ForeWord Reviews

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION

Like it Is: A Teen Sex Guide
E. James Lieberman
Karen Lieberman Troccoli
978-0-7864-0526-8
(September 1998)

In a comprehensive small book, physician Lieberman and public health expert Troccoli not only cover most of the sexual practices and mores of contemporary teens, but they also give much space, proportionately, to the critical subjects of sexually transmitted diseases and birth control.

There is no moralizing in this book. Much to its credit, however, the (fittingly) first chapter deals intelligently with both the “many virtues” and “seven sins” of relationships. The sins— violence, cruelty, contempt, trespass, infidelity, nagging and indifference—are explored in a surprisingly objective voice that lends both authority and clarity to the text.

The text might be difficult for some of the target audience. The range of reading ability from an average 13-year-old to an 18-year-old is huge, not even allowing for individual differences. Compounding this problem, the book’s design is rather like a college textbook, with sub-headings and exposition. The sketches and charts are few; but to be fair, critical sketches are included, e.g., how to insert a diaphragm, how to put on a condom. There are three pages of charts near the end of the book that present overviews of contraception; the book could use more. If charts, photographs, more sketches, and perhaps even some light-hearted art were strategically placed throughout the book, both information and message would be clearer, and the book would be easier to understand—a critical consideration for teen readers.

This is not to say Like it Is is unworthy; to the contrary, it is a valuable book. Further, there is a tremendous need for such an intelligent and candid book.

If a high schooler were to actually get into the book First Hour, the book would be dog-eared and passed through many hands by lunch. Nevertheless, its slightly advanced reading level might be intimidating for some teens, and its forthright, nonrestrictive presentation of the facts of life might anger a few parents. Like It Is is, indeed, an admirable teen sex guide.

Sally Ketchum