



The Truth: An Uncomfortable Book about Relationships

Neil Strauss

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This is not a journey that was undertaken for journalistic purposes. It is a painfully honest account of a life crisis that was forced on me by my own behavior and its consequences.

"As such, it requires sharing a lot of things I'm not proud of—and a few things I feel like I should regret a whole lot more than I actually do. Because, unfortunately, I am not the hero in this tale. I am the villain."

So begins Neil Strauss's long-awaited follow-up to *The Game*, the funny and slyly instructive work of immersive journalism that jump-started the international "seduction community" and made Strauss a household name—revered or notorious—among single men and women alike.

In *The Truth*, Strauss takes on his greatest challenge yet: Relationships. And in this wild and highly entertaining ride, he explores the questions that men and women are asking themselves every day:

Is it natural to be faithful to one person for life? Do alternatives to monogamy lead to better relationships and greater happiness? What draws us to the partners we choose? Can we keep passion and romance from fading over time?

His quest for answers takes him from Viagra-laden free-love orgies to sex addiction clinics, from cutting-edge science labs to modern-day harems, and, most terrifying of all, to his own mother.

What he discovered changed everything he knew about love, sex, relationships, and, ultimately, himself.

Searingly honest and compulsively readable, *The Truth* just may have the same effect on you.

If *The Game* taught you how to meet members of the opposite sex, *The Truth* will teach you how to keep them.

The Truth: An Uncomfortable Book about Relationships Details

Date : Published October 13th 2015 by Dey Street Books (first published January 1st 2015)

ISBN :

Author : Neil Strauss

Format : Kindle Edition 451 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Psychology, Relationships, Self Help, Biography

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From Reader Review **The Truth: An Uncomfortable Book about Relationships** for online ebook

Missy J says

It is very rare that I review a book that **none** of my Goodreads friends have read or that they "want to read" or are "currently" reading this book. Nobody! Nobody! Not a single person! (Except you Tiffany, but you never update your reading list!) So I think this review may be special!

This book has been a very long and exhausting emotional roller-coaster! The author Neil Strauss is very brave to publish this book. Since releasing "The Game," a book about pickup artists, the author has found himself struggling with sex addiction and the inability to commit. Like most men, he is scared that if he marries somebody, he will not be able to fool around with others. The thought of being "caged" scares him. In this book, he writes about his journey through rehab, relapse, hook ups and break ups, and finally managing to heal and recover, not only from his addiction problem, but also to a certain degree overcome of his childhood trauma.

I have to say that the psychological insights Strauss acquired during his journey are very, very fascinating. I learned a lot from this book and I hope that it will be useful to know in the future. For instance, I learned about **love avoidants** and **love addicts**, how the former is usually the result of an over-controlling and enmeshing parent, whereas the latter mostly happens when abandoned by a parent. Of course, this may sound simple, but Strauss really delves deep into the topic and shares a lot of pain.

Another term I learned is called "**Anhedonia**." Ever heard of this? It means the "inability to feel pleasure." It's not necessarily bad, but at a devastating low-point in Strauss' struggle to overcome his addiction problem and the intellectual barriers he set up to basically deny that he even has a problem, his dear therapist Lorraine wants him to reach a state of anhedonia. The main takeaway here, is that before we can start a relationship with another person, we really do have to work on ourselves first and make sure that we are grown up and stable. Once we are in control of ourselves, we may then pursue a honest and truthful relationship.

A lot of characters appear in this book and what a life Neil lives. Sometimes, I thought that he "overthinks" too much and that causes him to have a lot of problems, but he sure is very lucky to have Rick Rubin as his mentor and that Ingrid gave him another chance. There are so many quotes that I underlined and wrote down! My favorites can be found at the end of this review. Definitely a must-read for today's younger generation! I wish him and his family all the best!

"They say that love is blind, but it's trauma that's blind. Love sees what is."

"Don't trade long-term happiness for short-term pleasure."

"Love is not about finding the right person. It's about becoming the right person."

"Life is a test and you pass if you can be true to yourself."

"Even when we see the truth, trauma still prevents us from reaching it, like a rockslide blocking the road to

our future."

"Guilt is about making a mistake. Shame is about being a mistake."

"The opposite of fear is not joy. It is acceptance."

"It takes commitment to change. For only in commitment is there freedom."

"Real intelligence is when your mind and your heart connect."

"Love is a cage only when you feel indebted to it, constrained by it, responsible to its owner."

"Studies on choice even affirm that having too many options leads to less happiness and satisfaction."

Libby says

“They say that Love is blind, but its trauma that's blind. Love sees what is.” - Neil Strauss

It's been a very long time since I read a book from cover to cover in 24 hours or less. I had seen *The Truth* by Neil Strauss around and noticed a few people I knew were reading it. When a friend at work listened to a Lewis Howes podcast with Neil on the book and told me that I had to listen to it I took the hint and downloaded a copy. I could not put it down. It was painful to read at first, absolutely soul destroying in parts. His description of women and how he related to them was heartbreaking. I actually felt sick to my stomach and considered not finishing the book a few times but I just had to understand how his mind worked. It was only at the end that I got the reference to it being “an uncomfortable book on relationships”. I personally think “uncomfortable” was an understatement... “fucking excruciating” was more on the mark for me. As I waded through the horror of his experiments I knew why I could never bring myself to read his book *The Game*. I found myself in a state of despair that there were plenty of men out there that looked at and treated women like this... what hope was there. And of course plenty of women damaged enough to let them. None of his “adventures” held the slightest appeal to me, just disgust and sadness and the hollow, empty using of holes for cheap thrills, causing more damage to escape damage. Towards the end of *Door 3: Alternatives* I actually had to take a midnight shower, I felt dirty, cold and depressed. Then there was a glimmer of hope, “There is nothing frenzied about debauchery, contrary to what is thought,” Albert Camus once wrote. “It is but a long sleep.” And then he wrote in his own words, “It is time to wake up.” And I felt a rejoicing in my body and a please God let this be worth the shit I just dragged myself through...

