Hello, Woman on Fire! It’s Debbie Phillips, and I’m back with the latest edition of your Women on Fire membership interviews.

When someone is so fascinating and full of useful information to help us live a more fulfilling life, it’s often hard to capture all their wisdom in one interview. So, I am proud and excited to welcome back Michaela Boehm for a second interview. Michaela teaches and counsels individuals and couples internationally as an expert in intimacy and sexuality. In her work, she teaches people how to live an extraordinary and satisfying life. I have personally worked with Michaela, and I can attest she’s incredibly wise and a balm to a woman’s soul. In her workshops, she helps us to release the tension and chaos of everyday life to move closer to our true natures. It’s freeing and uplifting.

Born and raised in Austria, Michaela continues her training in psychology and extensive clinical counseling experience with her in-depth training in the yogic arts. She is a classical Kashmiri Tantric lineage holder.

Michaela’s approach empowers her students through an eclectic mix of education, experiential exercises, and guided explorations. She’s best known for her work with high-performing individuals. Her ongoing private clients include Oscar-winning actors, producers, business pioneers, and multiple Grammy-winning musicians. You may even have heard Will Smith and Gwyneth Paltrow giving shout-outs to Michaela for their work with her.

I invited Michaela back to talk about her new book, The Wild Woman’s Way: Unlock Your Full Potential for Pleasure, Power, and Fulfillment. What I also want you to know about this beautiful soul, who is most often found traveling the globe teaching, is that when she’s home, she lives on an organic farm in Ojai, California, where she rescues and rehabilitates animals.

Welcome back to Women on Fire, Michaela Boehm!

Michaela: Hello! Thank you for having me.

Debbie: Where in the world did we find you today?

Michaela: I am in Ojai for the next three hours. Then I’m going to Esalen, and then I’m going to Australia next week.
Debbie: Oh, my gosh. Michaela, I have been following your teaching travel schedule, and you are always somewhere interesting in the world.

Michaela: I am. Right now I am between barking dogs, so I’m trying to escape the dog barking here and go somewhere quiet. It’s been amazingly fun traveling all over the place.

Debbie: And to such amazing places as well. I want to start out with congratulations on your book. What a feat getting a book done!

Michaela: Yes. Thank you. I’m very happy with it, now that it’s out and I’m holding it in my hands physically.

Debbie: I’m sitting here holding it too. We got your baby! Two mamas holding your baby!

Rising from the Ashes of Great Loss

Debbie: I want to catch up with you because our Women on Fire know you. Since we last talked with you, which has now, unbelievably, been nearly two years ago, you’ve expanded your already robust teaching schedule around the world. And during that time, you’ve seen great despair. I know you weathered a very traumatizing event, and I wondered if you’d talk a little bit about it.

Michaela: Yes, it’s somewhat connected with the book because I wrote the book last summer. I wrote the book by locking myself into my writing shed that was my library. It had this massive collection of books in it, and that’s why I wrote the book during the summer. Then I had to go back out on the road and through a series of events. The final draft was due on December 15, and on December 4, my house burned down in the Thomas Fire [a massive wildfire that affected Ventura and Santa Barbara counties last year], one of the first few houses that burned in the entire area. So my life came to a very abrupt and very traumatic halt via the fact that everything I ever owned was gone.

Debbie: Wow.

Michaela: That’s something that’s very hard to stomach when you think about it. I went from having an enormous abundance of beautiful things and heirlooms and stuff I’d collected, books and animals — I have so many rescue animals, and I lost some of my most
beloved animals — the house and everything in it and most of the trees on the property. It happened within 15 minutes, and it was all gone.

My entire trajectory came to a screeching halt, and within it, the book, which was due December 15, but I got an extension through January 15. Only a few days before Christmas did we have electricity again or be able to leave the area because it was locked off for evacuation. Through a series of events, my husband did not evacuate. He had a broken leg. He couldn’t drive. I talked my way in through the road closures so I could be up here. I had to do the edits and everything that came with it in the midst of this just insane destruction. So the book, in that way, symbolizes the rising from the ashes in a very strong way.

