



# DAMAGED

by Lisa Scottoline

## Behind the Novel

- "You Inspire Me": An original essay by the author

## Keep on Reading

- Ideas for Book Groups
- Reading Group Questions

## Special Extra!

- An excerpt from Lisa Scottoline's next novel, *One Perfect Lie*.

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## *An Original Essay by the Author*

### **“You Inspire Me”**

Readers often wonder where I got the idea for a novel, and I’m always happy to explain, because there’s usually a single notion that inspires me when I begin to write, and this time, my inspiration came from you.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that one day, I was talking to my friend Franca, who has been my best friend since we met in law school. We practiced law together, were pregnant together, and both quit our jobs to stay home and raise our children. I never returned to the law, because I loved being at home with my daughter, Francesca, more. After long years of struggle, I became a published author and now I get to tell stories for a living.

Thanks to you.

But Franca returned to the law, and she changed her practice entirely. She became an expert in the area of special education. She advocates tirelessly for her clients, who are children in public and private schools fighting to get the special help they need in order to acquire the basic skills that many of us take for granted, like reading.

It struck me one day that Franca changes people’s lives, one child at a time. Children she represents have bright and happy futures, all because of her. And Franca works very hard, so she represents hundreds of clients.

It’s the power of one woman, changing the lives of hundreds of children.

And Franca introduced me to another woman, Diane Reotter, the mother of a son with dyslexia. Diane dedicated herself to her child and educated herself about all aspects of dyslexia, which at the time wasn’t well known. She began to drill her son in order to improve his ability to read, and she began to notice deficiencies in the public school system, which was



## *Behind the Novel*

falling short for dyslexic students, in addition to other students who had a wide array of learning disabilities.

Diane went on to create an organization called the Pennsylvania Dyslexia and Literacy Coalition, working tirelessly to champion the needs of dyslexic children in the Pennsylvania school system. After years and years of effort, building her organization and filling the ranks with mothers and fathers just like herself, she actually got the state legislature to draft and pass House Bill 198, which was signed into law in Pennsylvania.

The new law created a pilot program to screen kindergarten students for risk factors linked to dyslexia and other reading deficiencies. The goal is to identify dyslexia and other reading issues in students as early as possible. Not only does this help these students learn to read, but just as important, as you see in my novel, since dyslexia and self-esteem are connected, the new law also builds their self-worth.

It's the power of one woman, which changed the lives of millions of children across an entire state.

The more research I did into this topic, the more I found women like Franca and Diane, and plenty of men too, all of whom were single-handedly working to better services for children with special needs and give them all of the enrichment they need and deserve to realize their fullest potential and happiness.

All of these people decided that they were going to change something for the better, for children.

In effect, they decided to change the world.

Wow.

Not many people wake up thinking that they can change the world, and there are plenty who don't even try, and I don't blame them. It's all that most of us can do to get through the day, do our job, make sure there's food in the fridge, and try to keep our hands out of the cookie jars.

I mean that literally.

I'm on a diet, as usual.

But I am so inspired by people like Franca, Diane, and many, many more of you, and you know who you are, who toil thanklessly, teach for long hours, spend your own money on things you shouldn't have to, volunteer to help at school, serve on countless committees and boards, bake cookies for afterschool programs, raise money for baseball teams, band trips, and choir robes, take in foster children, or do whatever is needed, wherever it's needed.

I'm talking about every single person who decides to try to make something better and doesn't give up until they succeed.

That's you.

You may never get the credit you deserve, but I know you're there.

I see you and I celebrate you.

You inspire me.

And that's why I wrote you this book.



## *Ideas for Book Groups*

I am a huge fan of book clubs because it means people are reading and discussing books. Mix that with wine and carbs, and you can't keep me away. I'm deeply grateful to all who read me, and especially honored when my book is chosen by a book club. I wanted an opportunity to say thank you to those who read me, which gave me the idea for a contest. Every year I hold a book club contest and the winning book club gets a visit from me and a night of fabulous food and good wine. To enter is easy: all you have to do is take a picture of your entire book club with each member holding a copy of my newest hardcover and send it to me by mail or e-mail. No book club is too small or too big. Don't belong to a book club? Start one. Just grab a loved one, a neighbor or friend, and send in your picture of you each holding my newest book. I look forward to coming to your town and wining and dining your group. For more details, just go to [www.scottoline.com](http://www.scottoline.com).

