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SEX DOWNUNDER

BY MATTY SILVER

FOREWORD

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Matty Silver is a trained relationships counsellor and sex therapist. She has written this book because, difficult though it may be to believe in the present day and age, many adults are afraid, embarrassed or ashamed to speak to a stranger (or anyone) about sex. This is so, although an unsatisfactory sex life is a tremendous burden for most human beings.

It may be very much on the minds of the unsatisfied. But if they bottle up their problems and feel there is no one they can talk to, the result is anxiety, depression, stress and relationship breakdown. Sometimes even suicide. For those who do not know how (or where) to go to get basic advice, this book gives them the benefits of Matty Silver's years of experience. It deals with vaginismus, erectile dysfunction, fantasies, sexless marriages, sex toys, porn and much else besides. It is reassuring to know, based on her experience, that Matty Silver is confident and

* Former Judge and recipient of the Australian Human Rights Medal 1991.

optimistic that knowledge and advice can often, perhaps usually, offer excellent outcomes.

Knowing that you are not alone with a problem about sex is important to everyone who has a problem – especially if it one that you feel obliged to keep as a big dark secret. I know this because, when I was growing up in Australia in the 1940s-50s, I thought I was the only gay in the village. My sexual orientation was something I was told by society (and its laws) to keep strictly to myself. At a time when my body was bursting with hormones, I was made aware, in no uncertain terms, that I could talk about my ‘problem’ with no one. The rules at that time were ‘Don’t ask; Don’t tell’.

Getting to know other gay people was delayed for me by almost two decades. It was a sexless time. I sank my sorrows in school and university studies and endless student activities. When I met my partner Johan, when we were both just short of 30, I was feeling desperate that I would be ‘left on the shelf’. Fortunately, we met and have been together for 50 years: still going strong!

Because most gay people of my generation were forced to be silent about sex, when they discovered sex, it was like a dam bursting. They talked it

about it endlessly with their partner and just about anyone else who would listen. On the whole, I think gay people are more open and candid about sex than straights: an outcome of years of loneliness and solitary practices.

In my case there was another element. Johan was a migrant to Australia from The Netherlands. Just like Matty Silver. Although he insists that his native country was not always liberated and tolerant on the subject of sex, it did have a national characteristic that was different from Australia and also most Anglophone countries. Its people are very direct and blunt with each other. They generally cannot tolerate the hypocrisy (we call it politeness) of English speaking countries. They cannot understand hang ups over nudity, relationships and sex. Everything has to be laid on the table and spoken about frankly and bluntly.

Over 50 years, one grows to understand, and then cherish, this openness and direct common sense. But for those who do not have it on tap and have an issue with their sexual lives, it is wonderful to have this book. It sets out the answers to many of the questions that the reader was too ashamed to ask.

Not all problems of this world, including over sex, can be solved. But many can. Talking or reading about the subject can definitely help. Some problems are physiological. Some are psychological. Some are emotional. Others may have religious or cultural origins. Because of the importance of sex to the overwhelming majority of people, I applaud and praise Matty Silver for offering this book. Once, I would never have thought of writing this endorsement. But I thank Matty Silver for offering it to readers. Once I would not have written such an endorsement. I do so now because I threw off the burden of enforced silence and the pretence of hypocrisy and shame. When these barriers are overcome, life undoubtedly gets better. Some people still feel happier in the dark. I say let in the light.

Sydney

Michael Kirby

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