**Debbie:** Wow, no kidding.

**Michaela:** I’m very proud of the fact that I managed, somehow, to get it done and get it to my publisher in a way that it can be out now.

**Debbie:** Wow, wow. Talk about a phoenix rising from the ashes.

**Michaela:** Yes.

**Debbie:** Where were you, and how did you find out about the fire?

**Michaela:** I was in Amsterdam, and we had just finished the last teaching tour of the year. I had made plans to go to my parents’ home on December 4 for a couple of days and then give myself a few days of Christmas shopping in London. That was my whole fantasy, that I could have a few days to hang out in London — I love London — and shop. This is one of the very ironic things: Because of my big shopping plans for London, I had packed extremely light. I had one pair of boots, a pair of yoga pants, a pair of dress pants, and three tops with me.

**Debbie:** Because you wanted plenty of room in that suitcase for presents.

**Michaela:** Yes, I wanted plenty of room in the suitcase, both for buying Christmas gifts for my family and clothes for myself. So my virtuous packing experience ended in all my favorites, even teaching pieces, being burned. I woke up at 5:00 in the morning in Amsterdam to get ready to go to the airport. As I was waiting for the Uber with Steve, my teaching partner, I was scrolling through Facebook, as one does.

**Debbie:** Right, right.
Michaela: And I saw a little note on a private Facebook group of my neighboring community that I’m part of it, and it said Facebook group is open because of the fire. So I called my husband and asked, “What’s happening with the fire?” As I was calling him, he was standing there watching the house go up in flames. Because he couldn’t leave, because he had that broken leg.

Debbie: So he had the broken leg before the fire?

Michaela: He had the broken leg two or three days before the fire. He had a cast on the right foot, so he couldn’t get even the foot into the car properly. He also thought that he and the neighbors could save the houses around us, which has been done before. There was a fire about 12 years ago, and all the neighbors stayed and rescued their houses by hosing them down. But he couldn’t move and he couldn’t walk, and it went really, really fast because there was a transformer that blew right behind our house, maybe a half-mile up the hill, with 80 mile-per-hour winds. So the fire traveled at one acre per second, if you can imagine that.

Well, you can’t imagine that. There are these firewalls of 20 or 30 feet that come at you at one acre a second, so all he could do was get out and watch the house burn. Sadly, because he couldn’t walk and because it was dark, and the windows were breaking and the winds were insane, he couldn’t even get my dogs out. It was just horrendous all around, and I got a live report as my Uber was arriving. You can imagine the feeling of that. Then I had to go to the airport and try to figure out how to get home. I couldn’t get a flight out. I flew to Munich and had to tell my parents, who are in their 70s, and then immediately flew back home. I was on the road for close to 36 hours, and then had to force my way into the fire area to make it home to my husband and the animals who had survived. It wasn’t totally clear at that point who had survived.

It was brutal in so many ways, and it’s hard to describe what happens when something like this happens. It’s one thing for your stuff to be destroyed, but there were also hundreds of miles of cables burned and things like that, so we didn’t have internet. We didn’t have cell towers. It was the biggest fire in California history at that point. So no internet, no electricity, no running water, no cell phone reception for large portions of the next couple of weeks. It was an interesting Christmas, to say the least.
Lessons Learned from Trauma

Debbie: So many of us were following along with you, and what’s been so remarkable is watching you rebuild. What did you learn through this that you didn’t know before?

Michaela: I don’t even know where to start, because one of the things that saved me was that I have a very strong protocol of somatic practice — moving the body to release trauma, noticing when shock and stress lock up the body, and things like that. So what I certainly learned is that somatic practices and somatic movements, which I describe in detail in the book, really, really saved me. You have to imagine the first couple of nights. We were lucky enough that we moved into an Airbnb, so we had bedding and basic supplies, but no food or water or electricity. At least we had a roof over our heads and a bed, which was tremendous. But I’d wake up and roll directly onto the floor and start moving, because it was so, so insane.

I certainly learned that almost anything is bearable if you keep your body from freezing up and feel where the shock is in the body. I did a lot of that.

