A detailed botanical illustration in a soft, painterly style. It features several green, serrated leaves and clusters of small, round green berries. Interspersed among these are large, elongated, pinkish-red structures that resemble seed pods or flower buds, each covered in fine, hair-like details. The background is a light, off-white color.

Reading guide

The Care We Dream Of:
Liberatory and Transformative
Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health

Hello,

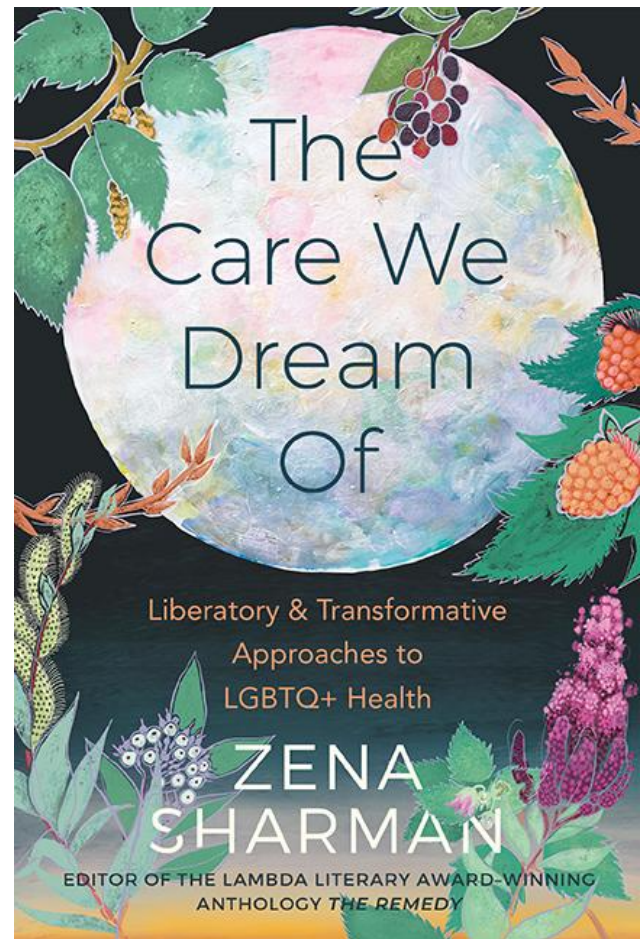
Thank you for reading *The Care We Dream Of*! It's a book deeply rooted in community and I wrote this guide in the hope it might spark dialogue among communities of readers.

You can use the discussion questions that follow in all kinds of ways: You might want to use them as prompts for personal reflection and dreaming. I kept a notebook throughout the two-year process of creating *The Care We Dream Of* and it became a place where I asked questions, drew connections and documented my own experiences of dreaming this book into being.

You might also want to use this guide to inspire conversations with friends, family, classmates, colleagues or other people you're co-conspiring with in service of liberation. I always feel excited when people tell me about their plans to read, share and talk about the book with others. I've been part of a queer book club (you'll find a nod to it in my essay "Queer Alchemy"); I remember how my experiences of reading were made richer and more meaningful through the perspectives of the friends reading alongside me.

Think of this guide as a choose-your-own-adventure, not a homework assignment. You can answer all the questions or only the ones that feel most compelling to you. Move at your own pace and take breaks when you need to. Figure out what you need to make this conversation accessible to you and anyone else you're in dialogue with.

How might you engage with these questions in ways that reflect the liberatory spirit at the heart of *The Care We Dream Of*? What could help it become a practice space for co-creating an environment where you and the people you're reading



with can show up in the fullness of who you are and trust that you'll be held with care?

Books come alive thanks to readers like you—through the ways you read them, talk about them, recommend them, and pass them on to others. I'm grateful to you for reading *The Care We Dream Of* because in doing so, you enable the book to take on a life of its own and help it do its work in the world.

At its core, this book is a spell of healing and transformation, rooted in love. It's rooted in the knowledge that there are as many visions for liberatory and transformative health and healing as there are queer and trans people.

My greatest wish for *The Care We Dream Of* is that it supports you and your communities to dream different possibilities for LGBTQ+ health and healing into being, both for us and in service of a more liberated and joyful future for all our descendants.

Zena



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did you react when you first read the question from the book's introduction, "What if queer and trans people loved going to the doctor?"

How does this question land for you now that you've read the book?

2. What's something in *The Care We Dream Of* that surprised you?

Delighted you?

Challenged you?

Gave you a feeling of relief or validation?

How did reading the book feel in your body?