All the while I'm reading this I'm conscious of the blinding parallels between this story of relationship and the story of my last relationship. Obviously my Beloved was not as extreme as Neil in many ways but he was a dedicated PUA and he did study *The Game* amongst other things and did live that lifestyle for years. I also saw painful parallels in the love avoidance and love addict dynamic between Neil and Ingrid and myself and my Beloved.

Door 4: Anhedonia was where I could breathe again. I cheered out loud when he made the first step in getting out of his fucking head and returning to his heart,

“The person who is too smart to love is truly an idiot.

With my last pillar of intellectual resistance demolished, I fly to Lorraine to be healed, to become worthy of Ingrid, to become worthy of myself, to find out who I am beyond the perpetually turning wheels of desire, manipulation, and intellectualization that have run my entire life.”

When he connected the dots of his childhood trauma with his relationships with women I breathed out a hundred yeses.

“All the things you’ve been trying to get from these relationships—freedom, understanding, fairness, acceptance—are exactly the things that you never got from your mom. So every time you load all that unfinished business onto your partner, you’re setting yourself up for another disappointment. Because as an adult, the only person who can give you those things is you.”

All his life he had been hiding from true intimacy within relationships, where better place to hide than that, whenever intimacy reached a certain level he would become scared it would consume him so he ran, thus creating a pattern of short term, shallow end relationships. True intimacy is when partners stop living in the past, in their trauma history, and start having a relationship with each other in the present moment. Love, is not something to be learned, its something we already have and we must unlearn in order to access it. Which reminds me of a Rumi quote that keeps coming up for me lately, “ your task is not to seek love (for Love is who you are- my words) but to remove the barriers you have built against it”.

When he finally reaches Freedom in Door 5 he quotes one of my favourite Pablo Neruda poem for Ingrid to begin the chapter marked with an eternity sign. I cannot help but burst into tears with great sobs. This dear god, this is what I want.

“I will die kissing your crazy cold mouth,
caressing the lost fruit buds of your body,
looking for the light
of your closed eyes.
And so when the earth receives our embrace
we will go blended in a single death, forever
living the eternity of a kiss”

~ Pablo Neruda Cien sonetos de amor

His heroes journey brings me to my knees, this is possible, if someone with his trauma history, impediments of extreme intelligence and stubbornness can come to this place then anyone can.

“While reading these beautiful words, I notice the complete absence of my old feelings: suffocation from her love, doubt that I have a good heart, fear of opening our lives to each other, and anxiety about her expectations of me. Instead, every word rings like truth. Neither haunted by the past nor worried about the future, I’m finally grateful for the present.”

I realised that every man I have ever loved has had this parental wounding as have I and we were not be able to be fully present to the other because of it. I have loved with wild abandon...only to be abandoned time and time again when Love opened the mother wound in my partner and made him resentful and closed to me. In the past I loved more, this time I let go and next time...well there wont be a next time with this pattern as I’m letting the whole trauma drama go.

"As I take her hand in mine, I realize that before trauma healing, I always wanted more—more women, more success, more money, more space, more experience, more possessions. Not once did I stop and say, as I do now, "I have enough."

I realise that I have felt this "not enoughness" in every man I have been with. I even remember saying it aloud on many occasions. "I feel like I'm not going to be enough for you babe, you're always looking for something/ someone more" There was this restlessness, this undercurrent of dissatisfaction, this keeping eyes open for something better to come along that I felt in them. In the past I thought it was me, that I wasn't some kind of not enough for them...but in my last relationship and after developing this magnitude of self-love I knew with a complete certainty that I am enough, so very, beautifully, perfectly imperfectly enough and the problem does not come from me here at all. I continue to work through my traumas and always will. I do not deceive myself into thinking that I am conscious of everything and will ever get entirely clear or never be triggered but I require in my life's partner a man that recognises this in himself too and desires to journey together. I am enough and he will be enough in himself and from that foundation we will stretch our wings and fly.

This is a brave book filled with ugliness and beauty in equal measure.

Leo Robertson says

Eugh.

Some interesting perspectives on relationships, intimacy and sex that were mostly better dealt with in *Modern Romance*.

It's so depressing to consider how many men there are doing shallow thing after shallow thing and derping all over the place, putting their needs not only before but at the expense of others, trying to figure out why they don't feel spiritually sated. I used to enjoy the empty look in their eyes when these men looked over my shoulder at parties to let me know I had to continually vie for their attention if I had any hope of their continued company beyond a few minutes, which turned any hope of interesting conversation into a stressfully sustained elevator pitch on my part while my inner voice berated me for how pathetic I was for caring about these guises opinions (this is all long behind me now, as you can tell) but when I meet these same people years later and they're doing the same thing? Hope they can feel my heart aching for them from behind a number of locked doors.

I mean, this was valuable reading material for me in that I meet guys like this so often that I constantly need new ways to purge all their flailing insecure nonsense by trying to understand them better.