Then the other thing is when you have animals like I do, rescue animals, animals who’ve had really tough lives and depend entirely on me for their survival. I’m sure this is also true for having children, right? I don’t have children, so this is my conjecture, but I’m pretty certain, if it’s animals and children — and there were few neighbors depending on me and my husband was very debilitated — you have to be resilient. I had tremendous resources within me for the sake of those who depended on me to essentially keep my shit together.

My first moves were finding hay, because the barns had burned down, and the horse and donkeys had nothing to eat. I had to carry water in and find the animals that were lost when the fences burned down. That serving something other than myself made a huge difference in the motivation to keep on going, even though, there was a part of me that just wanted to curl up and give up, in a certain way. The resilience was certainly powered by my care for those who depend on me.

Debbie: Right. Right.

Michaela: Those are important things, but one thing really, really made a difference. We had eight feet visibility for a couple of days, and we had to sleep with gas masks on as
respirators. So, the moment I could, I started creating beauty ... out of nothing.

**Debbie:** How did you do that?

**Michaela:** I found a few pots that hadn’t entirely burned. I looked through, and I found a few blooming things. Then eventually, when we could leave, I went to the plant store and I bought whatever they had blooming, which in December isn’t much, and I put all of that in front of the front door of the place I was staying. I’m still in this place. I put the one statue that was with me — I always travel with one for an altar — and made a little altar. I gathered things that hadn’t been destroyed. I’d just constantly turn toward the tiny little bit of beauty I could locate as a means of reminding myself that there was a whole other world out there, outside the fire area, where things were still normal.

**Debbie:** Right, right.

**Michaela:** That was very, very useful.

**Debbie:** I can’t thank you enough for having this conversation. I actually have tears in my eyes. I was following your photos on Facebook. I remember when you gathered those little plants, just to put beauty into your life. That was such a really beautiful and incredible lesson. So you’re still now in the Airbnb home?

**Michaela:** Yes, right. My entire life now is lived in Airbnbs, wherever I go.

**Debbie:** I’ve seen your beautiful plants on your beautiful farm, and I’m just assuming you are rebuilding your gorgeous farm on that mountain in Ojai.

**Michaela:** Eventually. It’s very, very difficult. With the bureaucratic red tape and permits, and with over a thousand structures having burned down, everything we need takes forever. For six weeks, I’ve been hounding a structural engineer who said it was going to take a week, so we are not even yet permitted. I hired an architect on December 21. I didn’t get the first draft of plans until May. That kind of waiting is pretty brutal.

What I did in the meantime, going with the beauty thing, is we had to get new fences made because of the animals. I fenced an area that used to be partly my vegetable garden. It was literally just ashes, and I had some raised beds built. The neighbors thought it was crazy, but by March, I had a full garden. I started planting. I brought in organic soil again, and I just
went to town on the one area I could do something, which was planting the cottage garden and vegetables. I built myself a little writing shed so I had a place to work.

Debbie: I have goosebumps. Your photos of that are so beautiful and inspiring. I want to ask you one last question about this, and then we’ll move on to the book. I love these things that you did for yourself.

Offering Comfort in Times of Grief

Debbie: I also was wondering, when this happens to someone, especially someone as beloved as you, so many people want to be able to help you. What, from a human side, what was helpful and comforting to get through this?

Michaela: That’s a really good question. There are a few things that I think are very important for people to hear, but the first thing that I wanted to say — and I think you know this and it’s written about in the book a bit — this wasn’t my first rodeo. I had lost my teaching partner in a very freakish accident and had to find him and identify him and eventually cremate him and drive his ashes to Canada. I learned a few things in that process that applied as well to the fire. That is, in moments of real disaster, like the death of someone you love, sickness, and destruction, people’s biggest fears and their own projections rear their heads in a very unconscious way.

I remember this as well because I lost my closest girlfriend who was closer, way closer, to me than my sister, when I was 19. She died within six months of a very aggressive form of breast cancer as an 18-year-old. I could not deal. I just couldn’t deal. I couldn’t deal with mortality, mine or hers, and I certainly didn’t handle that particular set of circumstances very well. Subsequently, I really immersed myself into this area so that I would be a better help to my clients and my students and myself. I understand that most people have a hard time dealing, and so I’m not upset when people can’t deal. But what is absolutely useless as a strategy is when people essentially make it about themselves.

