

PRESS KIT

The Runaway

A Memoir of Sights and Symptoms of Religious Trauma, and how it is Possible to Heal

Amy G Nash, LCPC

Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor • National Certified Counselor • Certified EMDR Therapist.

ONE-PAGE BOOK SUMMARY

The Runaway by Amy G Nash, LCPC, NCC

Genre: Prescriptive Memoir • Word count: 93,000 • Status: Complete

At sixteen, Amy Nash converted her Converse sneakers and ball cap for the black shoes and veil of a monastic nun. She wasn't running towards God as much as she was running away: from a home disintegrating from far-right religious conservatism, from a father who broke promises, a mother who turned abusive, and the public shame of the 1970 Gracey Case. She thought she'd find refuge in a house of God.

Amy learned the art of submission by praying hours each day, serving her community in menial tasks, and submitting to obedience, even when it meant neglecting herself. Meanwhile, her body rebelled through a combination of illnesses such as IBS, migraines, and shingles. When she finally walked out the door at forty-four, she did so without the benefit of a credit score, work history, or handbook that would help her navigate a world she no longer recognized.

She had not yet learned that freedom was not the same as healing.

The revelation came in a graduate psychology class when she was fifty-seven. A lecture gave her the name to what she'd been carrying her whole life: complex trauma.

The Runaway knits together the insights that come with being both a client and a trauma therapist.

It is part survival story, part education on what constitutes complex trauma, and part hope. It is for anyone who has ever felt unseen, unheard, or unacceptable.

The book traces four types of recoveries:

- Ability to rediscover Identity: a broken woman struggles to drop her masks and return to who she used to be
- Deconstructing Faith: the monastic nun questions the inconsistencies she finds within her faith and accepts her findings

- Learning Intimacy: the celibate woman who stumbles into and accepts romantic love in her fifties
- Late Bloomer: the woman whose life's work really begins at fifty-seven, proving it is never too late

Comparable titles:

- Tia Levings, *A Well-Trained Wife* (2024) and *I Belong to Me* (2026)
- Sarah McCammon, *Exvangelicals* (2024)
- Daniella Mestyanek Young, *Uncultured* (2023)

AUTHOR BIO

Long Form

Amy G Nash spent nearly three decades living in a monastery before rebuilding her life from scratch in her forties. Starting over with no credit score and no work history, she enrolled in college and went on to earn degrees from Mount Holyoke College and Loyola University Maryland. She became a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) and a certified EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapist in Maryland, earning her master's degree at fifty-seven.

She brings a perspective to her clinical work as both a trauma survivor and a credentialed trauma practitioner. For years, she sat across from clients describing their childhoods, marriages, and faith communities, hearing words she used to say to herself. She wrote *The Runaway* for them and the hundreds of others like them who have not yet found the language to describe or understand what happened to them.

Her academic work on women's spirituality has been published in *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History*. She speaks on religious trauma at workshops and on podcasts. She lives in Maryland with her husband, Randy, and their Australian Shepherd, Jasper.

Short Form (for event programs and podcast bios)

Amy G Nash, LCPC is a certified EMDR trauma therapist and the author of *The Runaway*, a memoir about surviving religious trauma and reclaiming herself after nearly three decades in a monastery. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College and Loyola University Maryland, she worked as a licensed therapist in Maryland and speaks on religious trauma and deconstruction. She lives with her husband Randy and their Australian Shepherd, Jasper.

KEY THEMES & TALKING POINTS

1. Religious Trauma Is Real — and Widely Unrecognized

Many people living with the effects of religious trauma have never had a name for it. *The Runaway* puts the clinical language into story form, making it accessible for readers who may not recognize

their own experience as traumatic. Amy's dual role as survivor and therapist gives her a unique authority on this subject.

2. The Body Keeps Score Before the Mind Does

Amy's physical symptoms such as migraines, shingles, IBS, and chronic pain preceded her psychological understanding by years. Her story illustrates how the nervous system responds to spiritual and emotional abuse long before conscious awareness catches up, drawing on the science of complex PTSD.

