

Review of Queen Bees and Wannabes by Rosalind Wiseman

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Rosalind Wiseman is cofounder of Empower, a not-for-profit organization that helps boys and girls learn how to deal with life without violence. In addition, Empower's staff has developed a curriculum called "Owning Up" "that teaches young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-one the skills to understand and proactively address the impact of Girl World" (p. 11). The organization teaches more than four thousand girls and boys and reaches many thousands more through training programs throughout the country. Wiseman has also developed materials for girls that address coping with abusive relationships and materials for parents to teach them how to deal with and reach out to their daughters. The author displays a deep and thorough understanding of adolescent psychology, gender role issues, and maternal savvy.

Every parent, grandparent, teacher of adolescents, social worker, faith worker, youth counselor, and youth therapist should read this book, twice. Wiseman writes with humor and insight that makes reading this book almost fun. Almost fun, but not quite, because there is so much pain in the lives of adolescent girls. And for those of us who have been there, the memories can be vivid and the wounds still raw. The book eloquently illustrates how our experience as adolescents can have a powerful influence on how we form or fail to form relationships throughout the rest of our lives.

Through reading this book we are taught to develop a "girl brain." Watching our little girls grow up and turn away from us toward friends who are often mean, spiteful, destructive, manipulative, and bullying can be very frustrating. Worse yet is to watch our daughters lose the joy and confidence they had in elementary school and to not know what is going on or how to help. *Queen Bees* is our manual that helps those of us on Planet Parent communicate with those on Girl World. We learn about the hierarchy of the clique and what it means to each member. We come to understand that our daughters understand that their survival depends not on parents but on their peers. We have little control over their experiences at school and within the social world in which our daughters must function, although we can make things worse. With the techniques learned in this book we can learn how to be a safe harbor for our daughters or girls in our care when trouble comes, as it surely will.

Wiseman has peppered the chapters with "Landmines," places parents often go, and things they say or do, but never, never should. She teaches us how to avoid trivializing and dismissing girls' experiences. We learn how to talk to teachers, other parents, and even more importantly, perhaps, when and how *not* to talk to others who are important figures in our girls' lives. We also learn various parenting styles, the best being "The Loving Hard-assed Parents" (p. 54). We are taught how to create a parental bill of rights as well as a daughter's bill of rights.

Wiseman teaches us about teasing, gossiping, and reputations and how they all can influence our daughter's social competency, sense of self, and friendships (p. 112). We learn strategies to help us know when to fight with our daughters and/or for them and when to back off. She teaches us about the mysterious world of the adolescent girls' cliques and their intricate rules.

And then there is the scariest part of raising an adolescent girl: the inhabitants of Boy World. This book introduces us to all those different types of adolescent boys from the "Nice Guys" to the "Thugs." We find out what adolescent boys think about girls and what they most want to know about adolescent girls. Parents need to know how to step back when daughters are getting dumped and when they are dumping boys. This is essential information for parents as these can be trivial, traumatic, or even life-threatening experiences. We learn not to tease. Adolescent romance is important; so, it is important to develop a girl's bill of rights for having boyfriends and her bill of rights with boyfriends. Parents need to talk to their daughters to make sure that they know that they deserve respect, kindness, and listening from any boy (never call him a boy to your daughter; he's a guy) with whom they have a relationship. Wiseman teaches parents about parties, from sixth-grade all-girl birthdays to those high school guy-girl parties where alcohol and drugs may play a role.

I highly recommend this book. I encourage everyone who has any relationship with adolescents to read *Queen Bees And Wannabes*.

Contact Information:

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The opinions stated in this review are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the individuals and organizations who support *The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues*.

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