Debbie: Right.

Michaela: And they make it about themselves by letting the person who’s befallen by some
catastrophe know how horrible they feel about it. That’s not useful, right? Like when somebody starts gnashing their teeth and pulling out their hair about my property. That’s not comforting, because then you, as the one befallen by the tragedy, have to take responsibility for that piece and that distress, as real as it would be. So I would say to anybody who wants to comfort someone, don’t do that. Don’t do the, “Oh, my God, I’m so sorry. I am so sad. I’m so upset.” Then comes the retelling of the wonderful things that they remember. I mean, I have people show up and go, “So which of the dogs died?” And it’s like, “Well, I don’t want to be reminded of this, particularly in the middle of teaching my first workshop after the fire because I’m only human. Unless you want to make me cry, that’s not the thing to ask.” Those were the very unhelpful things. What was extremely helpful — and it was interesting to see who did what — was from one of the women in my women’s group, who lives in town. She just sent me a message and said her husband was on the way up with food.

On several occasions, she’s crafted these wonderful meals that were both nutritious but also comforting and very detail-oriented. She sent me blueberries and fresh almond butter with some crackers she made. It was so lovely, because it didn’t have a demand for me to do something about it, and it was actually useful without being too intimate. There’s a reason why through all times, women would bring food in moments of disaster, because it’s the last thing you want to do is provide food for yourself or others. And in my case, I had only a pan and two knives. That was the extent of the kitchen equipment, because in an Airbnb, it’s a different story. So that kindness and care was super useful.

**Debbie:** So loving and comforting and nurturing in a time like that.

**Michaela:** And I did appreciate people sending me emails saying, “I’m thinking of you.” I was very embarrassed by this because I felt like eventually my insurance will kick in, but somebody set up a Kickstarter fundraiser. It turned out to be very useful, because I found out very quickly that the insurance wasn’t paying for fences, and fences were the most urgent thing. In that particular moment, people sending a bit of money that I could immediately turn around into something useful that protected my “children” was very helpful.

Then we did a cleanup day so that the worst of the dead trees and things like that could be dealt with and so the animal enclosures could be repaired. People showed up for
that, and that was incredibly useful. People showed up with clippings of succulents and scraped the dead stuff off the ground. A friend rented a little backhoe and showed up with a big trailer. My old assistant and her husband, who also live in the area, came and re-cemented everything, including the goat pen. That was very, very helpful.

What can people do? Hands-on help that’s useful and practical. Hands-on nurturing and keeping the demand for a social response to a minimum, because you don’t have bandwidth. In the middle of grief and loss and logistics, you don’t have time to send somebody a text or an email. You just don’t.

Debbie: That’s right. I also think, adding to your beautiful list here, this notion, yes, we know people care, but this notion of “how are you?” When you’re in the middle of grief, that is the last thing you want to talk about. “How do you think I am?”

Michaela: That’s exactly right.

Debbie: But you said it in a great way: keeping that social responsibility and need to respond to a minimum.

Michaela: Yes, yes, yes. That very sentence was the thing that prompted my entire exploration into death and loss as an 18-year-old or 19-year-old, because I realized that when I would go over to my girlfriend’s house, who had a few weeks left, that my knee-jerk of saying, “So how’s it going?” was so inappropriate. I don’t know what to say. It’s unreflective, you know? When these things would come out of my mouth, or almost come out of my mouth, I had to take a good hard look at the 19-year-old at what I knew or how I could deal.

Debbie: Well, it’s not a way to connect. You know, it doesn’t connect.

Michaela: Right. No.

Debbie: For the person going through the trauma, often they just want to go away. They just want to run away from that.

Michaela: The other thing is the hugging. I’m not a hugger to begin with, meaning I’m not naturally physically affectionate with people I don’t know, simply because I’m super-sensitive and I’m an introvert and many reasons. So for people to come up to me and press me against their chest was very unpleasant.
Debbie: It is, and that’s why I think it’s always important to ask. A lot of people are huggers, and I think in a situation like that, to say, “Do you need a hug?” I always think that that’s just good hygiene to ask that before ever grabbing somebody. I know myself, I’m similar to you. I don’t want people I don’t know to come up and hug me. That is a natural inclination of a lot of people to do. It’s what they need.

