's my baby bump post. Um, but you wrote that in your first half of your pregnancy that it was difficult for you to actually look at photos of your body and your body changing. And I would love to really talk about that because I'm, I'm actually a mom.

Lindsay: Um, I went through something very similar and I was so, it happened so fast, the change does, and you really don't have control over that. Um, but for people like yourself or even myself who've struggled in some disordered eating habits or just self image habits and things like...I wanted you to talk a little bit about it, like I want people to feel permission to do what you did and just say this is hard. This sometimes feels shitty. Like I don't feel good about posting this, but like I'm also in love with this process that's happening, like the gift that's unfolding before me and I think I lost. Um, I lost sight of that. And it wasn't until after I had my child that I like was like, and I saw another pregnant woman and it was like, oh my God, it's a miracle!

Lindsay: I was like, that woman's doing a miracle and like I couldn't see that in my own body. So I would love. Sorry, that was a really long segue, but I would love to talk to you about that because that's so huge. It's so, it's something people don't say. I mean, you know what I mean? They don't, they just don't say that. I'm. So I'm curious if you can maybe just walk us through that touch a little bit about how like, how you're doing now and what that looks like for you and then the questions you have and the things you're thinking about.

Amy: I'm so glad you asked that. I love talking about this because it was like, it was um, in the very beginning of my pregnancy, like immediately I bloated up like wild. It was just, I had no idea, no, no idea like that you could bloat that much. And I was, it was just that it was so immediate. Because I expected, you know, you're going to have a baby, you're going to gain weight. Right. But like I, I didn't expect it to happen that fast in that felt so out of control. Coming back to the control topic...that I was just like, I tried to take those pictures that you take from the side every week and you just see your belly growing. But I, I, we took the first one and I just broke down sobbing like I couldn't, I couldn't look at it and I was so surprised because I had gotten so far into my eating disorder recovery.

Amy: I've really felt like I was going to be prepared for these kinds of changes and I really wasn't. I don't think that I could have prepared myself for something like that. And it was, it was really, actually this is a difference between where I am now and where I was is that after I broke down I was like, okay, wow, this is really my next stage of healing. This is really what I get to

look at next. And how beautiful is it that this happened before my daughter got here. So it didn't happen when she got here, she didn't have to see her mom go through that. And I mean that that would be okay too and also would probably serve her if she saw me go through that. But then I got to become aware of this myself so that I can try as hard as I can not to pass this stuff onto my daughter, you know. And it was um, so it was a lot of, you know, for the first trimester of my pregnancy, I couldn't take pictures of myself.

Amy: I couldn't look at them, I couldn't look at them without crying. And um, that's just completely honest. And Yeah, you won't hear that from a lot of people who are going through pregnancy because it is a magical process and nobody wants to hear that is a thing. Nobody wants to hear that from you because you're a miracle and you're making a life and you should just be okay with the fact that you're gaining weight. But if you've got an eating disorder, girl, and you're going through that, you're not okay. The very beginning of takes some time. And I had to do some really focused work with my therapist on body image, which was the kind of the last piece of my eating disorder that's really held on, um, is the body image stuff. And it's actually been a great gift. It's really been a great gateway because it's opened all of that stuff up so raw that we were able to see it for what it was more clearly. And it gave us more stuff to hold onto a really like dive into.

Amy: Um, so now I'm absolutely loving the process. I'm loving taking pictures. I still have to do some self talk when I see pictures and that kind of stuff. But that's all the time. Um, and, and that was the interesting thing too, was the difference between seeing pictures of myself and the way that I felt off camera because the way that I felt off camera was so powerful and beautiful and um, and magical. And then pictures just would strip all of that from me. And so for my health, I didn't take pictures for the first, um, first, yeah, half of my pregnancy. Um, and then I've just been able to again, um, but I don't like stare at them.

Lindsay: Yeah. No, I mean I believe that's really, you know, like you're, what's really cool is hearing you express this as like, you seeing this not as like a, oh man, I'm still dealing with this, but really like you said, a gift, like thinking about it as like, okay, this is telling me something and I probably should listen. Um, and now I can work on it and I think in recovery, um, as, as your story changes or you're in different seasons of life, like things are thrown at you and it reopens or like you said, the next stage of that, the next level of that. And so when people are starting out on their own journey, you know, you can say, or we try to encourage people to let them know like, hey, this road may not be a straight and linear type journey but like it's so worth it. And it sounds like that's kind of where you've arrived. Like it's so worth doing the work to arrive where you're at right now.

