The Tell: A Memoir

by Amy Griffin



About the Book

An astonishing memoir that explores how far we will go to protect ourselves, and the healing made possible when we face our secrets and begin to share our stories.

For decades, Amy ran. Through the dirt roads of Amarillo, Texas, where she grew up; to the campus of the University of Virginia, as a student athlete; on the streets of New York, where she built her adult life; through marriage, motherhood and a thriving career. To outsiders, it all looked, in many ways, perfect. But Amy was running from something --- a secret she was keeping not only from her family and friends, but unconsciously from herself. ?You?re here, but you?re not here,? her daughter said to her one night. ?Where are you, Mom??

So began Amy?s quest to solve a mystery trapped in the deep recesses of her own memory --- a journey that would take her into the burgeoning field of psychedelic therapy, to the limits of the judicial system, and, ultimately, home to the Texas panhandle, where her story began.

In her search for the truth, to understand and begin to recover from buried childhood trauma, Griffin interrogates the pursuit of perfectionism, control and maintaining appearances that drives so many women. When, in our path from girlhood to womanhood, did we learn to look outside ourselves for validation? What kind of freedom is possible if we accept the whole story and embrace who we really are? With hope, heart and relentless honesty, she points a way forward for all of us, revealing the power of radical truth-telling to deepen our connections --- with others and ourselves.

Discussion Guide

1. Amy Griffin spent much of her adult life determined to move forward, never letting herself stop to look back. What do you think eventually motivated her to want to revisit her past and then to tell her story? Talk about the courage it takes to confront one?s past --- and to share it with the world. Have you ever decided to divulge something about yourself that

you once felt was impossible to share?

2. Amy was a star student in her small Texas town, and she became a high-achieving businesswoman after arriving in New York. Talk about ambition as a trauma response. Do you think Amy believed she could outwork (and outrun) her past? How can THE TELL serve as a reminder that people who appear to ?have it all? are not always as they seem?

3. A physical therapist tells Amy: ?There?s something your body is telling you that you don?t want to hear.? How did her body?s message manifest? What messages has your body sent you over the years? What makes it hard for you to listen to the messages your body sends?

4. John supports Amy?s decision to try therapy with Olivia, and he works to keep the family?s life afloat at home while she takes time to process what she?s uncovered. But John also understands his own limits, telling Amy when she needs to find outside support so he can just be her husband. How does he know when to place this boundary? How does Amy react to this? Have you ever had to place a difficult boundary to preserve a relationship?

5. Would you try psychedelic-assisted therapy? Why or why not?

6. ?I needed to find the evidence that would confirm my memories,? Amy writes in her journal. Why do you think Amy needs others to confirm what she knows to be true?

7. What did you learn from THE TELL and from Amy?s sessions with Lauren about how memory works? Consider the distinction between memory storage and memory recall, for instance. What did you find most surprising?

8. ?My daughters were asking me to participate in life, and in our relationship, in a way that I could not.? How do Amy?s children both trigger her memories and help her heal?

9. For years, Amy remembers so many details around the abuse, but not the abuse itself. She saw clues, but not the full picture of her trauma. How did THE TELL make you consider --- or reconsider --- your own life events and memories? Is there anything you might be unable or unwilling to remember? Have you ever surprised yourself by ?unlocking? an unexpected memory?

10. Amy begins to feel that justice will bring her closure. How was Paul?s story a helpful --- and unfortunately rare --- example for Amy? How does it affect her when she realizes her own story might not have such a tidy or satisfying outcome?

11. What was it like for her to tell her parents? Have you ever had to have a difficult conversation with your parents about your childhood? What did you learn through that conversation --- about yourself or about them?

12. Amy was raised in a traditional patriarchal Texas culture. Children were expected to both respect and obey their elders. How do the environments of our childhoods --- and the cultures in which we are raised --- inform our adult choices? How can our backgrounds influence what we can and cannot face in our personal histories?

13. Amy recognizes the resources and time she was able to devote to both her healing and pursuing her legal case. How are situations of abuse and survival different for those without the same resources? In what ways might financial and

class privileges insulate you from pain, or not?

14. At the beginning of her journey, Amy can?t ?tell? her secret to herself. By the end, she?s realized that ?the telling is the medicine.? How does telling her story help Amy heal?

15. How does Amy give herself the closure she needs?

16. Who do you think wrote the postcard? Does the writer?s identity matter?

17. What was your biggest takeaway from THE TELL?

Author Bio

Amy Griffin lives in New York City with her husband, John, and their four children. She is the founder of the investment firm G9 Ventures.

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