

the little black book for girlz

A Book on Healthy Sexuality

St. Stephen's Community House



annick press
toronto + new york + vancouver

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Preface

No matter what age we are, many of us prefer to speak to our peers about experiences we are going through, especially around issues of sex and sexuality. Many young women have expressed to us that there is a lack of material they can relate to on sexuality and relationships. They want something not only aimed at them, but also created by them. Out of this frustration came *The Little Black Book for Girlz*. The book was created by young women who hung out at the St. Stephen's Community House Youth Arcade Drop-In, in downtown Toronto. As a group we had many discussions about all kinds of different issues. These discussions were very honest and non-judgmental, and the girls wanted sex ed. material that was equally positive and empowering to them. As a group we decided to write our own book that would encourage other young women to learn more about their bodies, their relationship and their lives.

The Youth Arcade was an ideal environment for this project. It is a space where youth can meet, share experiences, identify problems, and support each other. It is also a place where they are challenged to think critically about the world around them. By having this space, the girls were able to take responsibility for the creation of the book and able to honestly talk and write about their lives.

At the time, and in such a supportive atmosphere, we felt very brave and powerful. We thought, "A book? No problem!" Well it turned out to be a little harder than we expected. Sex and relationships are HUGE subjects. To keep the book a manageable size, we had to cut out entire chapters on issues like body image, childhood sexual abuse, media, and religion. At times many of the writers were frustrated by the process and had other issues they were dealing with at home and school. It took two years and constant revisions

with a number of youth and community professionals, including social workers and doctors, to edit and review it ... and here we are today.

We're happy to report that the young women involved with *The Little Black Book* have become local superstars for their work on the project. Their names have popped up on television, on radio, and in magazines, all praising the girls for their honesty, their edge, and their creative spirit.

At St. Stephen's Community House we feel that material directed at youth is most effective when written by youth. Our hope is that this book offers information without judgment—without making girls feel bad about who they are and the decisions they make. We want our readers to feel intrigued, better educated, more capable of looking after themselves, and generally better able to make safe and fulfilling decisions regarding sex and relationships. To help in all this, we have included a resource guide and a glossary at the back of the book. Reading about all these issues may bring up questions that are not answered in *The Little Black Book*, so please check out the websites and hotlines that are listed if you require additional information. We hope you enjoy the book.

Sincerely,
Bridget Sinclair, *Project Coordinator and Facilitator*
Marlon Merraro, *Manager, Youth Services*
St. Stephen's Community House

hum dee dee dum dum dum...

Introduction

Alright, you chiquitas. Welcome to THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK.

In your very two hands, you hold a copy of a publication created especially for and by young women. It's a special book all about healthy sexuality and we're super proud of it. Why? Because this book was put together by a diverse group of teenage girls who have questions (and sometimes answers) about what and why and who we are as young women.

This book is just full of great stuff. Inside you'll find stories of personal experiences, poetry, important information, and resources all written and put together by young women aged 14 to 18. We look at relationships, periods, sex, birth control, pregnancy, STIs and AIDs, abortion, and sexual assault. Most of the authors of this book gained a lot of their knowledge from being "Arcade kids" (hanging out at the youth drop-in program at St. Stephen's Community House). And we interviewed many experts around Toronto to get straight facts about the stuff we chiquitas have to deal with.

I think young women in Toronto are among the luckiest creatures on this planet. We live in an amazing city, in a culture that allows us to be who and what we want. It can be hard to know what to



do with these freedoms, and it's a drag dealing with any limitations. Many times we aren't given the respect that we deserve. Sometimes we are asked to be silent.

We of THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK FOR GIRLZ group realize that all women everywhere deserve a voice. This collective of girls understands the importance of voicing our opinions and sharing experiences and stories. Adults can tell us what they think we're dealing with, but can they KNOW? We felt it was important for young women to have a book dedicated to what we think matters. Wherever you are in your life, there's one fundamental thing that links us all:

**We are teenage girls and
we kick ass!**

So please read on. Enjoy. Ask. Question. Talk to your friends, families, and lovers. It is super important to understand who and what you are and where you can go. And if you're ever stuck, please feel free to contact us or any of the organizations listed at the back of this book.