Strauss at one point says all the relationship permutations he tries out (to put it lightly- graphic descriptions galore) are turning his life into a "bad reality TV show." If that sucks, imagine what it's like being asked to read it! The early sections contain some interesting info about how we re-enact childhood relationships, and the rest is a bad novel of his own life replete with man-be-bad-writer errors like a whole chapter consisting of the sentence "Told you I was the villain in this story." Don't you hate it when a writer thinks they've got you right where they want you like that? EUGH. For someone who says he re-reads James Joyce's *Ulysses* every few years, why is his own writing filled with Palanifuck-on-a-bad-day faux faux?? Maybe because he namedrops like three whole celebrities he knows (I don't know who Rick Rubin is, and I don't care enough to Google his name, but I bet he's reaaaalllyyyy more importanter than, say, me, for example) but only one

book? I feel he carts Ulysses around like a conversation piece: it's just a cowboy hat, magic trick or glowing necklace of his (lol hi5 Strauss #LetTheBitchesFlock)

I knew not to trust the happy ending of *The Game* b/c this one had come out. This one came out last year but I know not to trust *its* happy ending either. Rather, I don't want to trust it because after he asks his now-wife not to read this book (saying in the introduction that it isn't even one of his best- just in case the reader thought he had any interest in them and hence incentive to parse pointless private info from his text- nope!), then telling her at the end he hoped she'd ignored his warning and read this account of all the sex he was having with strangers, all the drugs he was taking, and all his attempts to form a harem of ladies- while all the time missing her of course? Jesus...

He's tried therapy, he's tried learning- to sum it up, it didn't take.

Love, if you accept these shenanigans, I think it's your turn now.

Íris says

It's so rare to find a book that I binge on like it's the last food I'll ever get to taste again.

I love reading, but most books I read in a slow pace, savouring the words, taking my time to comprehend and make myself sure I am understanding the message behind the words.

This book, however, not only is easy to read, it's also incredibly addictive (just as Neil's behavior).

I'm a straight monogamous woman. I'm as predictable as it gets. Lately I've been question the nature of monogamy by observing most outcomes of monogamous relationships: they either end up with two people bored, hurt or lusting after the new.

And I definitely become to accepting that monogamy is not in our nature. We evolved to reproduce as fast and easily as possible. Infatuation occurs, settles in for a few months or years, allowing a couple to raise a child until it's old enough to go on on their own.

But, as society taught us, that's not what we expect in a developed civilization. We want the happily ever after; the long-term happiness; the unending passion feeling toward the same person; the same unshakeable sexual attraction for the same person, even after we grow old, wrinkly and saggy.

That's what Neil Strauss thought when he began this journey. And that's how I thought until I picked up this book.

Through his journey of self-discovery, which also makes the reader very uncomfortable questioning their own morality and relationship choices, we also begin to wonder about our very own ways of living love, passion, and sex. Is growing cold and distant avoidable? Is it possible to only have eyes to someone? Is it possible to live without "eating outside"?

This book asks and answers so many questions in so many different ways, though discovery, pain, lust, abandonment, chair work, therapy and sex experiences, that you are led to believe that there's only one way to truly be happy, and - SPOILER ALERT - doesn't go through living sex as the pivot that sustains relationships themselves.

I can say this book - pardon my French - fucked me up in the head. My world turned upside down. This book DOES make you uncomfortable, anxious, weary, questioning fervorously what you believe in and what values must change for you to live a happy life. Relationships are part of who we are, therefore it's only natural that we spend infinite hours pondering about it.

Do I recommend this book? There's nothing recommend more than this book. If you want to read non-fiction, this work is a must. I loved it from start to finish.

Nikmaack says

It's a weird book. Strauss is a narcissistic lunatic, who runs all over the place trying to deal with himself. While this is extremely entertaining, it makes his conclusions feel like utter bull. Now he is all better. And I should believe this, why?

Some of his self deceptions border on utter madness. It never occurred to him that he wants to screw around, but that if he let's his gf screw around he is wracked with jealousy. When this happens to him - his jealousy - he is stunned. What? Why is this so hard? He must have been compartmentalising, he says, letting himself off the hook. Why on earth was his jealousy such a surprise?

To be fair, Strauss is so open & sharing with most of his life (and that of his parents) that it's almost disturbing. His own stupidities, his self deceptions, his bad behaviours - he revels in sharing all of this filth. And his sexual exploits.

Which makes the predictable upbeat ending somewhat disgusting. Now he is an enlightened being who wishes to share his wisdom. There's something about that which is vile, as he treats himself that way from page 1 (he has all the answers) and then unironically still sees himself that way at the end (no, wait, now he has all the answers).

This is all very harsh on my part. The Truth is an extremely readable book. At the same time, it feels like a huge con job. On the reader, on the author. On everyone.

Simultaneously Strauss gives good advice. Fix yourself then pursue relationships. Examine your early traumas and the programming you got from your parents. And yet... And yet...

I don't know. This review of mine borders on gibberish. I was going to give the book 3 stars but I'm now bumping it to 4. Strauss gets super cornball and spiritual by the end, but he gave me a fun, if very shallow ride.

Kurt Russell says

This collection of words on paper is absolute garbage - A book about monogamy written by a man-baby who does not understand love. The word is literally used twice in the first 135 pages (I counted.) This fool wrote a book about love and doesn't even understand the concept. Sex, lust, self-affirmation, trust, companionship... all these tangential issues get tossed about and explored, though the author's vocabulary is incomplete and inexperienced. Would one trust a blind-man's opinion of a painting? Same idea here from this egotistic philanderer.

