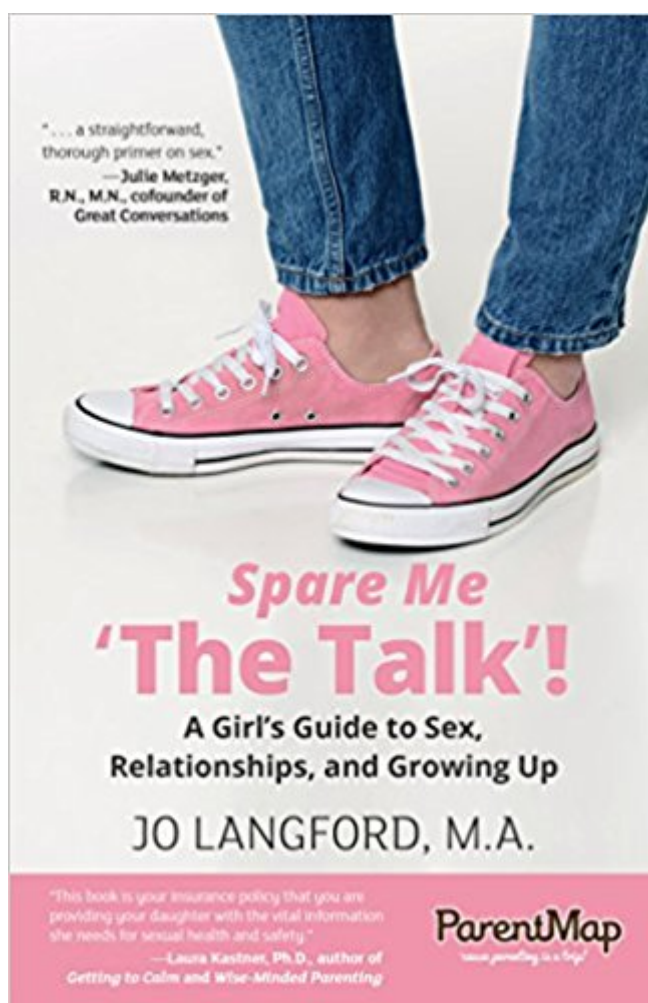


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Spare Me 'The Talk': A Girl's Guide To Sex, Relationships, And Growing Up



Synopsis

If you have a teenage girl, there's a 50 percent chance she's already sexually active and a 33 percent chance she's been solicited by an online predator in the past year. How prepared is she for the risks and realities of sex? You hold in your hands a comprehensive crash course for girls into staying safe emotionally, mentally, and physically while navigating the danger-laden worlds of teenage sex and sexuality in a digital age. This book is the first of its kind for girls and young women ages 12-24, and for parents of girls as young as 8. Your teen will learn proven, effective ways to:

- Avoid pregnancy, and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- Stay safe online and avoid sexual harm
- Ask someone out (and let someone down easy)
- Understand bodies and body issues, both male and female
- Accept that sexuality comes in all shapes and sizes
- Know the consequences of abstinence, indulgence, and everything in between
- Decide what is right for her, remaining true to herself and respectful of others

In language that's relatable, unflinchingly honest (and often funny), veteran sex educator Langford offers a powerful supplement to those notoriously awkward parent-daughter sex talks, answering the tough questions that teenage girls really have but would rather die than ask. Jo Langford is a certified counselor and sex educator who for two decades has provided outreach programs in high schools, residential medical, and psychiatric settings. He is the author of *Spare Me the Talk: A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up*, a Sex Offender Treatment Provider and adjunct faculty for Saybrook University's Washington campus. He can be reached at beheroes.net.

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Customer Reviews

Although some parents will read the topic list and want to believe their daughters are too young for certain facts, we need to remember that research has shown that most parents underestimate their kids' readiness, interest, and need for sex education. Regarding sexuality and many other complex topics, children typically absorb what they are ready for and leave the rest for later. This book is your insurance policy that you are providing your daughter with the vital information she needs for sexual health and safety. (Laura Kastner, Ph.D.) If you are worried about your daughter's ability to navigate the modern world of sexuality, offer her this book and give her what she needs to make great choices. Jo Langford tackles everything from periods and consent to sexting and being safe online. With a healthy dose of humor and practical, real-world advice and tips, this book will give teen girls a leg up when it comes to making decisions about sex. (Amy Lang, M.A.) *Spare Me the Talk!* provides adolescent girls a straightforward, thorough primer on sex that demystifies myths and provides answers for young women who are exploring sexual decision-making to help them make more informed choices. Today's girls are bombarded with mixed messages about sexuality; Jo Langford has created a resource that delivers information that adolescent girls can access over and over again. (Julie Metzger R.N., M.N.)

Jo Langford is a dad, a sex educator, and a public speaker. He is a master's level therapist in Washington state, and is a member of the adjunct human sexuality faculty for Saybrook University's Washington campus. For the past 20 years, Jo has worked with adolescents, parents, and professionals to promote healthy, positive, and safe sexual behavior. He specializes in the intersection of youth, sexuality, technology, and behavior, providing therapy to adolescents dealing with sexuality issues, as well as offering comprehensive sexuality education for tween and teen boys and their families. He is a Certified Counselor as well as a Sex Offender Treatment Provider in Washington State, and the adjunct Human Sexuality Faculty for Saybrook University, Washington. *Spare Me the Talk: A Guy's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Growing Up* and *The SEX-EDyclopedia*.

