

Therapists' by Day Book Review

Girls & Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape

by Peggy Orenstein

Peggy Orenstein's books are provocative and rich in understanding adolescent girls. She has had several NY Times best sellers for a reason. In reading her work I am brought back to my own doctoral research where I discovered in researching women attorneys, they were either too tough ("bitches") or not tough enough..a no win. What a double message we are giving our girls on their sexuality...stigma on virginity and judgment of girls as sluts and boys as achieved.

Once again we have seen the old double standard of what is expected of a male and what is expected of a female. A few years back a male client was bragging about his "rainbow" oral sex experience, meanwhile the girl involved in that was slammed all over facebook. The 1980's campaign of the federal government spent \$1.7 billion dollars to provide the failed abstinence programs. These programs seemed to focus on holding our daughters accountable for both genders.

Has it ever been easy being a female? A must read for those who love and parent an adolescent.

- Dr. Michele Winchester-Vega, DSW, LCSW-R, Newburgh

Girls and Sex is a well written, thought provoking book. It exposes the internal and external pressures young women face as they navigate their sexual development. I found this book very helpful and have already begun recommending it to my clients. The book highlights the struggle between sexual development and becoming sexualized; a concept I work on with my clients. The book provides alternate ways of thinking about sex and highlights the importance of changing the way we educate young women (and ultimately men) about sex. If you have a teenage daughter or preteen, or if you are in your 20's or are struggling with your own sexual development, this book can provide new understanding to assist you in navigating the "complicated new landscape" of sex. - Susan McVey, LCSW-R, Rock Tavern

Reading this book validates the importance of having an open dialogue with our daughters and our sons. Teaching them to respect and to demand respect, both body and mind, is crucial in the safety and development of our youth. Through interviewing dozens of young women, late adolescents to early 20's, this author shares their experiences and attitudes towards sex, which will be eye opening for most parents and educators. It is important to gain an understanding of the culture of casual sex and hookups that has become today's norm. I find it sad and scary at the same time, and also feel that we, as parents, educators, therapists etc., have an obligation to enhance the self worth of today's youth. - Rhonda Hauge, LCSW-R, ATR, Highland Mills

This is a great book for anyone who has been contemplating a more in depth discussion to empower their young adult to have safe sex. The author expands safe sex to include emotionally safe. Several components of a safe sex life beyond physical precautions to prevent STDs includes conscientious exploration based on values, emotional readiness to vocalize refusal and commitment to reciprocity.

In this book, Orenstein interviewed 70 girls and a few parents and educators. Her conclusion is the current dating culture lacks fully safe, or even, satisfying sexual experiences. Her summary of the typical sex life has meaninglessness, assault, confusion, double-standards and, sometimes, fun. Her captivating stories provide insight to parents and allow girls to feel normal.

Orenstein makes clear today's teenagers want answers to their questions, not lectures or to be shamed for curiosity. Parents and adult mentors can be the safe place to get accurate answers, as opposed to inexperienced peers and Tumblr. My hope is Orenstein brings the "Sex Talk" back home with more relevant content to teach emotional preparedness. - Elena Morales, LMHC, Monroe