Amy: Yeah, that's the biggest thing is I was so afraid of work in the very beginning of both my depression recovery and my, um, my eating disorder recovery and, but it's so rewarding to do it if not just doesn't feel like work because you actually do feel better after you do it, you know?

Lindsay: Yeah. That's awesome. I want to make sure that we get to talk a little bit about something and it actually the first way that I got to know who you were, um, when you worked with To Write Love on Her Arms for a 30-city tour, raising money. I want to make sure we get a chance to just chat about that. And um, if you could share a little bit about the 30 by 30 tour, I would love to make sure that people can kind of hear part of that journey and story. Um, and I know that you have to set the stage here because we're kind of hopping backwards, but um, I think it's really important still to include in the conversation.

Amy: No, I'm definitely happy to. I mean, it was, it was such a cool, such a cool experience. So back in 2012 I was like...I just want to be able to help more people. How can I help more people? So I started thinking about, you know, what are my skill sets? Well, at that time I had a personal training business and I had taught classes and things like that, and this cause that I really wanted to help was To Write Love on Her Arms. I had found out about you guys maybe the year before. And um, I was like they make hope cool for kids and people who like otherwise we're just taught to just smile and feel better, you know, it's like more empathy, like To Write Love on Her Arms really understands and I want to just help in any way that I could. So I was like, how can I help? I was like, well, I could teach boot camps and give the, give the funds or give whatever I fundraised to To Write Love on Her Arms. And I was like, yeah, but how can I blow this up big because I'm turning 30 in 2013.

Amy: It was like, how can I do that? And so I came up with the idea that 30 by 30 project and what that was was to celebrate the 30th birthday I almost didn't have because of my suicidal thoughts in the past, I would tour the 30 cities across the US and Canada, teaching a bootcamp in each city to raise money for To Write Love on Her Arms. And I remember when I first reached out, um, it was, it was to Lauren, um, when, when she was working with you guys back in 2012. And I was like, hey guys, this is what I'm going to do. And she was like, okay, let us know.

Amy: I was like, "okay, well I'm going to be fundraising on indiegogo. I'm going to be crowdfunding. And so I'll keep in touch with you guys." She's like, all right, just let us know whenever that happens. And I raised the money. I raised over \$18,000 to do the tour, um, through indiegogo. And Lauren was like, "wow. Oh my gosh, this is so amazing" and it was so cool being able to go out on tour to those 30 cities and telling my story and bringing movement to them and bringing that joy through movement that I feel to people and then people afterwards coming up saying to me that, you know, they've lost a loved one or they've struggled in the past and they'd never heard somebody talk it this openly and giving them permission to talk about it. It was such a cool, rewarding experience. Um, and that's, that's how our love affair - me and To Write Love on Her Arms - started.

Lindsay: Yeah, I remember it just being super inspiring, frankly. We were like, "wow, she's really doing it. We're like, that's awesome." You know? And you've had a chance to even share that with some of our supporters at conferences and just letting them know like, whatever you're uniquely gifted in, whatever you're uniquely passionate about...like you have a unique community, you have a unique audience that can hear this message, that needs to hear this

message. So it was really cool and maybe eye opening for us as an organization where, you know, we had done a lot in, in music world and the Vans Warped Tour and this was like kind of a first like, oh, someone wants to like do fitness and like really like, and, and the synergy, you know, the connection, mind and body. It was like a really perfect timing for us and a learning lesson for us. So we learned so much from you. So I wanted to just thank you for that.

Amy: Oh, yeah, of course.

Lindsay: I'm curious just before we, um, kind of wrap up here on our conversation, I want to talk to you a little bit about self care. What does that look like for you right now?

Amy: Oh, I'm a self care champ.

Lindsay: That's awesome.