Michaela: Yes, exactly.

Debbie: This is so inspiring and helpful, and I know you’ve addressed some of this in the book. Michaela, there’s just so much richness here, and I really appreciate you sharing this with our Women on Fire, because I know they’re really interested. It’s just such an amazing group of women who do want to be helpful in times like this. It’s also inspiring to see where you are now and your photographs of the beauty that you’ve created through this, including your book that came from it.

The Urge for Connection

Debbie: I want to talk about your book, but I also want to ask in starting this conversation, what’s the No. 1 reason women come to you, and men come to you, and couples come to you?

Michaela: I think for all three, the No. 1 reason is the yearning and the urge to connect with themselves and, via that, with somebody else. I would say that’s basically the No. 1 reason when I look at who shows up. Their real desire is to know more about who they are, to connect with their body and their emotions. Then they take that connection and that sensitivity into relationships of all kinds — in business, in intimate sexual relationships, and with friends and family. It’s a very wide scope of connection, I’d say, but that would be the No. 1 reason.

In women, I’d say it’s the lack of embodiment and the feeling of being so overwhelmed and so underserved in the areas of intimacy, sexuality, pleasure. Regardless if people have partners or not, it’s just an underserved area nowadays.

In men, it’s often the confusion about what’s appropriate and what isn’t these days. Who are they? What’s left to claim? What isn’t? What’s antiquated? Those are very important
questions for both men and women. We’re in uncharted territory, and there are way, way, way more questions nowadays than there are answers.

The last thing I want to say is that it affects relationships. In relationships, there’s a lot of work with either people not able to even find a partner, or if they have a partner, the spark going out and the relationship being polluted by the busyness.

**Debbie:** Right. You point out so wonderfully in your book that we are on all of our devices and things 24/7. Let’s talk a little bit about why we are so disconnected from our bodies.

**Michaela:** The body, as a vehicle, is an incredible resource. We’ve forgotten about that because we’re no longer living natural lives, for the most part. Some people do, of course, but if you lived in a cabin in Montana, let’s say ... That sounds like the Unabomber. I didn’t mean that. [laughter]

**Debbie:** That’s so funny. That is what came to my mind, I must admit!

**Michaela:** I guess that’s what it conjures up. So a cabin in Utah, right?

**Debbie:** Poor Montana. Yes, Utah.

**Michaela:** Then the necessity for your body to be fully online would be very clear. You wouldn’t make it very long if you’re not capable of feeling and intuition and strength and ability. But for most of us, we have cars and planes and computers and all of those things that supply us with our livelihood. We’re not out there foraging and toiling the soil and hunting or any of those things. Hence, on one end, the things that make the body such a great ally are not that apparent to us anymore. On the other end, we have probably the highest inflow of data, of information, ever. As a result, the body and the brain and our emotions and our psyche can process only so much. So we have to shut down whole areas of experience and perception in order to not go crazy.

**Debbie:** For women listening who completely identify with this and are feeling disconnected or exhausted, address the question you talk about in the book: How do you achieve a successful career, a fulfilling romantic relationship, and a rewarding personal life when those all feel in opposition? Your book is full of wonderful exercises, and I know you’re willing to share with Women on Fire some of your recordings of your exercises. What are a couple of tips you can give women that they could try immediately to get reconnected to their
body and their truth and who they really are?

Michaela: I just finished teaching a weekend here, and there was a woman who was saying she feels like she’s lost it all. I said to her, “Well, thankfully, it’s our first language, so to speak.” She happened to not be an English native speaker, and I asked her what her first language was. She answered, and I asked her how often she still speaks that language. She said barely ever. I asked her if she could understand it if somebody spoke it, and if it would come back. She said, “Of course, immediately.” That’s what embodiment and sensuality and pleasure is. It’s our first language as women. It’s always there. It never goes away. It’s just dormant.

