

BOOK REVIEW

Twilight, True Love and You: Seven Secrets to Finding Your Edward or Jacob

Louise Deacon. Chichester, UK: Summersdale Publishers, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-1-84953-140-5. Price: £8.99. Pages: 320 (paperback)

It's unlikely that many Journal readers will be *Twilight* fans – but their teenage daughters, and those daughters' friends, may well be. For the uninitiated, *Twilight* is the award-winning book and film series centering around the exploits of heroine Bella, whose life is turned upside down when she meets, and is loved by, vampire Edward and werewolf Jacob.

Author Louise Deacon takes the saga and uses it to point up crucial lessons that its young fan base may need to know as they enter the world of adult love. By referring to classic pieces of literature such as *Wuthering Heights*, weaving into her analysis established psychotherapeutic theories such as the influence of family dynamics, and citing key contributors to partnership research such as John Gottman, she explains the basics of good relationships and the dangers of toxic ones.

But this isn't a dry-as-dust study. It's a self-help book – and Deacon achieves all the above in a way that actively helps and is truly accessible. Her style is light, often humorous, moving from *Twilight* reference to real-life case histories such that all her young readers can surely take on board her guidance for their love lives both present and future.

At the same time, the book doesn't fight shy of challenge. Deacon points out unwaveringly – in chapters such as “Discover the Hidden Dangers of Your Romantic Imagination” and “How to Know if Your Relationship Really Works” – that *Twilight* can offer mistaken criteria and values.

The idealised relationships between Bella, Edward and Jacob – with their foundations in utterly unconditional love – are not real life; to demand that any human male deliver similarly is not only unrealistic but unfair. The attraction of the ‘bad boy’ – and the accompanying belief that he can be saved by the love of a good woman – is not benign; to fall for the myth can be actively dangerous. Making relationship decisions without asking questions such as “Are you suited ... do you love him as he is ... will he love you in the way you need?” is not fast track to everlasting love; it

leads inevitably to disappointment or worse.

That said, however much Deacon questions the validity of the values presented in the *Twilight* saga, she never invalidates its fans, her readers. She treads a careful and skilful dividing line between honouring the fascination that the saga holds, revering the themes that it explores, and setting its premises against relationship reality; in so doing, she gently leads her readers into learning vital life lessons.

For all these reasons, I unhesitatingly recommend the book for young people who feel ready to learn more about mature relationships. I would also, in fact, recommend it as an immensely useful reminder both of the myths of love and of love's truths as revealed by current therapy models. The wisdom that Deacon offers, and the entertaining way in which that wisdom is offered, means that you don't have to be a *Twilight* fan – or indeed a teenager – to gain from reading this book.

Reviewed by **Susan Quilliam**

Freelance Writer, Broadcaster and Agony Aunt,
Cambridge, UK

J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care 2012;**38**:47.
doi:10.1136/jfprhc-2011-100215