Readers should understand the backdrop of this work: The book is written by a millionaire rock-n-roll Malibu journalist who is having intimacy issues with his Mexican supermodel girlfriend who is decades younger than him. Hmmm... The only person wondering why any of this is an issue is the moron himself,

who then proceeds to drag the reader through hundreds of pages of inane self-help and sex fantasies in his purported quest for “the truth.” This dork is so full of himself that he binds the book in white leather as a faux Bible.

The work is not interesting, provocative, intelligent or humorous. It’s definitely long, boring, unfocused and redundant. And given its misplaced knowledge-base, it arguably makes the more susceptible and ignorant readers all the dumber from its vapid revelations.

The book is not an objective overview and analysis of an intriguing subject, but is more akin to a memoir penned by a self-absorbed imbecile filming a vlog on their selfie-stick. I’ve ready many bad books in my time, but few are as infuriatingly stupid and anger-inducing as this one.

Kevin Koskella says

This book had a deep and profound impact on me. I finished the 11 hour audio in 2 1/2 days.

I laughed and cried.

I'd probably have to write for days to articulate everything that was so amazing about this book. Neil's transformation within the book, and his vulnerability throughout were completely enlightening for me.

Coming from being one of the pioneers of the pickup movement, he found that he had to do some deep introspection, in the form of therapy and other methods, to uncover why his childhood trauma was actually at the root of why he has not found happiness or satisfaction in his relationships or sexcapades.

Throughout the book and in many specific incidents, it becomes clear that not just Neil, but every woman he gets with, suffer from damage caused by childhood trauma. Many were beaten, abused, neglected, or abandoned, and are living life stuck in a child or adolescent state of mind, never escaping their past.

This book opened me up to the true meaning of vulnerability, and the fact that not many people ever truly become an adult. This book also gave me a true appreciation of what it takes to love- it is far more about becoming whole yourself than to partake in an exhaustive search to find the exact right person that meets every need in every way.

Maybe a small spoiler alert, but I appreciated that in the end, he doesn't preach monogamy or non-monogamy but instead says those are the wrong questions. I'm sure i will be revisiting this book as there were so many nuggets of wisdom among the sometimes entertaining, sometimes heartwarming stories.

Read or listen to this book if you want the truth about what is the real key to freedom and happiness in relationships, and life.

Sean Goh says

This book has a lot of things. It has honesty (in spades). It has sex (lots of it, with graphic descriptions). It has hurt aplenty. I'm aware that the author might have airbrushed the story to make it more coherent, but the

downward spiral and subsequent long road to recovery made for a riveting read. A textbook on love avoidants and love addicts and all the assorted dysfunction that comes along for the ride.

Evidently, men have sex addictions, women have eating disorders. I suppose both share the same obsession: women's bodies.

She (therapist Lorraine) tells me that 90% of sex addicts seeking treatment are men, because men tend to act out, while 90% of people with eating disorders are women, because women tend to act in.

Lying is about controlling someone else's reality, hoping that what they don't know won't hurt you.

What it means to tell the truth: It is to give someone else her freedom, to allow her to have a reaction even if it leads to negative consequences for you, to give her the voice that lying takes away.

Intimacy is sharing your reality with someone else and knowing you're safe, and them being able to share their reality with you and also be safe.

To survive painful beliefs and feelings, we often mask them with anger. That way, we don't have to feel the shame behind it. The payoff of anger is mastery, control, or power. So the anger makes you feel better and one up.

Self-depreciation is still self-worship. It is still about self.

Remember that humour is a wall. It is a form of denial, just like minimisation, repression, globalisation, and rationalisation.

Intimacy problems comes from a lack of self-love, someone who fears intimacy thinking, unconsciously, that if you knew who I actually was, you'd leave me.

The avoidant is good at seducing, in the sense that he has an uncanny ability to find out what his partner needs and give it to her. Because he was usually enmeshed, he gets his worth and value from taking care of needy people.

I've never worked with a couple where one of them had it all together and the other was a screw-up. They've got as many issues as you do. Proof of this is that they're still with you.

When an avoidant and an addict begin a relationship, a predictable pattern occurs. The avoidant gives and gives, sacrificing his own needs, but it's never enough for the love addict. So the avoidant grows resentful and seeks an outlet outside of the relationship, but at the same time feels too guilty to stop taking care of the needy person.

I used to think that intelligence came from books and knowledge and rational thought. But that's not intelligence, that's just information and interpretation. Real intelligence is when your mind and heart connect. That's when you see the truth so clearly and unmistakably that you don't have to think about it. In fact, all thinking will do is lead you away from the truth.

Centuries ago, women who were overtly sexual were likely to be burned as witched at the stake, as they were thought to be in league with the devil. Five centuries later, we've come a long way. Instead of calling them witches and burning them, we call them sluts and burn their reputations.

We have so many contradictory, repressive, self-limiting beliefs about sexuality - and almost every one of them stems from a pathological need to dictate to someone else what they are and aren't allowed to do with their body and heart.

Loneliness is holding in a joke because you've no one to share it with.

So far, it seems like their open relationship has as much drama as a closed relationship. And the drama is about the same thing, trust. Perhaps the reason friendships tend to last longer than relationships is that they don't come with rigid rules and exclusivity clauses.

Perhaps the problem with most relationships is that the rules start to become more important than the values they're supposed to be representing.

I realise that there's more to swinging than first meets the eye. For some guys, it's about showing off the woman they love: Look what I got. And she loves me, so I must have value. And if you treat me with enough respect and admiration, I will share her with you - but not too much, because I don't want to lose control of her. That would cause me to feel pain and question my fragile sense of self-worth.