3. Leaving Is Not the Same as Healing

One of the book's most important contributions is its honesty about what happens after leaving a high-control religious environment. Freedom without healing is not actually freedom. Deconstruction contains many layers. Amy's journey into EMDR therapy and beyond to a more serene life shows what authentic recovery should look like.

4. It Is Never Too Late to Begin

Amy earned her master's degree at fifty-seven, fell in love for the first time at fifty-eight, and began her career as a fully licensed trauma therapist at fifty-nine. Her story is a powerful example how reinvention has no expiration date.

5. Submission and 'Death to Self' as Instruments of Control

The Runaway offers a rare insider account of how theological language, such as blind obedience, dying to self, and God's will, can be weaponized to silence and control an individual. This is relevant not only to monastic life but to evangelical marriages, cults, and any high-control religious community, as well as any abusive relationship.

6. EMDR as a Path to Healing

The book targets the benefits of EMDR therapy, showing how trauma stored in the body can be processed and released. It is as practical as well as a personal story, valuable for both survivors and the clinicians who work with them.

Q&A / SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

On the book

Q: What made you decide to write this story now?

Q: You were sixteen when you entered the monastery. What were you running from, and what did you think you were running toward?

Q: The 1970 Gracey Case plays a pivotal role in your story. Can you tell us what that was?

Q: You write about your body rebelling through chronic illness for years before you understood what was happening. Can you say more about that?

On trauma and healing

Q: Many readers may not realize they have trauma. What are some signs people might miss?

Q: How is EMDR different from other forms of therapy, and why do you believe it was the key to your own healing?

Q: What do you say to clients or readers who are afraid that healing means losing their faith entirely?

Q: Religious trauma is still a contested term in some circles. How do you define it, and why does the definition matter?

On life and reinvention

Q: You fell in love for the first time in your fifties and earned your master's degree at fifty-seven. What would you say to women who feel it's too late for them?

Q: The tomboy on the horse is a recurring image in the book. What does reclaiming that image mean to you?

Q: Who did you write this book for?

PRAISE & ENDORSEMENTS

"The Runaway demonstrates how our religious culture can shape and form our lives, even before we know ourselves. Readers who feel like they missed their chance or found themselves overwhelmed by a religious lifestyle will take away hope and courage from her story."

— Tia Levings, author of *A Well-Trained Wife* and *I Belong to Me*

"This book is a rare and honest look at what it takes to leave a life that no longer fits and rebuild yourself from the inside out. Her journey is a reminder that spirituality does not require an institution. It requires the willingness to finally trust yourself."

— Brittney L Hartley, *No Nonsense Spirituality*

"A powerful and compassionate exploration of toxic family dynamics and the lasting impact they have on those who grow up within them. Nash gives language to experiences that are often minimized or denied, helping readers feel seen, validated, and less alone."

— Dr. Sherrie Campbell, author of *But It's Your Family*

"In a raw and honest memoir, Amy details her courageous journey of escaping a high-control religious community and rebuilding her life. Her journey is authentic and nuanced, exploring both the beauty and pain found in religious life."

— Christine Bradley Chenitz, LCSW-C, Religious Trauma Therapist

CONTACT & BOOKING INFORMATION

Media & Interview Inquiries

Amy G Nash is available for podcast interviews, panel discussions, keynote addresses, and media appearances on the following topics:

- Religious trauma and complex PTSD
- EMDR therapy and somatic approaches to healing
- Faith deconstruction and spiritual recovery

- Women's spirituality and institutional abuse
- Late-life reinvention and professional becoming

Professional Affiliations

- American Counseling Association
- EMDRIA (EMDR International Association)
- Mount Holyoke College and Loyola University Maryland alum networks

Published Work

Amy's academic work on women's spirituality has been published in *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History*.

Connect

Threads: @trotter4711, Instagram: @amygraceynash, Facebook: Deconstructing and Healing from Religious Trauma