Amy: It's a huge part of my eating disorder recovery and that's what I really started devoting a lot of time to really taking care of myself. I actually, um, so it looks different every day. Um, but part of my recovery is that I journal, usually daily, let's say at least like five times a week, a little bit. Um, just so I can like really become aware of anything that's going on in my mind that I'm not addressing or completely clear on, so I'll journal a little bit um, at night, um, I have to make sure to eat a certain amount of times a day. Um, and that's, that's really important for me because I used to like really talk myself out of it. Um, and I also, I don't restrict my food at all anymore. I don't...No foods are off limits. I just get to make the choice every time. And uh, self care in the form of work because I work for myself. I have this site called Strong Inside Out and I, I coach people and I run, um, programs and courses and I love what I do. I absolutely love what I do, but I have a tendency to be kind of like a hustler to the point of detriment.

Lindsay: On always. Yeah, always on.

Amy: Exactly. As you probably know. And I think that I had to set that boundary for myself of like work needs to be done by 5:00 at the latest and you need to be computer closed, like doing something for yourself other than that. So whether that's reading, whether that's journaling early, whether it's watching tv or going for a walk or something like that, I just need to be done at that time. So I've set really, really loving boundaries with myself around work, around movements as well. Um, I really, I check in with my body, uh, throughout my movement sessions, um, and before my movement sessions to see what do I want to do and if it's not what I previously planned to do, don't do that, do something else, you know? So I do a lot of self care.

Lindsay: No, that's awesome. And I loved what you had said about sometimes we call them just boundaries, but I like how you referred to them as loving boundaries because that's the goal, right? Like we're just trying to remind ourselves of the truth, which is that you, you matter, your body matters, like you're valuable. And so that's, that's really important and I hope people will hear that and feel like they can kind of take something away from, from what you're doing

and the work you're doing. Um, Amy, we're super, super grateful for the time we've gotten to chat. Before we wrap up completely, I wanted to just ask how, how can people get connected to this Strong Inside Out movement?

Lindsay: Is there anything coming up or anything your excited about?

Amy: As far as things coming up, you know, my baby's gonna be born soon. So that's coming up for me. But that's just something I'm going to do.

Lindsay: Yeah, that's probably good. It's probably better that way.

Amy: Yeah so I'm excited about that. But no, I mean you can always find me on Instagram or Facebook @stronginsideout and then you can find me on my site and everything about the movement stronginsideout.com/writing. Um, and that's where you go to find all the juicy stuff. You can also find it at stronginsideout.com. But the juicy stuff is through the writing page. And um, anything coming up, I mean I host an annual event called the Raucous Weekend where I help people build this balanced version of health that I've been talking about. Um, and then I have a few programs that you can check out and personal coaching as well. So if any of that interests you, I'd love to hear from you.

Lindsay: That's awesome. Well, thank you so much, Amy. This has been awesome, and I love every time we get to chat about kind of just where you're at and the things you're learning because you're so insightful, and grounded and, and so loving. So thank you again. And, uh, we're excited to share this with folks.

Amy: Thank you so much for having me.

Lindsay [over music]: I want to thank our guest, Amy Clover. You can find more information about Amy in our show notes at twloha.com/podcast or on her website at stronginsideout.com. We hope each episode is a reminder that your story is important, you matter, and you're not alone. We understand that so many of you listening might be struggling or know someone who is struggling with the issues that we've been talking about. We believe that help exists. Part of our mission is to connect people to the help that they need and deserve. You can find local mental health resources at our website twloha.com and click the FIND HELP at the top of the page. Or if you need to talk to someone right now, you can always connect to our friends at Crisis Text Line. You simply text the word TWLOHA - that's TWLOHA - to 741741 and you'll be connected to a trained crisis counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Lindsay: If you enjoyed this episode and you want to hear more, we hope you'll subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. And if you can do us a favor, we'd really love for you to write us a review. It will help more people find this podcast and the mission of TWLOHA. If you have any feedback or questions, please send us an email to podcast@twloha.com.

Lindsay: A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. The TWLOHA podcast is produced by Mark Codgen, editorial support was provided by Claire Biggs and Jennie Armstrong of Lore de Force. And music assistance provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. I'm Lindsay Kolsch. Thank you so much for listening.

[music playing]

Lindsay: To Write Love on Her Arms is a nonprofit movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self injury, and suicide. TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and also to invest directly into treatment and recovery. You can find more information about TWLOHA at twloha.com.

[music playing]