3. In *“Crippling Healing,”* Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha offers readers a perspective on health and healing rooted in disability justice. After having read the book, how would you answer Leah’s question, “What does “healing” mean to you/us?”

In what ways does your answer differ from normative or mainstream definitions of healing or health?

4. *The Care We Dream Of* features different kinds of writing—essays, interviews, poetry, stories. What was it like for you to read across genres in a book about health?

Did you respond to or engage differently with the various pieces or forms of writing as you read the book?

How did this shape your experience as a reader?

5. In “*The System Isn’t Broken, It’s Working as Designed*,” I invite readers to draw a map of their experiences with the health system. If you were to create a map of your own, what would it look like?

What landmarks, danger zones, shortcuts or secret pathways might you include on it?

Feeling creative? Draw your map here.

6. The book offers visions of health care that's lushly inclusive and accessible to people in all kinds of bodies. If you could design a health care or healing space that felt this way for you, what would it look and feel like?

Who would be there and what would they do?

What would (and wouldn't) happen there?

How is your vision different from what you're able to access now, and what would it take to bridge the gap between your dreams and reality?

7. *The Care We Dream Of* recognizes and honours the many ways LGBTQ+ people and other communities experiencing systemic oppression create and share their own forms of community-led healing and care. What examples of this from the book did you find most compelling and why?

What are some other examples of what this looks like in your own life and communities?

8. Several pieces in the book centre on aging and death, topics that can feel emotionally charged and difficult to think about, let alone purposefully dream about. What was it like for you to engage with these topics in *The Care We Dream Of*?

Did the experience of reading this book shift your thinking on them in any way?

9. The image of a seed shows up several times in the book. In “seed,” Jillian Christmas writes, “You are your own medicine, Beloved, you already hold the seed to whatever healing you seek.” In the interview with Sean Saifa Wall, he says, “I’m planting seeds for future generations of activists. Whatever they want to do with the harvest is up to them—how they choose to redistribute the seeds, save them, throw them away, that’s their choice.”

What seeds do you hope to harvest in service of your own healing and liberation and the healing and liberation of your communities?

What seeds do you hope to plant for future generations?

10. What is the care *you* dream of?

What's something you could do alone or in collaboration with your community that might bring you closer to making this dream a reality?

Connect with me!

I'd love to hear about the ideas, insights and dreams that came up for you while reading the book and exploring the questions in this guide.

Share your answers with me via email zena@zenasharman.com or via the hashtag **#TheCareWeDreamOf**. I'm on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) (@zenasharman).

The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory and Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health

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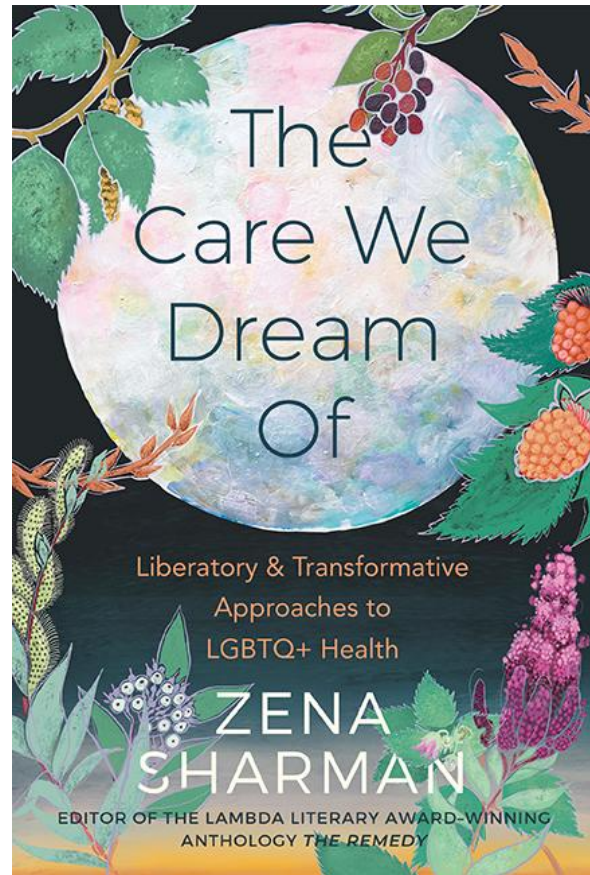
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The Care We Dream Of instills the reminder that queers do, in fact, deserve better health care and are worthy of wholeness—an audacious and galvanizing guide for us to reclaim and reimagine our well beings.

