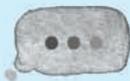


GIRL

Love, Sex, Romance,

and Being You



by Karen Rayne, PhD

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Dear Reader,

It is my deepest hope that you are here because you want to think about what being a girl means physically, emotionally, and sexually.

But first, it is important that we consider some of the cultural assumptions that are made about girls. Girls can be told, at different times, to be sensitive, strong, emotional, bold, sexually pure while still sexually attractive, and so much more. Let's throw those cultural assumptions out the window. This book is about the incredible range of what being a girl means.

This book is for all young women—of all bodies and sexualities—and is written with love and respect for each individual's process.

I'm glad you're here.



Karen Rayne, PhD

Introduction

Welcome to *GIRL!*

The content in this book is honest, real-world information for older teenagers who identify as female. Do you have questions about sex, love, relationships, and jumping from high school to college, all while navigating your sexuality? That's what we're here to talk about!

I hope that reading this book is so much fun for you. Sex, love, and romance can bring beauty to life, if they're done in ways that are right for the people involved. Below is some information that will come in handy as you read this book.

Words

The language around sex and sexuality is so important. There are a lot of words, from anatomy to psychology to culturally evolving words. If you don't know the definition of a word, don't let this intimidate you. Many of the chapters start with defining words that are important to that particular topic; if you come across a word that you don't know that isn't defined in the book, just do a quick Internet search for it.

The language around sexuality, particularly as it applies to identity, is changing quickly. If there are words about identity that feel outdated, replace them with words that resonate for you.

Parents

When I talk about parents, I'm referring to the people who raised you, whoever that means to you. Sometimes parents are biological and sometimes they're not. The parent-teen relationship is much more important than any kind of biological connection. So if you have a different word or name that you use for your parents, I hope you'll think about them whenever I say *parents*. You can even take a pen and write in the person who is meaningful to you.

Additional Resources

At the end of each chapter are additional resources. These point to books, websites, blog posts, TED talks, and more. Because the range of

topics in this book is so large, some of the topics had so many additional resources that it was hard to narrow it down to just a few, while for other topics it was hard to find even one or two resources to recommend. But know that what I did include in these sections are some of the best available at the writing of this book.

Here is a key to the Additional Resources icons:



Represents books



Represents apps



Represents websites



Represents organizations



Represents hotlines

Parts of the Book

There are a lot of little interactive and complementary “extras” scattered throughout the chapters. Here’s a run-down of some of them.

The Q’s

Throughout the book, there are questions for you to think about and, ideally, answer. These questions will hopefully help you check your knowledge, think about your feelings, and question what it is that you really want and need. There are different ways you can think about these questions:

- Consider possible answers to the questions, without writing them down.
- Write the answers in the book or in a journal or diary.
- Talk about your answers with a friend, counselor, or other trusted person.

The Diary Entries

Each chapter includes diary entries written by teenage girls and young adults. These diary entries are to show you how different girls relate to and live with the different topics covered in each chapter every day. These are real people writing about their real experiences. Some of them are writing under their own names, some under a pen name. To give you a sense of their personalities, the drawings of the authors are how they really look.

Here are introductions to each of the authors:



• **Anjali** is a full-time reproductive health professional, a part-time photographer, and an Indian classical dancer. She can't live without coffee, chocolate, and food. Anjali bounces between DC and Baltimore and loves all things in the reproductive health and sexual health realms. She hopes to one day travel and eat her way across the world!

• **Blake** is a queer/non-binary femme activist, artist, survivor, and performer who has a penchant for being silly. They work as a teaching artist and enjoy musical improv, acro yoga, and being a sponge. A native Texan, Blake grew up in Dallas and attended the University of Texas earning a bachelor of arts in theatre and dance, and a certificate in LGBTQ studies. It is their dream to create a holistic trauma healing center in New York for people experiencing homelessness.



• **Erin** is a theologian currently living in California where she is studying for a master's degree in Women's Studies in Religion at Claremont Graduate University. She also happens to be lesbian and transgender. A 2016 graduate of Eastern University in Pennsylvania, Erin earned her bachelor's degree in Biblical studies. She enjoys reading, spending time with her friends and family, and being in the snow. Erin hopes to return to the East Coast after completing her master's program.



• **Jordan** loves long walks on the beach, Harry Potter, and smashing the patriarchy. She is also a proud lover of theatre who would totally go to acting school if she didn't hate uncertainty so much. Instead, she's majoring in social work in college, and she eventually plans to be a clinical sexologist. Jordan dislikes queerphobia, institutionalized racism, fat prejudice, the fact that she'll probably still be paying off student loans on her 80th birthday, and things that are grape-flavored.



If Jordan could choose three people to be her besties, they would be Tess Holliday, Nicki Minaj, and Emma Watson. Finally, she hopes that other girls can identify with her diary entries, and that they give comfort to people who are going through the same things she has.

- **Lina G.** is a 22-year-old single mother working on multiple screenplays and a blog. During high school, her closest friends consisted of the popular and promiscuous girls, although she herself was neither of those things. As an undercover bisexual at a Christian-based boarding school, she struggled with self-acceptance, but she has recently learned to love and appreciate her true self.



- **Margaret** is 20 years old and attending her first semester at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Her major is early childhood education, to further her future career of secondary special education. When she isn't going to school, she works as a peer educator for Grand Street Settlement and at your neighborhood 7-Eleven. She really has a passion for working with children with special needs, and has had experience in that particular field since she was 13 years old. Dyeing her hair different colors as often as the seasons change, she is at times quirky, extremely weird, and fun to be around.



These diary entries are one of my favorite parts of the book. I hope you enjoy them, too!

Endmatter

At the end of the book is a section with additional information, including an anatomy glossary, and an index of the content in the entire book. These are great resources to refer to as you're reading the book or any time you hear something you'd like more information about.

And now? Dive in! Have fun.

Teen Self-help / Sexuality and Gender

Welcoming and inclusive of all self-identified girls, **GIRL: Love, Sex, Romance, and Being You** is an uncensored, unbiased, and fantastically relevant guide, jam-packed with what you want and need to know. A growing-up guide for the 21st century, **GIRL** covers what everyone is talking about—healthy sexuality, loving relationships, and gender fluidity, as well as thornier subjects such as STIs, consent, and sexual assault. Plus you'll find self-reflection quizzes, cool resources, and must-read real-life stories from girls like you!

Karen Rayne, PhD, is an educator, trainer, and nationally recognized expert on sexuality. Karen lives in Austin, TX, where she works with people of all ages to make information and conversations about sexuality accessible. Her goal is to ensure everyone has someone to talk with about sexuality and a place to find honest, accurate information. Because she can't talk with everyone, she writes books like this one.



Magination Press

Published by the American Psychological Association
www.apa.org/pubs/magination

ISBN 9781433823398



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