I agree with other reviews stating that this is a book for girls that is clearly written by a man, with limited understanding from his male perspective. While I appreciate his frank style overall, his

warning to girls that they may be their "own worst enemy" came across to me as a slippery slope to victim blaming. His statement that large breasts are inherently painful is also inaccurate--some are, some aren't. This is a revised version of his book for boys, with a bit of editing to direct it towards an audience of girls. Partnering with a woman author/healthcare provider would improve this book. The intentions are good, and he clearly wants to support healthy sexuality, but this book does miss the mark at times.

Must read for teenagers along with their parents. Girls often think they know all about this stuff; however, Jo Langford breaks new ground here.

I wanted to like this book, and while there are some great aspects there are too many fails. Here's a rundown:
The positives:
1. As mentioned already by others, it is great that he has integrated really good LGBTQIA+ concepts and issues and in a way that demonstrates open acceptance and warmth. This is the best part of this book and in this area I think the author did a great job.
2. It's great he's addressing issues related to consent and how it applies to sexual activities but also as it applies beyond sex.
3. He does bring up many good, high value topics that the reader may be uncomfortable discussing with a parent, friend or even healthcare provider. (however, too many of the topics lack adequate or accurate information)
The negatives:
There are several disappointments that, to me, outweigh the positives:
1. It is apparent that he is not a healthcare provider and his understanding of menses (periods) and female physiology is limited.
2. It is apparent that he is a male (physiologically in body and in identification) and therefore, again, has a limited understanding of menses & particularly the impact of first menses and adolescent development on female pre-teens/tweens.
3. There are parts of the intro that carry a judgmental tone, with a bit of shaming and guilt thrown in - this might turn off a reader right off. Specifically it is found in the paragraphs that include his presentation of statistics on sexual activity and sex, the statement that parents worry, and that girls(and boys) can become their own worst enemies. Perhaps he was going for a high intensity hook to lure in the reader with shocking stats and an emotional trigger, however, it is more likely to turn away female readers. If I were looking for information and support on a vulnerable sensitive topic I would not go with the book that blasted me with negatives on the first page. The intro should convey acceptance and a non-judgmental expression of caring. It should create a sense of safety in reading about sensitive topics by a caring author.
4. There are NO images at all - none. So as he attempts to describe female external anatomy of genitalia, such as vulva, labia, etc. there is no visual reference. This is essential for any kind of anatomy or health

related discussion. Sure, she can look online and find an image or diagram, but this reduces the usefulness and impact of the book. She might as well look everything up online if that's the case. If she's reading a book then she chose that format for a reason and all pertinent details and reference material (ie: images) should be in there.

General description of some issues: His discussion on menses is very "clunky" and feels both awkward and uncomfortable. The warmth and relatedness he's able to convey about LGBTQIA+ issues is not present in this area. Additionally, the information is not presented well from both my healthcare provider and female perspective, and it does nothing to support a nervous or scared preteen who is seeking more information about her body, menses and the overall experience of puberty and adolescence. There is nothing to help her feel good about her body and the amazing aspects or magic of this process that half the people in our world experience. Culturally there is still a negative connotation and taboo aspect to women's bodies (other than sexually) and our normal, natural processes and rhythms. There is a certain vulnerability for most young females who may be reading this book and attempting to learn about this information, and the tone and overall voice in chapters 1, 2, & 3 doesn't offer the necessary comfort around these topics. Additionally, IMO (and also from my pre-teen daughter) the use of "girls" and "boys" feels patronizing for a young person entering and/or in adolescence, and especially from a male speaking to a female (culture, context and history are relevant). The author vacillates back and forth between language that is anatomically appropriate and more mature to language that can "feel" patronizing or "talking down to" from a younger adolescent's perspective... Using girls and boys vs. female or male for example (which feels patronizing and "othering" according to my pre-teen daughter and some pre-teens I work with). A further example of this mix of voice and tone is appropriately discussing vulva, labia, etc. but then collectively calling them "girl parts" and saying "If you are worried about any health issue, especially one that has to do with your swimsuit area" - Swimsuit area? Girl-parts? Really? Are we back to societal mores that inhibit appropriate naming and mention of female body parts? I'm not saying he's sexist, judgmental or purposeful in using this tone or wording, rather it wasn't fully thought out from a female perspective and that the voice & wording regarding these female issues were not so thoughtfully and carefully chosen as those he used regarding LGBTQIA+ topics. His discussion on menstrual supplies was inadequate and seemed to have an inherent bias towards tampons with the implication that pads are for "newbies" or those with heavy flow or only night time. Pads are a viable option for any female anytime and all the time, and many women would rather use pads than tampons. The toxic shock syndrome discussion seems minimized, placed several paragraphs beyond the tampon discussion,

