
Early in this book you learn that Kevin is in prison after killing classmates at his school (a subject I would avoid). The prologue format is of the letters written by his mother, Eva, to her absent husband. The letters recount Eva’s interpretations and emotions about Kevin’s early and teenage years. The format limits the exploration of the themes in some ways, but also allows the reader to form an opinion about Eva, mostly unfavourable, as she obviously dislikes herself. Well written, the letters carry the reader compulsively through all the unpleasant events and later horrors.

Why is a book about the peculiar phenomenon of teenage killers of interest to health professionals? The letters have an appeal in a personal way to many women who have enjoyable pre-parenting lives that are, or would be, utterly changed by motherhood. Eva, the founder and chief executive of a travel book company, decides to have a baby mainly to please her husband, who feels he is not complete without her. (Or perhaps, he resents her success and feels that having a baby will reduce her luhris?) The letters describe the loss of status and purpose, the lack of reward, and feelings of responsibility for everything the child does, as well as the change in circumstances that are so familiar to many mature women embarking on parenthood. It also illustrates many of the fears and fantasies that we hear in the consulting rooms from women thinking about embarking on pregnancy, or who are already pregnant. For example, the feeling that the body is a ‘dead’ entity, the mother’s life, is taken over by an alien being, sucking the life force out. Or the fear that the baby will be a monster, as indeed Kevin turns out to be. He is so difficult to look after and get along with, that au pairs, babysitters, and even college students’ reports of post-abortion emotional sequelae and abortion attitudes. J Soc Clin Psychol 1998; 17: 425–443.

BOOK REVIEW

We hope that journal readers enjoyed reading We Need to Talk About Kevin, and also discovering whether their opinion of the book matched that of our guest reviewer. In the October issue, the fiction book under scrutiny will be Christine Falls by Benjamin Black (400 pages, Picador, 2007, ISBN-13: 978-0-330-44-532-0). We want to remind journal readers that if they would like to review an appropriate fiction title of their own choosing then they should contact the Journal Editorial Office by e-mail (journal@fshr.org) in the first instance with details of their nominated title.
We Need to Talk About Kevin

Gill Wakley

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