

# Girls & Sex Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Girls & Sex* uncovers the hidden struggle that many young women are having as they begin navigating the realm of sex and sexuality, identifying how pop culture and society's expectations are hurting them more than they should and what we can do to help girls feel empowered to choose to be who and what they want.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Slut, prude, whore, virgin. These are just a few of the labels that girls receive as early as middle school. When friends and boys call them these things, they sadly start to see themselves in similarly sexualized terms.

But on the flip side, boys seem to get a free pass when it comes to sex. How many of these terms do you hear when describing men? For some reason, only a discussion of a woman's sexuality tends to be condemning. How did we get to this point?

*Girls and Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape*, Peggy Orenstein explores this question and more. She highlights the struggles of developing into a young woman in today's world of objectification and unrealistic expectations for women. It's no easy task, but Orenstein believes we can empower the upcoming generation of girls by changing the way we talk about sex.

Let's see how much we can discover in just 3 lessons:

1. Young women bear the worst effects of our awful culture of sexualizing and objectifying women in the media.

2. Parents must be better at talking openly about sex with their daughters to help them avoid confusion, vulnerability, or worse.
3. Better sex education will lead to less teen pregnancy and help young people enjoy their first sexual experiences.

How about we dive right in and get learning?

## **Lesson 1: Our culture of sexualizing and objectifying women in the media is disgusting and it harms our young girls.**

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If you have a daughter, you've probably become increasingly aware of the concerning ways the media portrays young women. **Usually, men treat women merely as sexual objects, which can affect the way young women see themselves.**

Many of the women the author spoke to who were in their late teens and early twenties compared themselves readily to women they had seen on TV or in movies. Unfortunately, far too many of the characters who are female have little to no personality or deep characterization. Most often, they serve as an object of the male character's lust.

Female celebrities, particularly in the singing industry, further reinforce this objectification. For example, singers like Beyonce and Miley Cyrus perform on stage in front of hordes of young female fans wearing revealing clothing and making blatantly sexual movements.

Some may say they are owning their sexuality performing in such a way. But it's more likely just a dangerous way to gain attention. For instance, when Miley Cyrus' twerking on live TV caused a media frenzy, her popularity skyrocketed overnight and she sold millions of records.

## **Lesson 2: If you want to help your daughter avoid vulnerability, confusion, or possibly being taken advantage of, you must talk openly with her about sex.**

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Parents usually dread having to give "the talk." It's easy to see why. Talking about sex openly with your own child is uncomfortable for everyone involved. **But it is a small price to pay for the trouble your daughter can find herself in down the road if you don't help her navigate it.**

When parents won't openly talk about sexuality, girls can become confused. Particularly because they receive many mixed messages about how they should behave. On the one hand, they and their friends start to want to explore their sexuality. But on the other hand, they are told to remain virtuous.

This leads to stress, confusion, and bullying. Girls receive labels such as "prude" if they are shy about sexuality or don't wear revealing clothes. But if they do start becoming sexually active and wear more revealing things they run the risk of being sexually harassed or slut-

shamed.

Unfortunately, it's also common for young girls to feel an obligation to perform sexual acts for boys. Exposure to porn only reinforces this notion. This is because so much of it involves men disrespecting women only to get sexual rewards in return. Because of this pornography exposure, many young boys expect things like oral sex on dates.

### **Lesson 3: Only by improving our sex education can we reduce teen pregnancies and help young people experience the joys of sex.**

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So what can we do to help these poor girls who are just trying to navigate the dangerous landscape of adolescent sexuality? Orenstein says it starts with improving sex education. The way we teach it seems to only teach about men's pleasure and forgets about a woman's pleasure entirely.

If we don't teach that it can be enjoyable for women too, girls think good sex just means it doesn't hurt too bad and her partner climaxed. They become uncomfortable with their bodies and even self-conscious of their genitalia. This keeps them from experiencing a pleasureful sex life. If we don't start discussing female pleasure, these problems will never change.

Some places don't teach much sex education at all, because they believe talking about it only increases sexual activity in teens. However, research shows that abstinence doesn't work, in fact, it makes things worse.

For example, in the Netherlands, teens receive comprehensive sex education. Parents and teachers have honest discussions about both the benefits and the dangers of intercourse. Dutch teens become sexually active later, on average, and they also report losing their virginity as pleasant far more than their American counterparts.

We can see from our past that not talking about it or teaching abstinence-only contributes to the problem. **Not only does it fail to stop young people from having sex, it also makes them unprepared for it.** Students who are given abstinence-only sex education are actually 60 percent more likely to have an unwanted pregnancy.

### **Girls & Sex Review**

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I was apprehensive about Girls & Sex at first, but then I realized that this is going to help me be a better dad to my daughter! The lessons in this book are things that all men, young and old, should know about so we can treat girls better. I wish things weren't so difficult for young women these days, but I'm glad to know the pitfalls they face so I can help.

### **Who would I recommend the Girls & Sex summary to?**

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The 39-year-old who has a pre-teen daughter, the 15-year-old girl who thinks that she can't stand up for herself when boys mistreat her, and anyone that wants to learn the challenges of being a girl in the 21st century so they can help young women grow up more confident and happy.