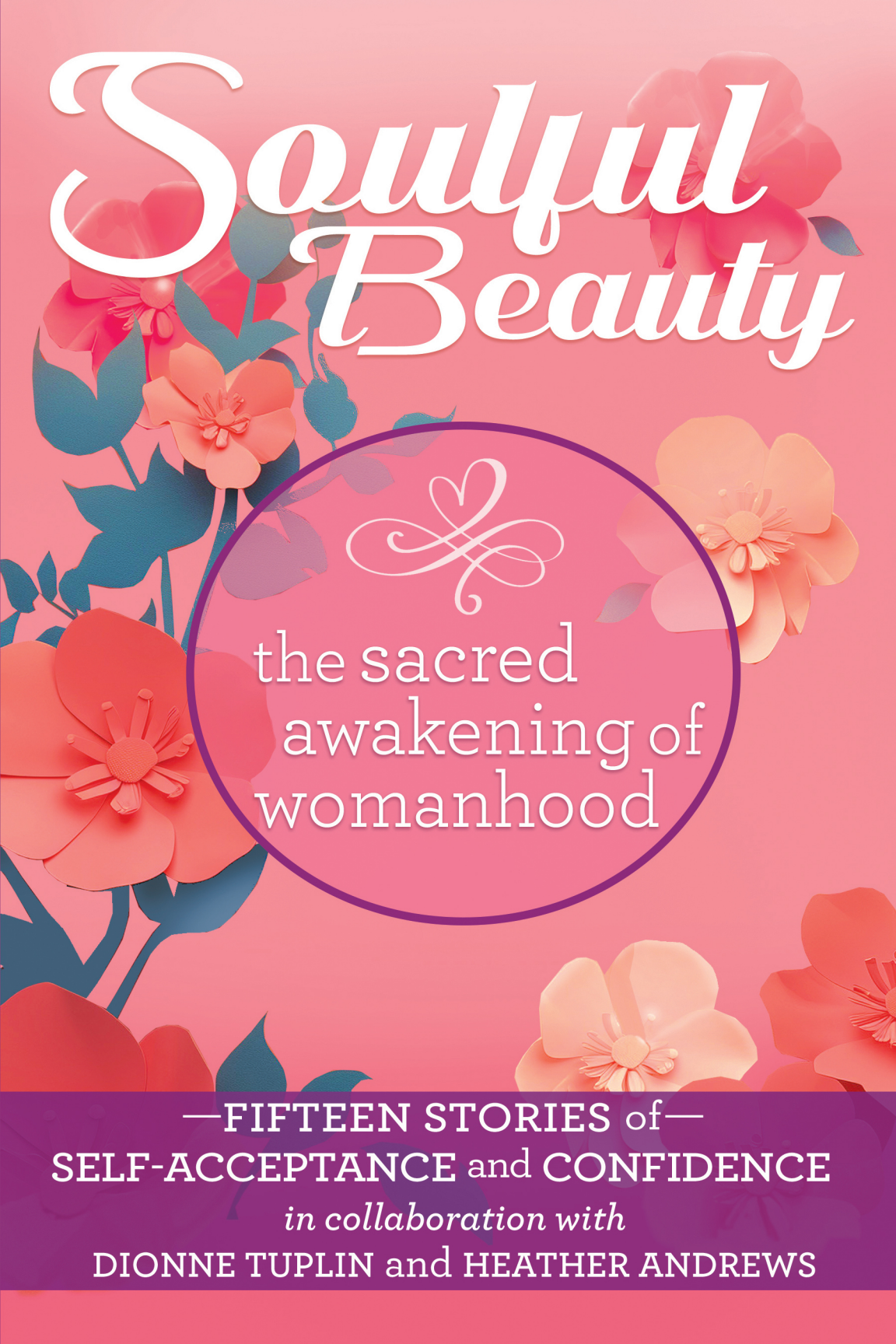


Soulful Beauty



the sacred
awakening of
womanhood

—FIFTEEN STORIES of—
SELF-ACCEPTANCE and CONFIDENCE
in collaboration with
DIONNE TUPLIN and HEATHER ANDREWS

Jennifer Gordon



Jennifer Gordon is a breast cancer survivor and advocate whose journey is one of resilience, self-love, and empowerment. Diagnosed during the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic, she faced her battle head-on, combining a double mastectomy with reconstruction in a single fifteen-hour surgery. Alongside her healing, Jennifer embarked on a transformative path, exploring tantra and sexual wellness, and discovering the power of pleasure and self-care in recovery.

As a confidence and sexual wellness coach, she's passionate about helping others reconnect with their bodies, treating them as beloved companions. Jennifer is also an accomplished dragon boater, winning numerous gold medals and finding strength in the camaraderie of fellow survivors. Her journey from the depths of trauma to a place of profound self-respect and joy inspires others to embrace their own healing with courage and humor.

