

The Secret Lives of Teen Girls: What Your Mother Wouldn't Talk About but Your Daughter Needs to Know

Evelyn Resh

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Practicing sexuality counselor and mother of a daughter, Evelyn Resh seeks to help girls and women of all ages to accept, understand, and enjoy, rather than fear their sexuality, and to reassure mothers about the normalcy and importance of the physical expression of love and sexual desire in the lives of teen girls. Resh found that the girls she treated in her practice didn't have the information and support they needed to deal with the powerful changes that were transforming their bodies and brains. They needed information to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, poor body image, habits of self-mutilation, eating disorders, and unwanted pregnancies.

Resh suggests that restraining adolescent female sexuality leads to a situation in which "we ultimately cut our daughters off from realizing their power as fully integrated and sexual women who can move with ease between their various realms of activity, seeking their own pleasure, and forging their own happiness." Although she directs her words to mothers, her work should also be read by fathers, who are often equally concerned about and even less well-equipped to deal with their daughters' blooming sexuality. Teen girls would also benefit from a study of the concepts discussed by Resh, as even the most forward-thinking parents are likely to have reservations about accepting their own daughter's desire to be sexually active, and dispassionate discussion of the topic in the home is all too rare. To aid in further research, Resh has included a list of informative books, Web sites, and films, as well as questions at the end of each chapter to provoke reflection and discussion.

Evelyn Resh is certified as a sexuality counselor with the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists, and holds a Master of Public Health Degree from Boston University School of Public Health. She practices integrative midwifery and gynecology, speaks nationally, and is currently the director of Sexual Health Services and Programming for Canyon Ranch Health Resort in Lenox, Massachusetts.

Honest, revealing, fearless, and

at times surprising, Resh's book confronts issues of female teen sexuality and individuation with respect and understanding while acknowledging the pain these issues can cause for parents and teens themselves. Whether or not one agrees with her conclusions as to the role of sexual activity in teen maturation, her work is a valuable resource for those facing the turbulent teen years.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September / October 2009)

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