

BOOK REVIEW

Sex Matters for Women: A Complete Guide to Taking Care of Your Sexual Self (2nd edn)

Sallie Foley, Sally A Kope, Dennis P Sugrue.
New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2012. ISBN-13:
978-1-60918-469-8. Price: £11.99. Pages: 449
(paperback)

As an author myself, I know that when asked to revise one's previously written work it's a huge temptation to simply check that the facts are still accurate, the research is still current and the telephone numbers still connect – then call it a job done. I'm proud that I've never succumbed to that temptation, but many have – and many 'fully revised' books have obviously had only a cursory glance. The second edition of *Sex Matters for Women*, however, pays far more than such lip service.

The original 2002 book was, as its authors suggest, "a comprehensive guide to women's sexuality". It offered information but also exploration,

support and guidance. It was clearly written from the viewpoint of the individual woman, yet with complementary awareness of the importance of male (and female) partners. It aimed to place the physiology of sex firmly within the context of the psychology and sociology of sex. As such, it was a book that one could happily recommend to women of every age and experience, knowing they would all benefit.

The 2012 edition builds on this foundation. To cite the authors again, there has in the past decade not only been much new research on issues such as the sexual response cycle and brain chemistry, but also new ideas about women's sexuality and its link with personality, self-esteem and relationship success. The book covers these themes accurately and comprehensively, through five sections: Knowing your sexual story; Understanding your body; Making peace with your body; Creating a better sexual relationship; and Developing sexual comfort, confidence and satisfaction.

But this is not only a full compilation of the latest information and understanding, but also a thoughtful examination of personal issues and women's place in the world. The three authors

are all sex therapists and their writing is happily informed by an awareness of the emotional and relational side of sex; the text regularly includes case histories as well as 'try this' exercises from the therapeutic kitbag to help readers explore not only the physical side of sexuality but also beliefs, values, fears and hopes.

Any criticisms? The informational sections may well be a little science-heavy for the non-professional reader. The 'composite' case histories can seem a little contrived or dramatised.

Apart from those caveats, however, I'm a fan. This is a book for all women – whether client, clinician or therapist – and for all men who want to know more about the women in their lives, enabling the reader to not only understand, but also appreciate, protect and enhance female sexuality. In short, the latest edition of *Sex Matters for Women* is not just a lip service revision, but a full step beyond the excellent original.

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J Fam Plan Reprod Health Care 2013;**39**:43.
doi:10.1136/jfprhc-2012-100426