CHAPTER 4

Adorable Aggression: Cultivating Fierce Love for Yourself



BY JENNIFER GORDON

I wish everyone could borrow my eyes—the eyes of a bisexual woman—for just a moment. To look at themselves the way I now see myself: through the lens of deep appreciation for the beauty of the female form, the art of womanhood, the poetry of being.

For so many years, I couldn't see my own beauty. I judged myself harshly, my reflection distorted by the lens of societal expectations and the male gaze. But when I allowed my attraction to women to unfold—when I gave myself permission to see the beauty in others like me—I found something magical: I could finally see myself.

Standing in front of the mirror, I began to look at my curves, my moods, my grace, my delight, my hilarity—all through the eyes of a woman who loves women. And for the first time, I saw how exquisite I truly am. It was a revelation: the beauty had always been there, waiting for me to look through the right eyes.

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To you, dear reader, I offer a challenge: think about your beloveds—your partners, parents, besties, children, pets. What makes you love them so much? Is it their perfection? Or is it the perfection of their imperfection—the little idiosyncrasies that make them uniquely them? Think of the honor it is to be in someone's inner circle, to know those intimate, unseen details: their quirks, their asymmetries, the way they laugh, the shape of their body when they're at ease. It's a privilege to witness someone fully. And yet, how often do we extend that same grace to ourselves?

I'll never forget the first time I did a boudoir shoot. There was a photo of me—of my backside. My booty, my bottom, my behind. When I looked at it, shame flooded through me, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet. I was terrified. Terrified to show anyone. Why? Because that part of me was unfamiliar.

We don't see our own backsides much, do we? We see our faces, our fronts, maybe a twist of the waist in a mirror. But the back? Unknown territory. And yet, to those who love me, my backside was familiar. They'd seen it a thousand times, probably more than I had myself. The photo I feared most? It ended up getting the most compliments.

That moment taught me something: there are parts of us—physical, emotional, spiritual—that we rarely see and often judge harshly. But to the people who love us, those parts are simply *us*. Whole. Beautiful. Familiar.

Soulful beauty, I've learned, is not about chasing perfection. It's about embracing every part of ourselves, even the ones we shy away from. It's about trusting that we are worthy of being seen. I often think humanity has a fatal flaw: our tendency for self-hatred and self-harm. I know it well. Yes, others have hurt me—some with words, some with actions—but my greatest abuser has always been myself. The cruelest words I've ever heard were spoken in my own mind. No one has abandoned me more than I have abandoned myself.

And yet, I am a survivor. I survived cancer; I had it cut from my body like poison. And I wonder sometimes: if a surgeon could remove the poison of self-hatred

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from me, what would remain? Who would I be if I never spoke another cruel word to myself again? If I never turned my back on my own needs?

That life is almost too big to imagine. A life where I am my own champion, my own safe harbor, my own first love. But here's the thing: I've started performing that surgery myself—not with scalpels, but with words, actions, and love.

Soulful beauty, to me, is this: the unlearning of hatred and the relearning of love—for myself, from myself, as myself. It's the hardest, most sacred work I've ever done.

People have always called me kind. But I never believed them. How could I be kind when I was so cruel to myself? I held myself to impossible standards, punished myself for mistakes, and denied myself the grace I gave others so freely. But somewhere in the middle of my cancer journey and the isolation of the pandemic, I made a decision: the cycle of self-cruelty ends with me.

The first step was boundaries. As a border patrol officer in Afghanistan, I defended physical borders. When I began to see my body and my peace as my own sovereign nation, something clicked. To protect my peace was to protect my soul. I had spent years trying to save the world—working with the homeless, victims of abuse, and survivors of war. But I never practiced self-compassion. The moment I turned that grace inward, the seeds of self-love began to grow.

Now, I defend my peace with the same ferocity I once defended borders. I am kind—not just to the world, but to myself. And that is the truest form of soulful beauty.

Falling in love with yourself isn't an overnight process. It's not love at first sight. If you've spent years practicing self-hatred, self-love feels more like taming a wild animal. You have to meet yourself where you are. For some, that might look like exercise, meditation, or gardening. For me, it's sitting in silence and listening. It's patience and small gestures—a gift of kindness, a moment of self-care. Slowly, you build trust with the wild part of yourself. This isn't about control; it's about

collaboration. Like any good relationship, self-love requires care, consistency, and patience. But the rewards? They're beyond measure.

I've spent decades hating my reflection, picking apart every wrinkle, scar, and curve. But now, I feel something unexpected: *delight*. The things society told me were flaws—the curves I hid, the scars from my cancer journey—are now my favorite parts of myself. They tell my story.