Signing off,
Chi Nguyen

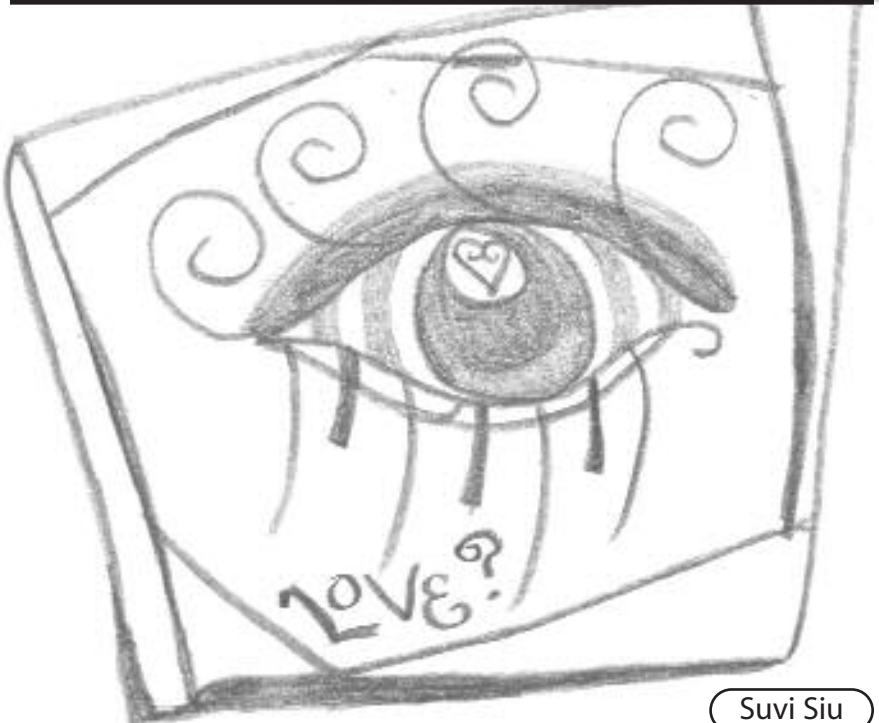


Relationships

Chapter 1

In this chapter, we look at issues around entering into relationships and that whole crazy love thing. Why are relationships so important to girls? Well, obviously the way in which we interact with the rest of the world effects how we view ourselves. Whether it's a relationship with a friend, a lover, or a boy- or girlfriend, they can often be fun, exciting, and totally terrifying at the same time. Sigh ...

—Chi Nguyen



Suvi Siu

By night U were my friend

Alicia Michele B.

At the time

That meant more to U than it did to me.

I was too blind to see that U wanted more from me

I told U how deep I had fallen in love.

And when he started to creep U were the one

That showed me love. Why didn't I see

Yours I was suppose to be?

So because of us U were joyous.

I saw the glow in your eyes. And the happiness in your smiles

But U told me lies.

U made me feel the way I always felt in my dreams

My dreams came true in U

And U said U felt the same way too.

Then Y did you leave me

The way U did

U say things have changed. But it's not me

It's U that's changed

So strange

U say U never look in anyone's eyes

But all U tell is lies. U know what I have been through

Can U hear my silent cries. Look what U are doing to me

I open my eyes and now I see. Just when I finally trusted U

U turn around and lie to me too.

I am sorry I met U

U keep pushing me away. All I want is for U to be okay

But maybe U are right. I'll try not to fight

Since U are happy the way things are

I won't interfere. If that's the only way I can show I care.

But this is so tough

And it even gets more rough. Cause it's breaking my heart

Thinking I have done something wrong.

Maybe you planned this all along

To think U were so special to me, but now I see.

This is how it's going to be.

But it's my bad

"Ain't that sad"

"Cause I always see people the way I like to see them

From near or far and not for who they really are"

If this is love then it's not enough

If all I am is confused

Love would stay with me until the end and much longer

Why can't U at least be my friend?

What Is Love?

This warm and fuzzy feeling...my god that sounds clichéd. It's so overwhelming sometimes! It will literally take your breath away, you just can't believe that this happening to you. When I'm with him, I feel perfect. I feel like I am flawless. Wow, it's corny, ain't it? But I'm trying my best. Love...lovelovelove, the word crawls up from your gut into your windpipe when you're around that one person and just sits there, making it hard to say anything but

I Love You

Even just to clear your throat.



In French they say *amour*, in German *Liebe*, in Italian *amore*, in any language they all boil down to the same thing: LOVE.

But what exactly is love?

According to dictionaries and encyclopedias love is...

1. To feel tender affection for somebody
2. To feel desire physically and emotionally for somebody
3. To like something very much
4. To show kindness to somebody
5. To have sex with somebody

But surely some can apply without the others! Love is a complex thing to understand, let alone define but one thing is certain, whether in France, Germany, or Italy, love is love.

Imogen Birchard



What Is a Healthy Relationship?

- * Feeling safe and able to talk about things that are important to you
- * Feeling trusted and trusting your boy/girlfriend
- * H A V I N G F U N
- * Feeling supported by your boy/girlfriend
- * Not feeling pressured to do anything you don't want to do
- * The relationship should make you feel good about yourself
- * Able to decide when you are ready to have sex
- * Learning about yourself and growing with each other

Reading the Signs: Unhealthy Relationships

- Mind games
- Controlling (telling partner what to do, etc.)
- Demanding (demanding sexual favors, etc.)
- Judgmental
- Smothering
- Pushing, hitting
- Grabbing, throwing objects
- Extreme jealousy
- Co-dependant (partner feeling like they can't do anything without you, vice versa)
- Public humiliation of partner
- Threatening
- Manipulation (tricking you into things you don't want to do, etc.)
- Possessive (treating your partner like they belong to you, are your possession, etc.)
- Overly critical
- Rough (pushing you around, being rougher during sex than you like, etc.)

—Imogen Birchard

Cheating: what is it?

Flirting? Having an emotional bond? Kissing? Talking? Sex...?

There are lots of different ideas of what cheating is. Some people think that flirting with someone else is cheating, while others think that as long as their partner isn't sleeping with anyone else, it's all good. When you're getting into a serious relationship, talk to your partner about what they think cheating is, and find a definition that you are both comfortable with to prevent any misunderstanding. Trust me, you'll avoid a lot of hurt feelings. Imogen Birchard