– **Vivek Shraya**, author of *Death Threat* and *I'm Afraid of Men*

What if you could trust in getting the health care you need in ways that felt good and helped you thrive? What if the health system honoured and valued queer and trans people's lives, bodies, and expertise? What if LGBTQ+ communities led and organized our own health care as a form of mutual aid? What if every aspect of our health care was rooted in a commitment to our healing, pleasure, and liberation?

LGBTQ+ health care doesn't look like this today, but it could. This is the care we dream of.

The *Care We Dream Of* is not quite an essay collection, and not quite an anthology. Instead, it's a hybrid kind of book that weaves together the author's essays on topics like queering health and healing, transforming the health system, kinship, aging, and death, alongside stories, poetry and non-fiction pieces. The book also

includes interviews with activists, health care workers and researchers whose work offers insights into what liberatory and transformative approaches to LGBTQ+ health can look like in practice.

The *Care We Dream Of* offers possibilities—grounded in historical examples, present-day experiments, and dreams of the future—for more liberatory and transformative approaches to LGBTQ+ health and healing. It challenges readers to think differently about LGBTQ+ health and asks what it would look like if our health care were rooted in a commitment to the flourishing and liberation of all LGBTQ+ people. This book is a calling out, a out, a calling in, and a call to action. It is a spell of healing and transformation, rooted in love.

The *Care We Dream Of* is a rare thing: it weaves a beautiful account of what queer and trans flourishing might look like with a deeply pragmatic roadmap for how we might get there. This book provides a visionary blueprint for how we arrive at the multiple, collaborative, sexy, and radically just futures we deserve.

– Hil Malatino, author of *Trans Care* and *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience*

The Remedy: Queer and Trans Voices on Health and Health Care

Lambda Literary Award Winner for Best
Anthology

Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016
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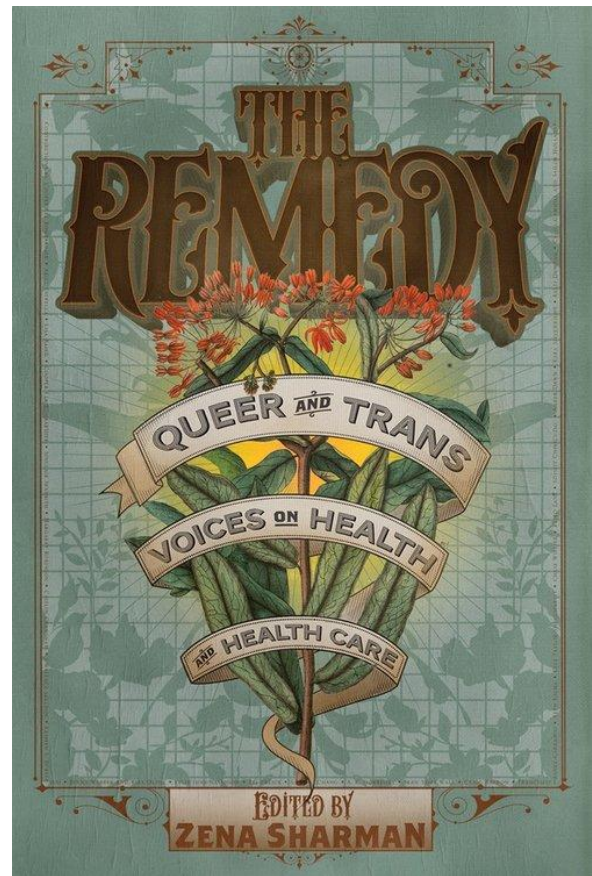
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This anthology on health care for queer and transgender people is as much an archive of experience as it is a call to action...It's a must-read for health care professionals and students going into the field, those navigating the system or supporting others through it, and anyone interested in honest, informed writing on the subject.

– *Publishers Weekly*

To remedy means to heal, to cure, to set right, to make reparations.

The Remedy invites writers and readers to imagine what we need to create healthy, resilient, and thriving LGBTQ communities. This anthology is a diverse collection of real-life stories from queer and trans people on their own health-care experiences and challenges, from gay men living with HIV who remember the systemic resistance to their health-care needs, to a lesbian couple dealing with the experience of cancer, to young trans

people who struggle to find health-care providers who treat them with dignity and respect. The book also includes essays by health-care providers, activists, and leaders, with something to say about the challenges, politics, and opportunities surrounding LGBTQ health issues.

Both exceptionally moving and an incendiary call-to-arms, *The Remedy* is a must-read for anyone—gay, straight, trans, and otherwise—passionately concerned about the right to proper health care for all.

A much-needed anthology that shares stories from patients and providers across the healthcare field...*The Remedy* is part of a growing effort within queer and trans communities to lead the long-lasting and healthy lives that we deserve.

– **Lambda Literary**