What if, next time you looked in the mirror, you didn't see a list of complaints? What if you looked at yourself with the same love you'd give your favorite pet or the cutest baby? Imagine giggling at your quirks, purring in delight at your reflection. What if you gave yourself that kind of joy?

Soulful beauty isn't about perfection. It's about the wild, messy, radiant love story you write with yourself. It's the courage to see your reflection and honor the life you've lived. It's about letting joy spill over into every part of your life. This is the magic of soulful beauty: it doesn't come from someone else's gaze or approval. It comes from within. And when you finally see it in yourself, the world will reflect it back to you.

You've probably heard the saying, "You won't find love until you love yourself." I get why that can feel triggering. It's easy to interpret it as a suggestion that you're unworthy of love unless you're perfect, but that's not the message at all.

Here's what I've come to realize: when you harm yourself with self-hatred and don't believe in your worth, it becomes harder to fully receive the love others offer. Even when someone showers you with affection, you may struggle to let it in because you can't see your own beauty. The greatest gift you can give yourself is love. When you nurture your love for yourself, it doesn't just transform your relationship with you—it opens the door to receiving love from others. They will reflect your magnificence back to you, and it will feel real because you've already begun to see it in yourself.

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Let me tell you this, from someone who's been through it: when you love yourself, people are naturally drawn to you. They feel safe and inspired in your presence because you permit them to love themselves, too. You show them what it looks like, and it's contagious. Loving yourself isn't just about transforming your own life; it's about offering the world a gift: the permission to do the same. And that, my friend, is the essence of soulful beauty.

Now, that wild, untamed essence within you—the one you've abandoned or mistreated—may not trust you right away, and that's part of your journey. Whether or not you were given the tools to love yourself, it's now your responsibility to make that change. No one else can do it for you. Self-love is an inside job. Some days, that wildness may turn its back on you and say, "Not today." Other days, it might cautiously take what you offer and then disappear. But then, there will be moments when it looks you in the eye, piercing through to your soul. Those moments are rare, but they are worth every ounce of effort.

To befriend yourself, you must show up consistently. You need to be willing to hold space for your wildness without attachment or expectation. It's about building trust, little by little, until that untamed part of you finally recognizes the love you've been offering—and starts to believe it. This is the slow, beautiful process of falling in love with yourself, and it's the greatest love story you'll ever live.

The most common complaints in relationships are a lack of emotional closeness, a lack of support, and not feeling loved or prioritized. But what if your love affair with yourself could be the balm that heals these wounds? Emotional closeness thrives in safety, and when you become your own safe haven, you become your own teammate instead of your worst enemy. Cultivating joy and connection with yourself creates a sense of support so strong that, even if you were the only person on Earth, you would still feel held and cared for. Prioritizing yourself slashes those complaints, because when you love yourself, you are the priority.

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Let me take you back to my bisexual heart: I identify as queer, a solo poly girl, and my #1 relationship is with me. My #2 is with my higher self, my eternal being, and the universe I dance in. I only invite others into my polycule when these core relationships are harmonious. They are my home base. I've set up such a solid foundation that I often choose solitude, because if someone doesn't love themselves as deeply as I love myself, we're not aligned. They won't understand me, and they'll inevitably drain me. I can't do their inner work for them.

I'd rather be single, filled with self-love and respect, than partnered and unseen for the incredible person I am. I choose solitude over being misunderstood, every time. When I'm alone, I cherish myself as I would a lover: the way I look in the morning, rumpled and cozy, with sleepy eyes and bedhead; the joy in my body, even with all its quirks and oddities—like my trumpet-like farts that make me laugh (reserved only for those I love—myself included). On tough days, I hold myself. When I'm sick, I tuck myself into bed, whispering soothing words to calm myself in the storm.

I treat myself like my most beloved companion. And let me tell you: my inner being responds with the pure joy of a dog when their favorite person comes home. This deep, unwavering love for myself creates a sense of fulfillment that no one else could ever replicate.

I guarantee you have an internal blueprint for how you want to be loved. If you expect someone else to follow it, they'll never do it perfectly. The only person who can do it exactly right, in their perfectly imperfect way, is you.

I've been told I am both the artist and the muse, and I've come to embrace that truth. I am the masterpiece, and I am the creator, forever in awe of the beauty I bring into being. That's the magic of self-love—it's not just a romance, but an ongoing act of creation.

DISCOVERING HOW YOU LIKE TO BE CARED FOR

Take a moment to reflect on these questions. Allow your answers to guide you in understanding how you best receive care and affection. Then, write a letter to yourself as though you're leaving instructions for someone else who will care for you, like you would for a beloved pet or child.

1. How would they make sure I feel loved and valued?

- What kind of words, actions, or gestures would make me feel truly seen and appreciated?
- Do I prefer compliments or quiet acts of service?
- Would they show affection physically, emotionally, or both?

