

In an interview, Maura Casey can discuss:

- **Addiction as a family disease** – Addiction is not just a personal struggle — it impacts entire families. Her memoir reveals how alcoholism became both a character and a catalyst in her family’s story, showing readers that healing is possible, even in the aftermath of generational patterns.
- **Revisiting childhood through diaries** – Dusting off decades-old diaries during the pandemic unlocked vivid memories, unexpected humor, and poignant self-discovery. These entries gave voice to Maura’s younger self, capturing her mother’s wit, her family’s dynamics, and the raw beginnings of her own struggles with addiction.
- **A mother’s courage** – Her mother’s decision to donate a kidney to Ellen, at a time when such procedures were experimental, exemplified selflessness and hope. Through research, Maura uncovered the fact that women donate organs more often than men, and that it is nearly always better to get an organ from a relative than from an unrelated donor. For her mother, there were emotional and medical complexities behind this life-saving act, offering a poignant exploration of maternal love.
- **Reconnecting with Dr. Mary Hawking** – Reuniting with Mary Hawking, sister of Stephen Hawking and Ellen’s doctor, added depth to Maura’s understanding of her family’s medical journey. Mary’s vivid recollections and preserved letters illuminated the groundbreaking history of kidney transplants and filled in missing pieces of Ellen’s story.
- **Exploring redemption and forgiveness** – Writing “Saving Ellen” allowed Maura to reframe her perspective on flawed family members, particularly her alcoholic and adulterous father. It’s a story of guilt, remorse, and eventual forgiveness — an acknowledgment that even deeply flawed individuals are capable of redemption.
- **Universal themes of resilience** – “Saving Ellen” speaks to anyone who has faced illness, addiction, or family dysfunction. It’s a testament to the power of asking for help, finding moments of serenity, and embracing hope — one step at a time.
- **Humor amid hardship** – Humor, rooted in her Irish heritage, was a survival tool for her family. It punctuated even the darkest times, adding levity and humanity. From laugh-out-loud diary entries to moments of comedic absurdity during family conflicts, humor provided balance and kept despair at bay.

- **Buffalo's influence** – Growing up in Buffalo, a city marked by post-industrial resilience and blue-collar ethos, not only shaped Maura's values but also sparked her rebellion. Her mother's feminism, steeped in her Army service during WWII, challenged the patriarchal limits of the 1960s and inspired Maura and her sisters to do more. It also provided a stark contrast to her mother's groundbreaking act of kidney donation when transplants were highly unusual — an act of courage that defied societal norms.
- **The healing power of writing** – Writing became a lifeline, a path to navigate trauma, recovery, and self-discovery. Processing painful memories — such as her sexual assault at 12 and her struggles with alcoholism — was cathartic. Inspired by “The Liar's Club,” author Mary Karr's advice, Maura explored raw, unfiltered emotions before shaping them into a story that could connect with others.