I've known people - mostly love addicts - who would be less hurt if their spouses died than if they cheated. They'd even prefer the former, because at least they couldn't take it personally.

One of the unfortunate axioms of human behaviour is that what others shame people for the most is usually what they're doing in secret themselves. After all, an accusation is much more powerful than a denial: it's a way to seem one up when you're really feeling one down.

In life, whoever has the strongest reality wins. Lose your moral certainty and lose the ground you stand on.

I realise the goal isn't sexual anarchy. It's that I want the rules around my sexuality to be self-imposed, not externally imposed. That's the key difference, perhaps in everything.

I used to think that a good relationship meant always getting along. But the secret, I realize, is that when one person shuts down or throws a fit, the other needs to stay in the adult ego state. If both people descend to the wounded child or adapted adolescent, that's when all the forces of relationship drama and destruction are unleashed.

The only relationship that's truly a failure is one that lasts longer than it should.

The person in a relationship with the least amount of comfort does get to set the boundaries - even if she keeps changing the rules.

You can't force a relationship to happen. You just have to make a space in your heart for one, then let go of all expectations, agendas, and control.

Relationships don't require sacrifices. They just require growing up - and the ability to stop clinging to immature needs that are so tenacious, they keep the mature needs from getting met.

Any style of relationship is the right one, as long as it's a decision made by the whole person and not the hole in the person.

In the dance of infatuation, we see each other not as they are, but as projections of who we want them to be. And we impose on them all the imaginary criteria we think will fill the void in our hearts. But in the end, this strategy only leads to suffering. It is not a relationship when the other person is left out of it.

The problem many people have is that the exact quality that attracted them to their partner becomes a threat once a serious relationship begins. After all, this quality was the open door through which the romance started, so now they want to close that door, lock it, and throw away the key before someone else tries to come in after them.

If married men have mid-life crises, men who haven't ever truly been able to commit have no-life crises. And if they're able to see clearly for even just a moment, they start to realise that they're losing more than they're gaining each day they remain stalled on the scenic road of growing up.

What's the fun of hiking Machu Picchu, of walking a trail carved centuries ago, if I can't share it with someone I love? That is the price of freedom.

That is love, when two (or more) hearts build a safe emotional, mental, and spiritual home that will stand strong no matter how much anyone changes on the inside or the outside. It demands one thing and expects only one thing: that each person be his or her own true self. Everything else we attach to love is just a personal strategy, be it effective or ineffective, for trying to manage our anxiety about coming so close to something so powerful and uncontrollable.

As my grandmother used to say: You can't change a person unless they're in diapers.

Peter Knox says

I read *The Game* when I was in college, single, and entering the 'real world' - it was a thrilling read and absolutely helped with my personal confidence. *The Truth* recognizes *The Game* for what it is, seeking short-term pleasures at the sacrifice of long-term happiness. *The Truth* is *The Game* all grown up, and as I read it now as a married man seven years into my best relationship I realize I've grown along with it.

Strauss is a master storyteller of the human guinea pig non-fiction narrative and really turns introspective here, as he submits to rehab/therapy/non-monogamy/abstinence and all manner of physical and emotional experiment to understand himself, his complicated history, and how he might find happiness in sex and love today.

The book is funny, sexy, gross, overwrought, emotional, traumatic, honest, TMI, and complex, but Strauss keeps a fast pace while breaking down the various philosophies, treatments, research, communities, and relationship models - trying each one openly and with plenty of emotional weight at stake. It's like a crash-course in 101 emotional therapy you experience third-hand.

Whether it's a mythologized cliché or undiscovered insight, Strauss challenges societal mores and rules while finding himself and strives for honesty above all. There isn't a person alive who hasn't dealt with honesty and shame and jealousy and resentment. I appreciate Strauss for digging deep and surviving the darkness, then coming back to share his results.

Laleh says

This book was a bit too intense for me.

To be honest, it was just too carnal.

It ended well, and I guess it was interesting to read all the different stages the author went through, but I think whatever end or motive he had in mind could have been accomplished a lot more simply. But then again, it's a semi autobiography, so the guy is free to write what he damn well wants and not care if some people can't stomach it:))

One other thing I would like to add:

There is already quite enough undeserved prejudice/stigma/bias attached to or around some beliefs already, without world-renowned authors adding to it.

So for god's sake, if you are going to write about leading religious figures from a faith other than your own, at least get your facts straight first!

Dani says

I have so many thoughts on this book.

So many, I'm actually not sure I'll have the patience and emotional stamina to go into all of them. But I'll try because it is important.

This was a riveting read for me. So riveting at times that it was uncomfortable - in a very challenging, and therefore very good way. Some themes and passages really stressed me out, rattled me, made me very emotional.

I had to pace the audio-read to allow myself to digest, to reflect, to understand why this affected me so much.

I went into this expecting the unconvincing, ever so American tale of the redemption of the male sexual sinner, with moralistic undertones, a distinct lack of complicated emotional undercurrents, no shades of grey and even less psychological sophistication.

Well, overall, I was wrong, let me state that upfront.

It was, in essence, something I have been looking for forever - a painfully honest, quite visceral and very, very particular analysis of the question **if**, and **why**, and **how** an **avoidant attachment style** might have something to do with choosing alternative, open or polyamorous relationship models and sexual subcultures.

Way to go there! Because these are such loaded questions. And this has been a theme I have been struggling with all my life. And it is very hard to find honest, humble, intelligent and introspective books about this.