2. How would they make me feel safe when I'm upset or stressed?

- Do I like to be given space, or do I want them to be there offering comfort?
- What specific actions would help calm me down or give me peace of mind?

3. How would they support me when I'm struggling mentally or emotionally?

- What kind of support or encouragement do I need when I'm feeling down or overwhelmed?
- Do I need them to offer advice, or is listening more important?

4. What kind of environment or atmosphere would make me feel at ease?

- Would I feel better in a quiet, calm environment, or do I need some background noise, like music or a show?
- Do I need the space to be tidy, or is it okay if it's a bit messy sometimes?

5. How would they take care of my physical well-being?

- How would they make sure I'm comfortable if I'm feeling physically off or unwell?
- Would they encourage me to get rest, hydrate, or eat nourishing food in a particular way?

6. How would they care for my exercise and movement needs?

- Do I prefer to be encouraged to be active, or would I like them to join me in activities like yoga, walking, or dancing?
- What kind of exercise routine feels good for me, and how would they support me in sticking to it?

7. How would they respect my sleep and bedtime routine?

- Do I need a certain amount of quiet time or routine before bed to sleep well?
- What's the ideal time for me to go to sleep and wake up?
- How would they make sure I'm getting enough rest?

8. What are my special needs or things I might require extra care around?

- Are there specific conditions, quirks, or sensitivities that need special attention (e.g., allergies, mental health struggles, or physical pain)?

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- How would they ensure I feel understood and supported around these needs?

9. What does my ideal care look like in the event of an emergency?

- If something went wrong, what steps would they take to make sure I'm okay?
- Who would they call in case of emergency (e.g., doctor, close friend, therapist)?
- How would they make me feel safe and reassured in the middle of chaos?

10. How would they nurture my sense of joy and fun?

- What activities or hobbies would they encourage me to enjoy?
- How would they help me relax and laugh, especially when I need a break from stress?

11. How would they treat me on my tough days?

- When I'm feeling down or tired, what would be the best way for them to show up for me?
- Would they give me space to rest, or would they offer light distraction or support?

12. What would they do to show me how important I am to them?

- What kind of little surprises or gestures would make me feel cared for and appreciated?
- Would they take the time to check in with me, even when things seem fine?

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Now, use these insights to write a letter to yourself. Imagine you're leaving instructions for the care of a pet or a child when you're away. How would you want someone to take care of you, knowing all the answers to these questions? Here's a starting point to get you thinking:

Dear [Your Name],

If you're reading this, someone is stepping in to care for you. Here's everything they need to know to take care of you the way you deserve:

Love & Comfort: *[What does love look like for you? What actions would make you feel truly loved?]*

When You're Stressed: *[How would you like to be comforted when you're stressed or overwhelmed?]*

Physical Care: *[What can they do to support your physical needs, like sleep, food, or exercise?]*

Mental Health: *[What do you need when your mental health is a struggle?]*

Special Needs: *[Any extra care or things to keep in mind?]*

Emergencies: *[What's the plan if something goes wrong?]*

Fun & Joy: *[What makes you feel happy and relaxed? How can they help you nurture that?]*

Thank you for loving me and taking care of me. I trust you to honor these needs and keep me safe and happy, even when I'm not able to fully care for myself.

With love,

[Your Name]

SELF-CARE IS SELF-LOVE IN ACTION

When you care for yourself intentionally, you fall in love with yourself, and you realize you're not missing anything. You're not waiting for someone to complete you, because you already hold the key to your own joy, peace, and belonging. You are the home you've been searching for.

So, what if you stopped chasing love outside yourself and started creating it from within? What if, instead of waiting for someone else to see you, you saw yourself so clearly that the whole world couldn't help but reflect it back?

Loving yourself is a revolution. It's the art of becoming whole. And when you master this art, you don't just change your life—you change the way the world sees love.

Because when you love yourself deeply, you don't just heal yourself; you give others permission to do the same.

Connect with Jennifer:

<https://linktr.ee/TheBlissPoint>



Soulful Beauty:

The Sacred Awakening of Womanhood is a powerful collection of remarkable stories from fifteen courageous women who have each walked the path toward self-acceptance, healing, and inner strength. Through raw honesty and heartfelt reflection, these authors share how they embraced their unique identities, overcame self-doubt, and discovered the beauty that comes from within.

More than just a compilation, this book is a celebration of womanhood—of resilience, growth, and the radiant power that blooms when women honor their worth. Each chapter offers a glimpse into the personal journeys of transformation, inviting readers to reconnect with their own sense of self and find inspiration in the shared strength of sisterhood.

Soulful Beauty is for every woman ready to rise, love herself more deeply, and walk confidently in her truth. Let these stories remind you that the journey to true beauty begins with self-love and continues on with a love that touches and enriches the souls of others.

FOREWORD by TIA CRISTY

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