**Your Source of Energy and Power**

Michaela: Most of the things that help us come back online as a body, and with that as an intuitive powerhouse, have to do with involving the lower body. I’m talking about the pelvic floor, the hips, the belly, the thighs. That whole area carries a factory of energy, based on the fact that we reproduce in that area, and our blood flow. There are all kinds of reasons why that is, but there lies an incredible source of power in the hips and the belly and the genitals and the pelvic floor. Because it’s there, all we need to do is bring our attention there. One of the easiest ways to do that is to move our hips. That’s one of the exercises I’m sharing with you as a recording so it can be followed along.

If nothing else, getting out of the chair at work or getting out of the car and standing, just pulling the feet hip-width apart, wiggling and bouncing the body a bit, then moving the hips in circles or figure eights and up and down, activating the thighs and consciously feeling the tension in the pelvic floor and relaxing that. This can be done by clenching and then relaxing or just by letting it relax gradually. Those kind of things immediately bring trapped power, trapped energy, online. From that place of that trapped energy being online again, we can re-engage with the things we have to do. Most of these things that bring us back to our native body intelligence take only a few minutes, and over time, they become habits. There’s no reason not to get up from your desk once an hour, drink some water, move your body, move your hips, stretch.
Debbie: Michaela, this is so encouraging. I learned this from you a long time ago. For those of you listening, Michaela invented Nonlinear Movement Method. What that means is exactly what she is saying: You move in a way that your body calls you to do.

Michaela: Yes.

Debbie: You don’t have to move to the beat of anything. I think that was the single most transformative thing. I love what you said about how much power there is in this lower part of your body. When I’m doing your exercise around that, that is where it all is. It’s in my hips, in my thighs, that lower part of my body where I can feel release.

Michaela: Yes, and then what happens is that when you activate those areas, the excess energy trapped in the neck and shoulders and jaw and head goes out. That also makes it a bit easier to deal with that intense pressure in the head that comes from thinking and writing and doing and speaking. So it’s a very good hygiene to re-engage with the lower body.

Debbie: Your subtitle is Unlock Your Full Potential for Pleasure, Power, and Fulfillment, and I want to talk a bit about power. Power is sometimes a loaded word for women. How do you view power?

Michaela: To me, power has two components: The source of power is a strong, powerful energy of the body. That doesn’t mean certain muscles or being specifically trained. But the energy that is available in your body can be used. That, to me, is ultimate power. Because then you can use that energy toward creation. You can use it toward boundary-setting. You can use it toward the empowerment of yourself in the world. There are all kinds of ways that you can use it. And power, to me, has the component of energy, and with that, emotions in the body not being suppressed. That gives you physical manpower, so to speak. Womanpower, right?

With that free, available energy in the body comes tremendous intuition. Also, and I said this earlier, with the boundary-setting, when you know what’s happening inside you and can translate that into conscious thought, you are capable of navigating situations in the present moment versus in the aftermath. One big example of this that happens all the time is people — both men and women, but in women, we hear it more often — being in a situation that is not OK for them and not knowing that it’s not OK until they’ve left. For three hours,
three days, three years, 30 years of their life, it’s like, “Whoa, that wasn’t OK.”

At that point, the moment to set the boundary is gone. There’s no more ability to rectify the injuries. But if what you’re feeling gets immediately translated into conscious thought, then that “Whoa, that’s not OK” is the movement that I don’t set a boundary. If you’re not capable of setting a boundary, you can remove yourself or deal with it in appropriate ways right after. That’s a big piece of power in a bodily power.

That is the ultimate women’s empowerment, when you are able to harness your native gifts, one of which is feeling and intuition, and a strong bodily disposition that allows us to bear children and maintain energy output for long periods of time without dips. There are all of those kinds of things that, when we can use them, we become very effective and very powerful in our lives. Not in a power-grabbing, power-hungry, angry type way, but in the way that we’re wise and full and capable.

Debbie: I love that and it’s so true. It’s so very true about the sooner you can understand and feel what you’re truly feeling and make a decision about that, rather than three years later, or 30 years later, as you were saying. That’s so empowering.

