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Foreword Review

Sexy Mamas: Keeping Your Sex Life Alive While Raising Kids

Anne Semans
Cathy Winks
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"'Sex?' What is this 'sex' of which you speak? I've heard of it, but for the life of me I can't remember what it is," said one survey respondent quoted in this book. Another tired mom answered, "Who wants to have sex when you can SLEEP?!" But for mothers who are wistful or determined about the sex lives they used to have, this book offers a wealth of assistance.

Not for the prudish, *Sexy Mamas* offers advice on everything from setting aside private time to the value of masturbation-a practice, they say, that is sadly overlooked as a way to connect with one's own erotic needs and tastes, as well as offering a sexual outlet when there is no partner. This book will be useful not only to mothers, since the authors also provide advice about how to rekindle or sustain passion in a long-term relationship, ways to re-enter the dating scene after being alone, and how to communicate better with a partner so that both parties? needs are met (something that's valuable in any relationship, with or without children).

Finding time to rekindle the steamier side of life can be tough for mothers, who are often overwhelmed by the constant demands of their offspring. Often-overlooked possibilities are taking advantage of babysitting by friends or family members who are willing to have the kids at their house; leaving children at day care for an extra half hour while both grownups "plan to arrive home at the usual time"; and trading sleepovers with the parents of playmates.

Finding the energy can be just as challenging. Survey respondents have suggested everything from ordering groceries and meals online (saves time and energy) to hiring someone to do housecleaning and chores-and cutting expenses to afford these little luxuries (sidebars include suggestions for ways to do that too)-to lowering one's standards for a clean house ("get used to a little clutter and let the dust-bunnies breed").

Another important aspect of sex-after-children is self-image. The authors encourage women to reevaluate themselves and their attributes, to learn how to appreciate themselves for what they are now, rather than what they used to be or might be "someday." Waiting for sex until they are the "right" weight or have reachieved the "right" muscle tone can cause women to forego a lot of pleasure, they say, and they offer ways of becoming reacquainted with and learning to appreciate a body that has undergone an amazing transformation. Women should review their assets, say the authors, and focus on their attributes. They point out that images in magazines and on television rarely reflect the reality of people with different shapes and sizes. They remind readers that it's crucial for children, particularly girls, that their mothers have a positive self-image. Girls whose mothers are comfortable with their bodies will be more able to throw off the media "programming" about unrealistic standards of beauty.

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Good communication is vital. Whether it's for better sexual interludes or better parenting, mothers have to be more upfront about what they want or need. The authors suggest better ways to talk about the difficult subject of sex, and ways to use communications skills gleaned from coping with baby to better interact with a partner.

The authors, employees of Good Vibrations, a women-owned San Francisco sex shop, are forthright about the body's need for sex. Recognizing that many women have never explored their own sexuality, they include a chapter on getting acquainted with one's own body and needs, written in a matter-of-fact and engaging style that manages to dismiss embarrassment and self-consciousness. In fact, the entire book is cheerily open and honest, not only about the needs of heterosexual mothers and couples, but also those of lesbian and gay parents and couples. The bibliography and list of resources recommend books to further enlighten women on how to bring new vitality to a sex life they may have thought was over, and places to purchase supplies for trysts that may be scheduled weeks in advance (spontaneity, they warn, is something that often disappears from a couple's love life once there are children in the picture).

While this book is indeed a valuable resource for mothers, other women should not overlook it as an entrée into improving their sex lives. The authors have assembled an impressive array of useful and helpful information that can make any woman's quest for a better erotic life a little easier.

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