

A Psychiatrist's Letter to Young People about *Fifty Shades of Grey*

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I help people who are broken inside. Unlike doctors who use x-rays or blood tests to determine why someone's in pain, the wounds I'm interested in are hidden. I ask questions, and listen carefully to the answers. That's how I discover why the person in front of me is "bleeding".

Years of careful listening have taught me a lot. One thing I've learned is that young people are utterly confused about love - finding it and keeping it. They make poor choices, and end up in lots of pain.

I don't want you to suffer like the people I see in my office, so I'm warning you about a new movie called *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Even if you don't see the film, its message is seeping into our culture, and could plant some dangerous ideas in your head. Be prepared.

Fifty Shades of Grey is being released for Valentine's Day, so you'll think it's a romance. *Don't fall for it*. The movie is actually about a sick, dangerous relationship filled with physical and emotional abuse. It seems glamorous, because the actors are gorgeous, they have expensive cars and private planes, and Beyonce is singing. You might conclude that Christian and Ana are cool, and that even though their relationship is different, it's acceptable.

Don't allow yourself to be manipulated by a Hollywood studio. The people there just want your money; they have no concern whatsoever about you and your dreams.

Abuse is not glamorous or cool. It is never OK, under any circumstances.

This is what you need to know about *Fifty Shades of Grey*: as a child, Christian Grey was terribly neglected. He is confused about love because he never experienced the real thing. In his mind, love is tangled up with bad feelings like pain and embarrassment. Christian has pleasure from controlling and hurting

women in bizarre ways. Anastasia is an immature girl who falls for Christian's looks and wealth, and foolishly goes along with his desires.

In the real world, this story would end badly, with Christian in jail, and Ana in a shelter - or morgue. Or maybe Christian would continue beating Ana, and she'd stay and suffer. Either way, their lives would most definitely *not* be a fairy tale. Trust me on this one.

As a doctor, I'm urging you: do NOT see *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Get informed, learn the facts, and explain to your friends why they shouldn't see it either.

Here are a few of the dangerous ideas promoted by *Fifty Shades of Grey*:

1. Girls want guys like Christian who order them around and get rough.

No! A psychologically healthy woman *avoids* pain. She wants to feel safe, respected and cared for by a man she can trust. She dreams about wedding gowns, not handcuffs.

2. Guys want a girl like Anastasia who is meek and insecure.

Wrong. A psychologically healthy man wants a woman who can stand up for herself. If he is out of line, he wants her to set him straight.

3. Anastasia exercises free choice when she consents to being hurt, so no one can judge her decision.

Flawed logic. Sure, Anastasia had free choice - and she chose poorly. A self-destructive decision is a bad decision.

4. Anastasia makes choices about Christian in a thoughtful and detached manner.

I doubt that. Christian constantly supplies Anastasia with alcohol, impairing her judgment. Also, Anastasia becomes sexually active with Christian - her first experience ever - soon after meeting him. Neuroscience suggests their intimacy could jump start her feelings of attachment and trust, before she's certain he deserved them. Sex is a powerful, intense experience - particularly the first

time. Finally, Christian manipulates Anastasia into signing a legal agreement prohibiting her from telling anyone that he is a long time abuser.

Alcohol, sex, manipulation - hardly the ingredients of a thoughtful, detached decision.

5. Christian's emotional problems are cured by Anastasia's love.

Only in a movie. In the real world, Christian wouldn't change to any significant degree. If Anastasia was fulfilled by helping emotionally disturbed people, she should have become a psychiatrist or social worker.

6. It's good to experiment with sexuality.

Maybe... for adults in a long term, healthy, committed, monogamous relationship, AKA "marriage". Otherwise, you're at high risk for STDs, pregnancy, and sexual assault. It's wise to be very careful who you allow to get close to you, physically and emotionally, because just one encounter can throw you off track and change your life forever.

Bottom line: the power of *Fifty Shades of Grey* lies in its ability to plant seeds of doubt. There are vast differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships, but the movie blurs those differences, so you begin to wonder: *what's healthy in a relationship? What's sick? There are so many shades of grey...I'm not sure.*

Listen, it's your safety and future we're talking about here. There's no room for doubt; an intimate relationship that includes violence, consensual or not, is unacceptable.

This is black and white. There are no shades of grey here. Not even one.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miriam Grossman MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "MD" at the end being more distinct and bold.

ONE HUNDRED PERCENT MD, ZERO PERCENT PC