

## Hood Wellness: Tales of Communal Care from People Who Drowned on Dry Land

**Tamela J. Gordon**

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Tamela J. Gordon's memoir-cum-self-help book radically reimagines community care.

Living in New York City, working as a server, and self-medicating with alcohol and drugs, Gordon was “Tired of everything.” “My Body wore self-destruction so well,” she writes. Desiring sobriety and healing, Gordon moved to Miami, starting therapy and joining an online support group. She was challenged to reexamine her self-perception and rebuild it with self-acceptance in mind. She also hosted Casa de Tami, a three-day retreat inviting “several Black marginalized genders” to stay at her home and learn physical, mental, and emotional self-care. Later, in New Orleans, she continued to foster community-minded healing through a revised paradigm of wellness.

Broken into three sections, “*Hood Wellness* isn’t a how-to kind of book,” Gordon says. “It’s a reflection of the power of community and an affirmation that, regardless of our intersections and hardships, there is more for us when we walk together.” And community is presented in a masterful manner: the voices of other people are interspersed throughout. This evocative selection of testimonials makes space for those most vulnerable to various social ills, centering their experiences with nuance.

Still, Gordon's voice—conversational, unfiltered, sensitive, funny, and compassionate—remains the bedrock of the book. Her prose carries lyrical remnants, as with the repeated capitalization of “My Body” that signifies deep awareness and connection to self. Its vision is inclusive, building to a curated, comprehensive guide to free-to-cheap wellness practices that includes insights into nutrition, exercise, mindfulness, and community engagement for marginalized groups—from supporting LGBTQIA+ organizations to going on “white cleanse.”

Blending insights from case studies and racial history into personal reflections, *Hood Wellness* is an empowering, provocative memoir that takes a strong stance against limiting approaches to self-care.

BROOKE SHANNON (July / August 2024)

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