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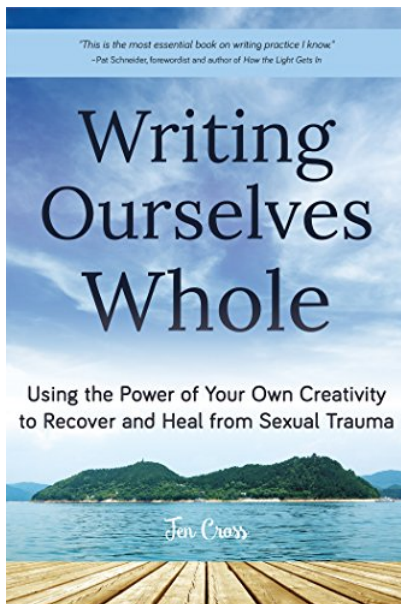
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Video Interview by Elizabeth McShane

Writing to Heal from Sexual Abuse—and to Find Joy

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Interviewer's Note: Jen Cross is the author of *Writing Ourselves Whole: Using the Power of Your Own Creativity to Recover and Heal from Sexual Trauma* (Mango Publishing, 2017). It's a conversational and often lyrical guide to healing through journaling and personal writing. Jen lives in the Bay Area, where she facilitates erotic writing workshops and workshops for sexual trauma survivors.



As a correspondent for *Talking Writing*, I spoke with Jen in early April at Harvard University. Our conversation delved into how she came to develop this free-flowing writing practice, the power of embracing your erotic side, and the limitations of the #MeToo movement.

Jen was candid about her own healing journey as well. Many sexual trauma survivors find themselves living a messy reality. They're labeled "survivor," but the rest of who they are is overlooked. Jen talked about how writing without self-censorship or judgment has helped her to reconcile who she is as both a survivor and an erotic person. As she writes in her first chapter:

We want to get back into 'right relationship' with our own words—meaning, we want to feel a sense of agency

with and through language. Our words *do* have power, though not in the destructive sense that our perpetrators, families, or communities often claim. The story we tell *about* our words also has power.

Excerpt from *Writing Ourselves Whole*

As part of the TW Reading Series, we've reprinted a partial chapter from Jen Cross's *Writing Ourselves Whole*, titled "[What Writing About Trauma Can Do](#) [6]." Don't miss this powerful excerpt, which includes a writing exercise.



Elizabeth McShane is an intern at *Talking Writing* and a former faculty aide through the Harvard University Extension School. She's learning how a literary magazine is run under the mentorship of Editor-in-Chief Martha Nichols. Liz's days are spent studying journalism and anthropology, and her nights are spent bartending in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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