yet they are the significant cause out of all the methods discussed. The discussion also implies that low-absorbency tampons eliminate the chance of toxic shock syndrome which is not true - there are many variables with absorbency levels just one of them. There is a section about what the reader should do if a male asks her about her period and it starts out very good and affirming. However, it ends with "many guys wouldn't be able to handle it" which feels very othering (again) as well as somewhat patronizing. Again, I don't believe this is the authors intent, but it is an example of not giving full consideration to the socio-cultural aspects of being female in the same thoughtful manner in which he did for LGBTQIA+, there is an unfortunate disconnect there. Some of his medically related information isn't what I'd want my daughter, her friends, or my clients to be told as it's not correct and could potentially prevent a female from seeing her provider until much later when more severe symptoms develop. An example is in his description of vaginal and vulvular yeast infections. He states "There is an intense itching, burning sensation, localized in the vagina and vulva, which can become so painful it can become hard to walk". This would be true for a more developed & severe yeast infection, but earlier she may not have itching or only mild itching and for some there are no symptoms at all. Reading this she may put off a healthcare visit even if she has the other, earlier symptoms, therefore allowing the infection to grow in intensity and severity. His description of female arousal is based on - what many of us in healthcare and sexology consider - dated information. When sexuality was first studied medically, the original arousal description was based on male arousal patterns then generalized to women in a manner that made women's arousal "fit" the male pattern description. However, there is much newer information and data showing that the excitement-plateau-orgasm-resolution-refractory model doesn't truly fit the female arousal experience (there is a video of a lecture by a Stanford MD & professor describing this older understanding vs the new findings and understanding in a presentation called "changes in women's sexual function through the lifespan..." for those interested) His contraceptive discussion, again, has issues. It is missing important information and not current with all of the latest information or data. He does state "accurate as of when this book was written", but that disclaimer isn't as meaningful to many adolescents (or adults for that matter). Medical information can be challenging to put into a book as the understanding and practices update constantly. Trying to go more generic with your information in hopes of not bumping up against changes in medical practice doesn't always work well either, as sometimes too little or too general information can be more harmful than helpful. This is one area where online information from a reputable source, such as Scarleteen will absolutely be more accurate as it is regularly updated and medical

providers are consulted for all the medically related content. It is hard to find regularly updated medical information print material now days, as much has been moved online or into apps which can be updated on the fly .There are many inconsistencies in his overall physiological (how the body works) & medical discussions and I couldn't help but pick it apart while reading. However, I think I've mentioned enough in this review at this point.Overall: His intent was good but the author would have fared better if he'd partnered with a primary care provider or gynecologist as a co-author, and particularly one who is very current on their information, especially as it relates to adolescents. It would have benefited even more if it had been written by a female, as first hand knowledge and experience is very relevant, particularly when addressing sensitive information to an adolescent audience. I believe his intentions were good, but he should have stuck with his guide for males, and again, co-authored with a medical provider for that one as well.

This thin book is an excellent resource for daughters and parents. There are no photos nor illustrations in this book, but the narrative is downhome folksy and at times witty. The uniting theme is keeping a positive self-image. There are six parts to this book.Jo Langford starts out talking about biology of both female and male parts, puberty and the accompanying mood swings, personal hygiene, sex and gender identity, to include the various acronyms and expressions used that even I wasn't familiar with.The second part talks about dating, online dating and flirting, and how best to break the ice or to stop dating someone without hurting the other person's feelings. He also covers violent relationships to avoid, such as abusive guys, manipulative guys, etc. He then talks about oral, anal and vaginal sex and what to look for and what to be aware of. Abstinence and choices are also given, although he notes that very few actually practice abstinence.The third part covers sexually-transmitted infections, the symptoms, various contraceptions and even abortion.Part four covers sexual harassment, sexual assault and abuse and basic self defense and how to effectively report this. Langford stresses not to feel guilty at any time and to remain strong. A man or boy who forces himself on anyone needs to be properly penalized as that is a form of control.The fifth part covers online safety, which talks about online predators, porn, social networking, sexting, cyberbullying and online gaming and what to watch out for. He warns to always keep one's manners, reveal one's real name and, and to keep things clean. NEver lie about the age and never lie about one's behavior because then you have lost control.The last part is for parents, but I honestly believe the parent should read the entire book. There are many helpful websites in the end for more detailed information.

This is a sex ed manual designed for girls aged 12 -24. The coverage is broad, covering everything from anatomy to birth control to bullying. It is a relatively slim version and frankly, I was disappointed. First off, the age group is way too broad. What is appropriate for a 24 year old is not appropriate for a twelve year old and visa versa. the approach is a secular everything goes style. People with strong religious convictions may find the assumption that pre-marital and teenage sex a given unacceptable. The subjective morality grates. I don't object to the frankness but the back and forth was annoying. Porn is healthy, porn is unhealthy. Hook ups are not bad except when they are. There are some good discussion points but the coverage, though broad, is somewhat superficial. The anatomy section would be better with some illustrations. This might be a good book for older girls and perhaps for parents who wish to better understand contemporary concerns and challenges. But ultimately it tries to do too much with too little.

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