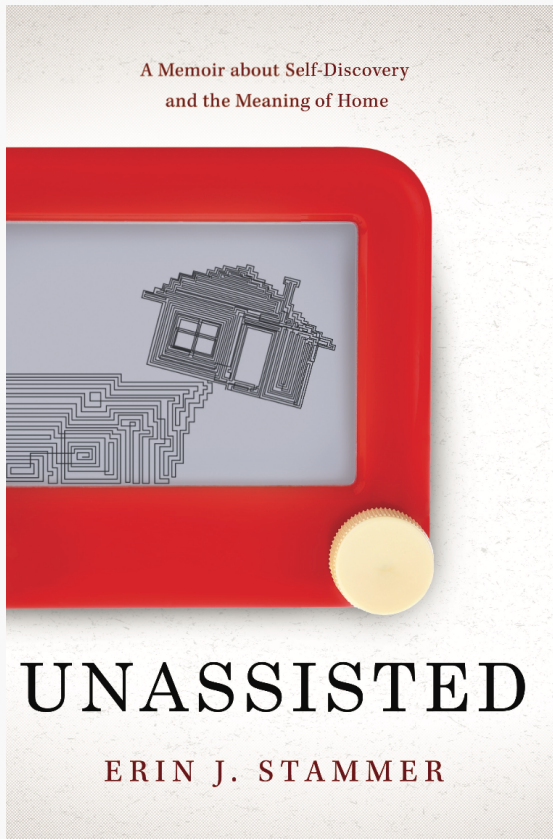


UNASSISTED

BY ERIN J. STAMMER

"In the end, this book is about finding home, where we can not only survive, but thrive"

-Tom Hallman Jr., Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author



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Erin Stammer grew up in Portland, Oregon, and graduated from Brown University with a BA in Comparative Literature and French. She later obtained her Masters in Healthcare Administration from Portland State University. She is married and has four grown children. When she is not reading and writing she works full time for a finance company, cooks, practices yoga, and enjoys traveling the world.

Connect With Me

www.erinstammer.com

erinstammerauthor@gmail.com

Sensitive and cautious from an early age, Erin had always managed the periodic upheavals in her life, but in a short 18 months, a whirlwind of events tip the balance that she had been able to maintain.

The Great Recession, a second marriage, merging families, menopause, and undertaking an enormous role managing a chaotic assisted living facility all combine to create a perfect storm that threatens to break her.

Unassisted is Erin's story of finding herself and finding home.



Early Praise for *Unassisted...*

"This memoir is a reflection on living a fully engaged and an intentional life. Erin Stammer's authentic, empowered voice takes the reader on a literary journey where we find love and joy in the most unexpected places and most difficult situations. Full of emotional truths and hard-won wisdom, resilience and grace, *Unassisted* is a perfect book club book."

-Ruth Wariner, bestselling author of *The Sound of Gravel*

"Erin is a tremendous storyteller. Her memoir is compelling, her writing lyrical, almost as if we are caught in a dream that is her struggle to right size her life, when faced with one of the greatest challenges of her career. As we read about the enchantment of her early childhood, the pain of her adolescence and the midlife events that bring forth all the things that she never resolved, we stagger along with her, and we maintain hope. In the end, this book is about finding home, where we can not only survive, but thrive."

-Tom Hallman Jr., Pulitzer Prize winner and senior reporter for *The Oregonian*

"Home is not always a place of love and nurture; often it's a place where we are uncertain and wary. And similar to Erin's story, many of us find a way to overcome, heal, and forgive. In *Unassisted*, readers are taken on a journey of a woman who despite the episodic dysfunction of her childhood, became the strong woman she was born to be."

-Stephanie Plymale, Author of *American Daughter*, CEO of Heritage School of Interior Design

Discussion Topics for *Unassisted...*

What prompted you to write this memoir, and in particular with the primary focus of 18 months when you were managing an assisted living facility?

When I was finally able to move on from the assisted living facility both my physical and mental health was significantly damaged. It took me a long time to process what had happened to me during that time, and how I might go about recovering from it. I was experiencing many emotions – anger, regret, grief, disappointment in myself and in others. I came to acknowledge that I had PTSD and that I needed to treat myself with care as I worked through these emotions. All along I considered writing my story to free myself from the negativity that lingered from that experience, and from all the other contributory factors (menopause, merging families in a very small house, losing the job and career I had loved). When I began to write, I realized there was much more to it than these obvious things. There was my childhood, and the person I had grown up to be, and the choices I had made that had not always led to my own happiness. Writing the book was cathartic and healing.

What did you learn about yourself in writing the book?

I learned that I could overcome self-imposed obstacles to finish what I started, to learn from my mistakes and to accept the woman I am. I conquered a lot of fears and self-doubt in writing my story; fears that I would never finish or publish, fears that I would upset people or be misunderstood. The self-doubt manifested as not believing in myself enough to tell the world my truth and be believed and accepted as an author. In completing the book, I also discovered that I had become more bold and tough in general about who I was and not letting others tell me I was something else. It was liberating.

How has your family reacted to your story?

My family, and my friends, have been nothing but loving and supportive. I think they would tell you that I have always relayed things in a straightforward way, with little hesitation. Certainly, I was selective about what I shared in this memoir; this was a specific time in my life, and I did not write about every detail of my childhood, every moment I've experienced. I laugh when my siblings ask me why I didn't include the story of when my brother had an allergic reaction to crab or my sister got bit by the neighbor's dog on Northrup Street. I tell them maybe they should write their own memoir and include those things.

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