Michaela: Yes.

Using ‘The Wild Woman’s Way’

Debbie: I knew our time would go really fast, and I want to ask you a couple more things. Especially about the book. We’re going to have to have you back for round three. And you will be our guest on the Live Chat master class, so women will be able to pick up this conversation and ask you questions directly. For now, I want to talk about the book. I love this book so much, and you were so kind to send me an advance copy. I read it last winter. I read it in a 24-hour period. But I’d love to hear from you, how do we get the most out of this book? I want every women out there to read it. How does a woman get the best out of the book? What should she do? It’s all really juicy and good.

Michaela: It was a very interesting process. I wrote the book for myself. I’m an avid reader and super passionate about books. When I read a book that has exercises in each chapter, I
don’t actually want to do them while I’m reading the book. I want to get through the book, and often I read on the plane or in the bathtub. That’s not when you do exercises. This took a lot to push through, because my editor didn’t want to do that.

I made it so that all the exercises, everything you ever need, is in the back of the book in a compilation. I’m very happy with that. When you read the book, there are a few exercises and suggestions in each chapter, but they’re picked up in detail and widened in the practices chapter. You can read the book and really get the information that you need, and then, use the exercises at the end of the book as a way to put all these things into practice.

The whole first part of the book talks about how and why things are the way they are — how we ended up in a situation and what can you do about it. There’s information on things like trauma and trauma release, embodiment and lack of embodiment, and those kinds of areas that will allow you to understand what’s happening inside you. Then, there are chapters on things like pleasure, orgasms, bathing, relationships, the connection with other women, getting older, and those kinds of areas where I’m looking at these topics through the lens of embodiment, through being a woman, and through our current climate. That’s the second part of the book.

Then there is the third part of the book. If you do nothing or you don’t have time to read, go straight to the last part of the book, which is all the exercises. I’ve designed the exercises in a way that they can be done in a few minutes and can be woven into your day. Or, if you suddenly find yourself with a bit more time, you can expand on them quite substantially. Some of them you can do with other women. I talk about doing things with other women and describe how I run women’s groups.

There’s an enormous amount of information, so much so that some of my ongoing students, after reading the book, said, “Why did you give it all away? What’s left? Now everybody has it.” A lot of people were quite upset about that, because, as you know, when you have a body of work, people take it and claim it as their own. So some of my students were upset with that. But I figured that I have endless material.

**Debbie:** Yes, you do.

**Michaela:** And I have endless creativity. So I wanted to actually give something. I wanted to
not be stingy and hold back half of it, then say at the end of the book, “If you want the real stuff, come to a workshop.” Right? There are lots of women that will never be able to come to a workshop.

**Debbie:** That’s right.

**Michaela:** For all kinds of reasons — financial, logistical, spatial. So, the book is out, and now I’m doing an online women’s group for the same reasons. I made it so that pretty much anyone can have access to these things in depth, and maybe create their own women’s group or incorporate just a minute or two here or there.

**Debbie:** Exactly, and that’s how you are. You are about abundance. You and I have talked about abundance before, and one of the aspirations of Women on Fire is “There is plenty in the world for me.” And that is who you are. I love this book because it is filled with everything you need, and you can live in this book for a long, long time. That’s why I wanted you to talk about how you use it. So thank you. That was really fantastic.

So, Michaela, to close this — and this is temporary because we will see you on the Live Chat master class — I’m just curious, when you hear the words Woman on Fire, what does that make you think of?

**Michaela:** Passion. And passion, not in the sexual way, but the willingness to dive in. And in a certain way, to leave it all out there, hold nothing back, burn with the yearning and desire to have that fulfilled life. That, to me, is a Woman on Fire. A woman who just goes, in the best possible way, and unapologetically forges ahead with my passion and my love and my yearnings and my desires. That doesn’t mean we are insensitive to other people, but we are bringing ourselves fully to life. That, to me, is a Woman on Fire.

**Debbie:** I think that should become the official definition. That was great! Thank you so much. Good luck! I know you’re taking off for Europe now, and you’re going to come to us from Europe for when you’re on the Live Chat.