There are tons of books that overtly or covertly pathologize people engaging in unconventional relationship-styles and sexual behavior – and yes, I've spent many years educating myself to be able to oppose those, at least in my head, in a sophisticated and intellectually honest way. That was a necessary survival strategy, especially as a woman raised in a dogmatic religious household and then, as an adult, navigating these subcultures.

But this fight has been fought, and mostly won, for me personally - allowing for other issues to emerge. The older and more experienced I get, the more other, more complicated, more hidden, more intimate issues demand attention. I feel more and more dissociated from a certain poly-evangelistic, kink-evangelistic crowd that, again overtly and covertly, refuses to engage in critical and honest discussions of obviously abusive, disempowering developments and undercurrents – and more individually, about how our biographies and psychological dysfunctions might shape our relationships styles and hidden agenda both in empowering and harmful ways.

I feel the honest engagement with the disillusionment and pain in all of this is completely necessary – and

completely unavoidable. And yet the resistance within the community seems to be immense.

Now, I have to say that Neil Strauss is not in any way a practitioner of polyamory.

But it is exactly his biased observations and distorted perception of these subcultures that are so valuable. What he did, essentially, was a staging of his immature, narcissistic phantasies under the disguise of a seemingly egalitarian, conscious relationship construct. In fact, the most uncomfortable, most cringe-inducing segments of this book were part of his exploration of “alternative” relationship styles in the third part.

I’m not sure that he did grasp, fully, just how abusive, how coercive these relationships were on his part. I’ve seen that quite often in the polyamorous community: Men (and women) who just add another toxic layer to their emotionally abusive behavior by demanding from their partners to not only accept intolerable conduct but also, on top, to “process” it with them in excruciating talks and “take responsibility” for their (entirely appropriate) emotional responses.

I like to call that **advanced gaslighting**.

In my opinion the poly-, kink- and sex-positive-, but especially the new age/tantra-communities tend to function as a treasure-trove for men and women with these kinds of narcissistic dysfunctions and deeply rooted inferiority complexes.

He is called out in the end on the “one up, one down” dynamic he has a compulsion to establish and the fact that he manipulated and used his partners as “toys”, as his therapist puts it, in his own self-involved psychodrama - and that is yet another painful epiphany that he does not hide from the reader.

In the brilliant fourth part of the book “Anhedonia”, which actually offers the most depth and insight, he acknowledges that“at the puja and in the sex-positive community, I found countless women who were sexually liberated and open, and required only one thing – that they be empowered and in control of the context, because that’s how they felt safe enough to truly let go. **And I was uncomfortable with that. [...] I was never actually pursuing sexual freedom. I was pursuing control, power, and self-worth.**”

He rips off layer after layer of self-deception, mercilessly, until finally we can look, together with him, at what is truly the driver behind his manic, obsessive philandering, the intensity and sex fixation and the covert misogyny – the massive narcissistic abuse in his primary parent-relationship and the resulting deep emotional injury.

And that sounds kind of cheap, and predictable, doesn’t it?

But it isn’t, because the way he recounts his painful, painful path to this insight is truly riveting.

Which leads me to the main point of this review: What exactly about this book is so mesmerizing – and so painful?

In my opinion it’s the immediate, authentic narration style.

There were many, many parts of this book where Neil is so unflinchingly honest, so raw, so brave in his self-exposure that I was completely immersed. Then other passages annoyed me because of their lack of depth. At other times I questioned Neil’s commitment to gritty honesty and unflinching self-reflection – I wasn’t sure, at times, if he was smoothing out some edges, lining up events to fit the overarching story arc, in effect sacrificing emotional honesty for an agenda.

But these parts were always followed, again, by painful self-revelation – and after a while, I’d say after approx. 50% of the book I began to trust the author. I began to understand that his circling between painful emotional honesty – intellectualized justification – maniacal rebellion – self-centered disillusionment – back

to gritty painful honesty - was a truthful reflection of his inner journey, of exactly the never-ending, dysfunctional thought-process he went through, of his elaborate self-sabotage.

So throughout the whole book he did his very best to keep the description of his journey as immediate, as authentic as possible, by letting us be part of his delusions, the inevitable shattering of his delusions, the depression, the next clutch at straws – until, at the very end, this dynamic proved to not be sustainable anymore and everything started to dissolve.

Genuine, grueling, truthful, agonizing and in the end deeply cathartic.

That is, I'm very sorry to say, except one particular passage of the final phase of his healing arc. Overall, the last chapters were too neat, too rushed, too forced, too idealized. But there is one wrap-up passage in the end, one, for the lack of a better word, disney-fied recounting of his grueling path that almost undid the whole book for me. (view spoiler)

Hm, really? These are the learnings? This is what all this has been about? Didn't you just spend the whole book masterfully enlightening us with far deeper, far more elusive, far more profound insights? It seems like he, in the end, just couldn't resist the typical American self-help simplification – and, looking at the merchandize that followed this book, the equally typical proselytizing.

That leads me to an overall impression, that crept up in the beginning and was solidified over time: This is a very American perspective. Not only is "The Game", Neil's most famous book, the embodiment of a certain pervasive male culture and perception of women that, sometimes, feels very alien to me, but also his whole journey through the sex addiction therapy, the sex positive sub-culture, his thoughts on the needs of men and (especially) women in relationships – everything is thoroughly colored by this very particular American brand of sexism and sexualized misogyny.

