

## BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEW

**Come As You Are: The Surprising New Science That Will Transform Your Sex Life**

Emily Nagoski. London, UK: Scribe Publications, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1-925-22801-4. Price: £12.99. Pages: 432 (paperback)

There are now literally thousands of books – my own among them – which aim to help women understand and make the most of their sexuality. This book, however, is special.

Written by Emily Nagoski, formerly Director of Wellness Education at Smith College (Massachusetts, USA) and the Kinsey Institute (Indiana, USA), the book rises above most others for many reasons.

The first is its range: the 400+ pages cover not only female physiology, sexual response, and ‘what to do in bed’, but also the emotional and relational underpinnings of sexuality; its social context; its pitfalls, its pleasures. A full set by any count and, as the book’s cover claims, drawing on the latest in scientific research to underpin its content.

Then there’s the style. We all know how hard it is to talk about sex in a way that’s neither prudish, clinical nor cringingly streetwise. Emily delivers a ‘voice’ that is informative, accurate, but also friendly, warm – the book is an

astonishingly ‘good read’. You turn the pages because you want to know what the author has to say – it’s no coincidence that Emily’s professional work involves not only formal teaching but also informal conversations about women’s sexuality.

What also endears me – as a constant advocate of linking sexuality and emotion, sexuality and self-esteem, sexuality and relationship – is that the values in this book embody good practice. Everything Emily espouses is aimed at building confidence in the women who read the book, in empowering them to embrace and enhance their right to pleasure and their ability to achieve it.

Three examples that had me – metaphorically and sometimes literally – punching the air and shouting ‘Yesss’. The first is her coverage of the role of the clitoris, done without compromise about the organ’s importance, yet without any devaluing of male physiology, and with a wonderful way of explaining the link between the two.

The second – and yes, linked – theme with which I concur is her handling of why many women do not easily climax through penetration alone. Again, there is no strident finger-pointing at intercourse as a ‘patriarchal perversion’, but instead elucidation of the misunderstandings and miscommunications that lead society to rate some kinds of orgasm as ‘better’ than others.

The third ‘Yesss’ came with the exceptional way the book draws therapeutic

principles into the encouragement to women to enhance their sexuality. Lack of desire, of arousal, of climax are not best resolved by deeming these ‘problems’, but by an exploration of what each person’s body is communicating: Your unique sexuality, says Emily, has its reasons. Work with those not against them; accept rather than protest about them. As the book’s title suggests, embrace what is ‘Come As You Are’ and your pleasure will flourish.

Who is the book for? Young, older; lay, professional; beginner, advanced? All of these, and men too. My recommendation? Buy this book for your patients, for your clinic, but also for yourself, and your partner or even your older offspring.

There have been many books that have claimed – as this does on its front cover – to ‘transform your sex life’. For once, that claim may well be true.

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