



Straight Talk for Teenage Girls

Annette Fuson

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The teenage years can be especially challenging, particularly for girls. Annette Fuson attempts to help teenage girls navigate the more difficult issues with her encouraging book, *Straight Talk for Teenage Girls*.

The book is a manageable length, structured simply and effectively into eleven chapters. Each chapter explores challenges teenage girls may face such as handling volatile emotions, making friends, avoiding drugs, and considering the decision to become sexually active. The chapters begin with specific examples of a problem and then go on to explore the subject matter more fully. There are also quizzes to help the reader assess her goals or feelings, and nearly all chapters contain questions that teenagers are advised to ask themselves as they make tough choices.

Fuson, a former teacher, is thorough in her approach to many complex subjects, and her ongoing message is one of self-acceptance. She consistently encourages readers to ask themselves, "Is this what is best for me?" Readers are reminded that it is never too late to change or to forgive themselves for mistakes. Her tone is one of friendship and understanding, and while her own personal views wander in on occasion, she is never condescending or judgmental.

Teenage readers are likely to find the book helpful and approachable, and Fuson is forthright in telling them what they need to know. "NO TEEN IS COMPLETELY HAPPY WITH WHO THEY ARE," she firmly states (the capitalization is hers) in chapter two. "So stop bellyaching. It is time to take a real look at who and what you are and accept it happily."

The chapter continues with a discussion of self-esteem and suggestions on how to find it. The quiz at the end, entitled "How Well Do You Like Yourself?" offers readers a useful self-assessment, filled with enough positive traits that every girl who takes the test is certain to come away with several things she likes about herself.

Straight Talk for Teenage Girls covers the basics and also tackles some of the deeper issues. There are chapters which offer advice to those teens who may be involved with cutting, or who are otherwise harming themselves. Subjects such as bullying, dealing with abusive boyfriends, and learning to manage friends whose loyalty is lacking are all explored in depth. The author also offers suggestions of where to go for more help when it is needed, including telephone numbers for help lines as well as websites.

The book does have a few typos as well as formatting issues, but most of them are not excessively distracting. The black-and-white photographs of smiling teenagers do not enhance the book's content.

Straight Talk for Teenage Girls is an informative guide that encourages young women to face life's challenges wisely and attentively while maintaining their own individuality and value systems. The book has the potential to foster important conversation between parents and daughters, and sons, too, and all are sure to find something positive and useful within its engaging pages.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (December 12, 2012)

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