That is not to say that the themes and especially his deeper insights aren't universal. So I don't mean this derogatory in any way. His analysis reaches deep enough to be meaningful for every man and woman who has ever been touched by the combination of dysfunctional parenting and Judeo-Christian patriarchal culture. The deep shame he so brilliantly, powerfully captures, feels utterly poignant and human to me, but there is a special tinge to Neil's personal **coping mechanism** with this shame that is deeply rooted in American culture.

This is a highly recommended read. It is bound to make you think, if any of these themes affect your life.

Twierking To Beethoven says

Yeah, well, this was ok-ish but not as good as I was expecting it to be. The first part was excellent, what followed was just boring. Also, Rick Rubin is a pretentious, pompous, overblown, obnoxious twat, and he's all over the book. Fuck him.

That said, I loved Neil Strauss's biographies - The Long Hard Road Out of Hell, The Dirt: Confessions of the World's Most Notorious Rock Band, How to Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale - as well as his nonfiction. I really enjoyed both The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists and

Emergency: This Book Will Save Your Life, but "The Truth" just fell short of my expectations.

2.5 stars. Sorry. I mean, I really am.

Harris says

So full disclosure: I was given a copy of *The Truth: An Uncomfortable Book About Relationships* for review, I've hung out with Neil and I'm a former pick-up artist myself. So with all that in mind...

The Truth is an interesting book. It's one that's fairly easy to be cynical about. I mean, first Neil Strauss becomes famous* for writing a book that taught millions of dudes to try to use Svengali-esque techniques to get laid and now he's writing about leaving it all behind and embracing monogamy? Like that's not part of every self-help guru's progression. After all everyone loves a reformed sinner, right? I mean, shit, the book itself enforces this view - its white faux-leather Bible stylings is the literal opposite of *The Game*.

* Strauss may have been infamous for *The Game*, but the man had written multiple NYT Bestselling biographies and non-fiction books well before *The Game* ever happened, as well as being a well-known reporter for *Rolling Stone*.

So needless to say: it's incredibly easy to see this as being Strauss grabbing for a redemption narrative now that he's become a poster-child for annoying douchebags at clubs and pushy OKCupid dates and the assholes clustering around public streets in major cities in order to pick up women walking by.

And the first couple chapters don't necessarily help. The book opens with the fact that Neil has cheated on his long-term girlfriend with one of her best friends and - as many men have done upon getting caught - is heading to rehab for sex addiction. Again, this is something we've seen over and over again: get caught doing a bad thing, claim that bad thing is out of your control, make public showing of trying to beat bad thing through therapy at a resort-cum-retreat that's less therapy and more of a long vacation.

So you'd be forgiven for seeing this as Neil doing a very public mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. But that's not what's going on.

What we're reading is someone who's doing some very explicit, very unpleasant and incredibly painful soul-searching, trying to come to terms with a lot of ugliness in his past. It's almost shockingly vulnerable, Neil Strauss as open as we're ever likely to see another person, trying to figure out just what it is that drives him to push away people he cares about.

Now to be fair: one of my longest-running pet-peeves is the trope of "the womanizer is only a womanizer because he has some trauma in his past and is healed to settle down to life-long vanilla monogamy," and it's incredibly easy to see *The Truth* in that light. But that's not quite right either.

There's a saying: the path to wisdom is along the road to excess. And God knows Neil goes to excess here. After breaking up with his girlfriend and leaving sex addict rehab, Neil decides to pursue ethical non-monogamy and - as in *The Game* - dives in head first, visiting polyamory conferences, swingers parties, play parties and kink salons and - not surprisingly - having a lot of sex. Like, Caligula-levels of sex at times.

And here's the thing: despite the fact that Neil is doing some Olympic sport-fucking, none of it is portrayed

as all that appealing. In fact, despite living out scenarios that would be hard to swallow (sorry) in porn, most of it feels awkward and uncomfortable and leaves the reader feeling like they'd really rather just go. As with many an ill-advised hook-up, as soon as the one busts one's nut (or realizes it's not going to happen at all), it quits being fun and becomes something that you'd rather leave as quickly and unseen as possible.

As many people have before him, Neil is slowly being forced to realize that all the sex in the world isn't going to make him happy. It's a way of filling a hole in his life, a sort of addiction to numb the pain... and like every addict, it's never going to be quite enough to do what he ultimately wants.

Now, perhaps it's the English major in me looking for any excuse to justify my BA, but I can't help but notice that *The Truth* echoes other works. Like Warren Ellis' *Crooked Little Vein*, we're getting a guided tour of the polyamory underbelly of the world. In fact in many ways, it becomes a Who's Who of sex researchers, therapists and counselors; Dr. Helen Fisher, Esther Perel and Reid Meihalko all make appearances to one degree or another, while Tristain Taormino, Christopher Ryan, Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy all make cameos via their books.

But more than anything else, *The Truth* reminds me of - and is structured like - Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Neil is the erstwhile Dante, crawling deeper and deeper into the pit of sexual decadence in search of his sacred Beatrice before reaching the Purgatory of therapy and ultimately the Paradise of a happy, fulfilled life. In fact, it's as he's literally climbing out of the pit that he finally realizes what he truly wants and what he needs to do.

This isn't to say that the artful construction and structure of the book belies it's claims to authenticity. There's really not a moment where you feel that Neil is being untruthful or trying to polish up his image or excuse his past excesses. If anything, it feels painfully honest to a fault - even a little self-pitying at times; the phrase "I'm not the hero of this book, I'm the villain" echoes over and over through the narrative. This actually annoys me. While yes, I do have the benefit of being the detached outside observer, the fact is that there really aren't any bad guys here. Yes, people get hurt, sometimes hurt badly... but it's not out of malice or even self-absorption. What you see in *The Truth* are people who are well-meaning and well-intentioned but ultimately wrong for each other; square pegs convinced that they should be round and believing that if they try hard enough or find the right angle, they'll finally fit into that round hole.

