



Harmful To Minors: The Perils Of Protecting Children From Sex

Judith Levine

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Sex is a wonderful, crucial part of growing up, and children and teens can enjoy the pleasures of the body and be safe, too. In this important and controversial book, Judith Levine makes this argument and goes further, asserting that America's attempts to protect children from sex are worse than ineffectual. It is the assumption of danger and the exclusive focus on protection-what Levine terms "the sexual politics of fear"-that are themselves harmful to minors.

Through interviews with young people and their parents, stories drawn from today's headlines, visits to classrooms and clinics, and a look back at the ways sex among children and teenagers has been viewed throughout history, Judith Levine debunks some of the dominant myths of our society. She examines and challenges widespread anxieties (pedophilia, stranger kidnapping, Internet pornography) and sacred cows (abstinence-based sex education, statutory rape laws). Levine investigates the policies and practices that affect kids' sex lives-censorship, psychology, sex and AIDS education, family, criminal, and reproductive law, and the journalism that begs for "solutions" while inciting more fear.

Harmful to Minors offers fresh alternatives to fear and silence, describing sex-positive approaches that are ethically based and focus on common sense. Levine provides optimistic, though realistic, prescriptions for how we might do better in guiding children toward loving well-that is, safely, pleurably, and with respect for others and themselves.

Judith Levine is a journalist, essayist, and author who has written about sex, gender, and families for two decades. Her articles appear regularly in national publications, most recently Ms., nerve.com, and My Generation. An activist for free speech and sex education, Levine is a founder of the feminist group No More Nice Girls and the National Writers Union. She is the author of *My Enemy, My Love: Women, Men, and the Dilemmas of Gender* (1992), and lives in Brooklyn, New York, and Hardwick, Vermont.

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