Tour time is my favorite time of year because I get to break out my fancy clothes and meet with interesting and fun readers around the country. The rest of the year I am a homebody, writing every day, but thrilled to be able to connect with readers through e-mail. I read all my e-mail, and answer as much as I can. So, drop me a line about books, families, pets, love, or whatever is on your mind at [lisa@scottoline.com](mailto:lisa@scottoline.com). For my latest book and tour information, special promotions, and updates, you can sign up at [www.scottoline.com](http://www.scottoline.com) for my newsletter.

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The Bunnies Book Club of Scottsdale, Arizona, submit their photo for Lisa's book-club contest.



## Reading Group Questions

1. The title *Damaged* is appropriate for this book on many levels. In what ways do you relate the title to the different aspects of the story?
2. While *Damaged* is set within the Philadelphia School District, so many school systems across America are equally stretched and struggling. What do you think should be done to improve our nation's schools? Besides with additional funding, in what other ways can we support our teachers?
3. Mary has a strong and surprising reaction to John, the first, and only, male lawyer in the firm, when he offers to help. What do you think caused her to act so out of character? Do you think her response would have been the same if it were one of the female lawyers offering help? Why, or why not?
4. Patrick has a learning disability that has led to severe anxiety. More and more children are being diagnosed with issues such as ADHD, anxiety, and learning problems and much has been speculated in regard to the causes. Why do you think there is such a rise in the number of children with these disorders? Do you think there is any validity to the idea that we are just doing a better job at diagnosing children, not necessarily that so many more children have problems? In what ways do you think the system is helping these children, and in what ways are they letting them down?
5. Mary (like Lisa) loves with all her heart, and attaches easily. Were you surprised by Mary's decision in regard to Patrick? How would you have reacted if you were Anthony? What did you think of Anthony's surprise for Mary? What did you think of her reaction? How do you juggle your obligations to your birth family versus your created family? Who do you think should come first, and are there any times when that priority can, or should, shift?

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6. Being a working, single mom, Lisa was fortunate to have her parents' help with Francesca after school, which created an incredible relationship between Francesca and her grandparents. Patrick is being raised by his grandfather. This has now become a very common situation in America. What are your thoughts about this? Do you think it is the grandparent's responsibility to step in and raise a child when the parents are unable? In what ways are grandparents better equipped to raise a child, and in what ways are they disadvantaged? How does the grandparent becoming the parent hurt or enhance the typically special grandchild/grandparent bond? What kind of relationship did you, or do you, have with your grandparents?
7. Although Mary is a now partners with Bennie and bills more than she, Mary is still deferential to Bennie. Since Bennie started the firm, do you think it is appropriate that Mary concedes to her? Why, or why not? The women at Rosato & DiNunzio are very protective and supportive of one another, but that is not always the case in the corporate world. Why do you think this is? Do you think the camaraderie among the women is so strong because there were no men in the firm until recently? In what ways can women be more supportive of other women, and why is it so important?
8. Lisa always has terrific secondary characters, and Machiavelli is a true original. What did you think of him as a character? What about as a lawyer? Would you want him representing you on a tough case? Why, or why not? Do you think he crossed the line with his legal strategies, or was he just pulling out all the stops for his client?
9. Lisa has always known and promoted the importance of reading, but she learned a lot while researching the book, including how fundamental reading is to self-esteem. In what ways do you





think reading is important? Do you have creative ideas on how we can get children to read? What was your favorite book as a child? What is your child's favorite book? How have your reading habits changed over the years?

10. For fun, let's talk weddings! What kind of dress did you imagine Mary would wear on her wedding day? What about the bridesmaids' dresses? Who do you think will cry the most at Mary's wedding? Who will make the biggest scene? Who will be the craziest dancer? Who will catch the bouquet? When they eventually go on a honeymoon, where do you think Mary and Anthony will go?

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