To be fair: most of the book focuses on Neil trying to convince himself that what he wants is different from how he used to be in his days as *Style*... despite the fact that what he ultimately wants is a harem, just as he did when he was part of Project Hollywood. Unlike his time as *Style*, he's much more aware of just how much he's hurting other people - as well as himself. This is never driven home more than by excerpts from his various partners' diaries and journals. We get to hear, in their words, just how bad things are from their perspective and it's heartbreaking.

Much like *The Game*, *The Truth* is a book that's going to be misunderstood. People saw *The Game* as a how-to manual, rather than the story of a group of men who were fundamentally broken inside trying to use sexual success as a way of increasing their self worth. People will also see *The Truth* as a condemnation of non-monogamy and polyamory, which is a shame. See, the theme isn't that monogamy is best and non-monogamists are fooling themselves, it's that if you're not emotionally healthy, no relationship is going to work.

Part of the overarching theme of the book is that Neil is continually sabotaging himself by throwing himself in head first, biting off more than anyone can chew. His very first foray into ethical non-monogamy involves trying to form a poly triad with everyone living under the same roof. His next involves trying to form his

own commune. His third involves starting an open relationship with no rules whatsoever.

Small wonder he fails every time; it's not what he wants deep down and so it falls apart. It would be almost comedic if it weren't for the very human toll it takes on him and his partners.

(It's significant, to me anyway, that the happiest and most successful polys and kinksters are at Reid Meihalko's party, where everything is carefully structured and organized without the pseudo-spirituality of the pujas or the wanna-be pornstars of the parties at Bliss.)

The end of the book may be a foregone conclusion, but it - odd as it is to say this about somebody's lived experience - feels earned; you understand why Neil behaved the way he has. You see how, despite having a sexual resume that would make Wilt Chamberlain and Gene Simmons envious, he's still the same bundle of neuroses and insecurities that he always has been. Until he's sorted his issues and fought his demons, he can't let anyone else in, including himself.

You think you know what The Truth is about. It's not about Neil Strauss seeking redemption or making amends for his old life. It's about trying to figure out who he is and why he does what he does. There're no excuses being made here, no attempts to deflect blame. It's, well, the truth; naked and raw.

John Boettcher says

I suggest using protection while reading this book.

WOW! I don't even know where to START with this review. Needless to say I have never read anything more blunt and honest about such a controversial topic in my entire life. When the introduction to the book says, "They say a parent's love is unconditional. We'll see if that's true at the end of the book", you know it's going to be a whopper!

Neil Strauss, writer and author, tell the story of the last couple years of his life where he struggled with monogamy, wanting a bit more of an open relationship, to be able to experience other people at the same time as he loved the girlfriend he had.

Neil takes us in great depth, detail, and humor through his experiences in sex rehab, in open relationships, with sexual adventures and fantasies of kinds I didn't even know EXISTED! And he does it in a way that makes you laugh out loud the ENTIRE way through the book. This is easily one of the funniest books I have ever read. Neil is honest and blunt to a fault. I am not going to go into the specifics of what he talks about, but it has a lot to do with threesomes, orgys, drugs, more orgys, open relationships, girls of a type I never knew existed, and again, more orgys. It is a brutally honest look at life, love, sex, and relationships.

Strauss says on the back cover of his book, "I'm not the hero in this story. I'm the villain". And about two-thirds of the way through the book, I was kind of agreeing with that statement. The first half of the book is simply a hilarious sexual romp through paths untaken, doing things that most of us haven't even had the guts to DREAM about, much less actually DO and then WRITE about it in full detail. And when I mean full detail, I mean FULL. DETAIL. Nothing is left to the imagination in his writing.

I found the book so addicting I couldn't put it down. The fact that it is shaped and presented in the form of a leather bound Bible, with silk page market and everything makes the book all the more irreverent and funny.

The amazing thing is, all of the introspection Neil does, actually teaches you a lot about how we think about love, sex, and relationships. How our culture views those things, and if there may possibly be a better choice than an archaic system of monogamous marriage. I leave the reader to make their own conclusion on that one, but if you make it to the end of the book, you will find out what Neil discovered in all his adventures over the past two years.

The psychology in the book is also very good and Neil even gives out reference material for people who want to learn more about the topics that were covered in the book. It is a raw and undeniably funny account of someone who is comfortable enough with himself, (and his relationships) to give us full access to not only his life, but his thoughts and mind as well. It is a journey worth taking.

I highly recommend this book to anyone with an open mind, is not afraid of sex or profanity, or honesty for that matter, and wants to laugh their ass off for a good 400 pages and feel good about it the entire time.

Probably the best non-fiction book I have ever read!

Joey says

When I was in college, I read *The Game*. I soon ended up in a relationship that to this day I regret being in. It's not always a good idea to immediately pick the first available option. No amount of sex can equate to trusting someone. Having more sex with the same person doesn't make you morally correct. It just means you're getting proficient at having sex with the same person.

I enjoyed reading this book the first time, but upon another read it can be summarized pretty easily into 3 simple steps.

1. Change your phone number
2. Change your email address
3. It's OK to say, "no" to your mother

The average ranking of this book is 4.20.

Also- Brie Larson wears Crocs.

This is a fact.

P.S. Don't forget to water your plants.