**Michaela:** Australia.

**Debbie:** Australia? Oh, my gosh!

**Michaela:** I’ll be a day ahead. I’ll be coming from the future. [laughter]
Debbie: Awesome! You’ll be able to tell us what happened. Thank you so much. I just love you from the bottom of my heart, and thank you for all the wisdom and gifts you’ve shared with Women on Fire in the past and today, and I know, in the future.

Michaela: Thank you so much, and the same from here to you.

Debbie: Great! I will see you soon.

**After Interview**

Hello, Women on Fire. It’s Debbie, and I just finished interviewing Michaela Boehm. I hope you enjoyed the interview. It was very inspiring to me, just hearing her story of how she coped with the trauma of something so awful as losing basically everything you own in a fire. So this is the After Interview, where we kick back. We’re here, in Jimmy Parr’s wonderful studio, and I have today as the special After Interview guest somebody who is very near and dear to my heart. She is an integral member of our Women on Fire team. She’s been a part of our team for five years now. It is Daren Stinson. Say hi, Daren!

Daren: Hi, Women on Fire!

Debbie: Many of you talk to Daren a lot, so you know Daren organizes our retreats and, well, Daren just makes everything happen. So thank you for that, Daren. I want to publicly thank you.

Daren: Thank you. It’s a pleasure.

Debbie: Well, what did you think? How did you enjoy listening to Michaela? And what stood out for you?

Daren: Wow, she is such a fantastic woman. She reminds me of a modern day Dr. Ruth.

Debbie: Yes, she does. I wanted to ask her about her specialty — among many, many, many — as a tantric teacher. I’m going to ask her about it on the Live Chat master class. I want to know more about Tantra. To me, it sounds like a weird or impossible sexual position or something, but I know it’s way, way, way something else.

Daren: I think it’s more a state of mind. And that’d be really interesting to hear about from her. But the thing that really stood out for me was when she was talking about somatic...
movement and not allowing tragedy to settle in your body by using movement to move it through and get it out of there. I really resonated with that.

**Debbie**: It was very powerful. It’s very practical. In the book, she talks about the different responses. She mentioned that sometimes people just freeze, but the antidote to all of it is just moving your body. When she said that, I remembered when my father died in 2004. When we received the news, I remember just wanting to run. I left the room where there were lots of people gathered, and I just walked as fast as I could through the halls of this hospital. I’m realizing that I was just naturally using the somatic releases, listening to my body, to work through the trauma.

**Daren**: Right, right. The key, I think, is listening to your body. Because you’re able to do that, it’s very beneficial to you.

**Debbie**: Do you remember the interview we did before with Michaela, when we did “Bring More Love and Light into Your Life”? It was in January of 2017. I loved her then. She talked to us about finding your heart’s highest calling. I always loved the thought of that. What is your heart’s highest calling? You look back in your life at the things that you’ve been drawn to and surrounded yourself with. She’s such a wise woman.

**Daren**: She has so much inspirational information to share. I’m so glad that we had the chance to talk to her again.

**Debbie**: I once went to her farm and worked with her for five days. It was maybe four or five years ago. I don’t know. Were you with us when I went?

**Daren**: I don’t remember you going, no.

**Debbie**: So it must’ve been the year before you came. You know what? I think it was the summer of 2013, so it was right before you came. Her farm — the farm that burned down — was just exquisite, and she did have so many animals. She’s just a really, really lovely person. She’s always been very circumspect about who all of her clients are, but now that her book is out, people like Will and Jada Smith and Gwyneth Paltrow are saying, “Hey, here’s my teacher’s book.”

**Daren**: Right. They’re like, “I know her.”
Debbie: “I know her.” And we know her, too!

Daren: Yes.

Debbie: Is there anything else you wanted to say that stood out about the interview?

Daren: The other piece was, in the midst of all the tragedy, when she started creating beauty. That was the signal she was starting to heal. She wanted to bring beauty and goodness back into the situation. I thought that was very memorable.

Debbie: It sure was. Thank you so much for everything. Thank you for being here today. I’m so tickled that you listened in, and your insight is really terrific. And thank you for being you!

Daren: Thank you.