Love, Sex and Staying Warm: Keeping the Flame Alive

Neil Rosenthal
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This well-crafted, lively book on relationships written by an advice columnist encourages optimism.

Neil Rosenthal, a marriage and family therapist who writes a weekly newspaper column on relationships, has reused some material and combined it with new content in this engaging book, Love, Sex and Staying Warm. Rosenthal is unfailingly upbeat, positive, and helpful in doling out advice to both men and women in a work that covers familiar ground, with chapter titles such as “What Women Really Want,” “What Are Your Fights Really About?,” and “The Loss of Sexual Desire.”

While it is likely that readers will be familiar with the content if they have read other books on relationships, they will probably find comfort in Rosenthal’s compassionate honesty and practical insight. The author expresses himself extremely well, acknowledging that there are no easy answers to the perfect relationship; however, he offers some useful tools to make the road less bumpy. For example, Rosenthal peppers the book with numerous quizzes, including “What Grade Would You Get in Your Relationship?,” “Are You Walled Off?,” “How Good a Listener Are You?,” and “Are You Sabotaging Your Relationship(s)?” These quizzes often ask provocative questions that require a great deal of self-examination. The author also includes some handy lists; “Seven Deadly Relationship Sins,” for instance, walks the reader through the kinds of personal shortcomings, such as “being too detached, withdrawn, removed, guarded or disengaged,” that could easily wreck a relationship.

Rosenthal is unafraid to talk about prickly issues such as handling criticism, arguments about money, and power struggles. He doesn’t shy away from talking about sex, either; the author covers such areas as “erotic talk,” “emotional Viagra,” and “how to jump start your love life,” all in a sensitive, nonsensational fashion.

In addition to original text, Rosenthal attributes some of the information to others. To personalize the book, he adds several letters he received in his role as a columnist. His answers to readers’ questions are always thoughtful and empathetic.

Despite the serious nature of the subject matter, Rosenthal manages to lighten things up considerably with a multitude of humorous and often clever quotes by comedians, philosophers, and famous people that he appends to the end of every chapter. This one from Jimmy Carter is typical: “I’ve never won an argument with my wife; and the only time I thought I had, I had found out the argument wasn’t over yet.”

The author’s writing style is breezy. Paragraphs and chapters are short. The page layout is pleasing to the eye.

Rosenthal has done a nice job of putting his own spin on an overwritten topic. His book should give hope to anyone looking for help in improving a relationship.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (September 2, 2014)

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