



Spare Me 'The Talk!' A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up

Jo Langford

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Langford empowers young men to make their own informed decisions about sex, using both honesty and wit.

Father, therapist, and sex educator Jo Langford doesn't beat around the bush when teaching young men about sex. In *Spare Me 'The Talk!' A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up*, he tackles difficult subjects head-on, with both honesty and wit. Unlike those dreaded "talks" the title refers to, Langford never bores and never condescends. He offers frank and engaging advice to young men interested in understanding their own sexuality.

In no uncertain terms, Langford states that he takes a comprehensive approach to sex education, versus an abstinence-only approach. The book provides a positive view of sexuality rather than a negative or "shaming" view. That said, Langford doesn't shy away from the serious consequences of sexual activity. His chapters explore sexual acts, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases in unflinching detail, as well as important issues of gender, sexual orientation, body image, and relationships.

What differentiates *Spare Me 'The Talk!'* from other sex-education manuals is Langford's ennobling emphasis on the responsibility of teenagers to form their own decisions, despite social mores or family attitudes. "Tweens and teens need to be given opportunities to use their judgment, exercise critical thinking muscles, and make mistakes," he writes. "Knowledge and self-confidence are the best protection against the unfortunate consequences that sometimes accompany sexual activity."

Further strengthening the book's real-life impact are Langford's excellent chapters on Internet safety, from ubiquitous pornography to social networking and sexting. "The internet is forever," he warns. "If you have to lie about your online behavior, you are not in control of your life."

For all the seriousness of the subject matter, Langford still manages to imbue several moments with ribald humor. For instance, in his chapter on the human body, he explains that the penis is the "very first toy a guy gets." "We do target practice when we pee; we write our names in the snow," he boasts. "We protect our penises with our lives." Langford's colorful personality makes *Spare Me 'The Talk!'* all the more readable and appealing to young readers (and perhaps some adults), who need its wisdom most.

SCOTT NEUFFER (Winter 2016)

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