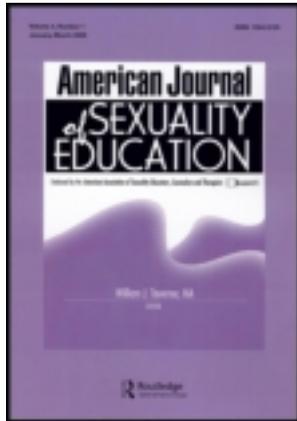


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### Naked at Our Age: Talking Out Loud About Senior Sex

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## ***Naked at Our Age: Talking Out Loud About Senior Sex***

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*Naked at Our Age is an excellent resource for sexually interested and/or active adults over the age of 60. The book combines the author's personal reflections, questions and stories shared by older adult, and advice from sex therapists, sexuality educators, the author, and health care providers. The breadth of topics makes the book useful to men and women, particularly those interested in partnered sex, whether with a long-term mate or new partner. Weaknesses include the emphasis on information for those who are or want to be partnered sexually, the limited attention to chronic illness and other physical limitations other than cancer, and the lack of some basic information. These are small complaints compared to the overall high quality of the information in the book. Naked at Our Age is compassionately and well written, and it offers carefully researched information and advice. The book is recommended for older adults and for the professionals who work with them.*

**KEYWORDS** *Sex and aging, sexuality and aging, aging, sex advice, senior sexuality, Joan Price*

NAKED AT OUR AGE: TALKING OUT LOUD ABOUT SENIOR SEX, Joan Price. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2010, 387 pages, softcover, \$16.96, ISBN 987-1580053386.

*Naked at Our Age* is a wisdom-filled book that acknowledges and normalizes the sexual interests, needs, and challenges faced by older adults and their partners. The book should be recommended reading for professionals working with older adults, such as social workers, health care providers,

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sexuality educators, psychotherapists, and staff/administrators in adult living environments.

Author Joan Price writes with the reassuring tone of a good friend—more reassuring, actually, because good friends can be critical, while Price offers warmly acknowledges and nonjudgmentally addresses the concerns voiced by the individuals quoted in her book.

At nearly 400 pages, *Naked at Our Age* comprises 20 chapters, each of which combines Price's commentary or reminiscences, questions and stories shared by older adults, and advice from a host of sex therapists, sexuality educators, and health care providers. To Price's credit, contributors include several individuals with expertise in areas typically overlooked, such as a sex toy seller, an erotic film director, and sexuality advocates. In addition, Price includes nontraditional sex practices and relationships including polyamory, open marriage, swinging, multiple-partner sex, BDSM (bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism), and sex incorporating phones, webcams, and chatrooms.

The foreword, written by sexuality author and educator Betty Dodson, oddly focuses on her own sexual experiences instead of introducing Price or her book; however, any confusion the reader may feel will be offset by Dodson's candor, which mirrors the forthright nature of the book. In the introduction, Price explains that her first book, *Better Than I Ever Expected*, led readers to request that she write this book, which is less about her sexual reawakening than it is about sexual problem solving for men and women ages 60 and up. Price divides the book into chapters that make this one of the most useful books on the market about older adult sexuality. The chapters are:

1. The Older Ways Don't Do It Anymore!
2. Reviving Desire
3. Sex Toys: Now More Than Ever
4. Together Yet Alone: Is This My Marriage?
5. Talking About Sex
6. Off the Beaten Path: Nontraditional Sex Practices and Relationships
7. Surviving Divorce, Breakup, Betrayal
8. Sex with Myself
9. Unlearning Our Upbringing: Women's Stories
10. Unlearning Our Upbringing: Men's Stories
11. When Sex Hurts: Vulvar/Vaginal Pain
12. Reclaiming Sexuality after Cancer
13. Erectile Dysfunction: What Men Don't Say Out Loud
14. Erectile Dysfunction: Women Speak Out
15. No Way Back: When Your Partner Has Alzheimer's Disease
16. Death, Grieving . . . and Then What?

17. Sexuality for Hire
18. DWO: Dating While Old(er)
19. Safer Sex—Yes, at Our Age
20. Better Now Than Ever: The Joys of Older-Age Sex

Within each chapter lies a wealth of commentary by people Price met through her work, blogs, Facebook page, surveys, and other venues. Their honesty is heartbreaking at times, such as this comment by 58-year-old Frank, who discusses his creative sexual life in the virtual world of Second Life:

In real life, I have survived a cardiac arrest and brain damage, a burst appendix, and a bleeding ulcer. I have an acoustic neuroma, which affects both my hearing on one side and my balance, in general. I can no longer dance, for instance. So a scenario where I can appear young—where I can dance with my partner and charm her with words spoken or typed, instead of stumbling over chairs and spilling my wine—is pretty ideal. (p. 121)

The 45 experts Price invited to contribute offer helpful advice and suggestions, including some information that may be new to many sexuality and health care professionals, such as Michael Castleman's distinction between true erectile dysfunction (ED), which affects only a modest number of older men, and erectile dissatisfaction (EDis), which is experienced by nearly all older men. This is an important distinction for health care providers who can be too quick to write prescriptions when education about normal, age-related sexual changes would be sufficient.

Price's candor may be jarring for some readers, as she discusses her sexual experiences with her husband, with vibrators, and with a Tantric healer who provided an orgasm-inducing sensual massage. She notes that her family might cringe upon reading about the third type of experience. It would have been possible to educate about these subjects without disclosing so much personal information, but Price chose to include these details in order to give older adults information they cannot read elsewhere and may not be able to discuss with a loved one or health care professional.

The most profound section of the book deals with grief, and Price holds nothing back as she writes:

During my extreme grief after Robert died, I cried all day. That's an understatement. I wailed, I screamed, I keened. I exploded in great, rippling waves of crying that felt like I was vomiting tears uncontrollably from my gut. My heart was being sawed to pieces. (p. 273)

Price then describes her slow and emotionally wrenching journey back from the depths of despair to being eager to live this new stage of her life.

She discusses the change she experienced from being passionately engaged with her sensuality to being unable to connect with anything other than a dispassionate approach to her work as a sexuality educator. She turned to many kinds of experts to guide her through this dark period in her life, and readers will no doubt feel the urge to cheer when reading of the moment Price felt her sex drive flicker back to life.

The book is geared toward heterosexual men and women having or desiring partnered sex, which creates a disconnect when Price frequently refers to her own singlehood since her husband's death. She does use one chapter to address masturbation as a healthy, joyful activity for single and partnered adults, and self-pleasure is mentioned during discussions of sexual dysfunction. However, given the high numbers of single, older adults, more references to solo sensual pleasures, both genital and nongenital, would have been a useful addition. Much of the text could be useful to people of any orientation; the personal reflections and most of the advice relates to male-female sexual experiences.

While one chapter addresses cancer and sexuality, another chapter offers limited discussion of how to adapt to other aches and pains. Surprisingly, given the country's collective health status, little attention is given to the emotional and sexual impact of heart disease, obesity, medications, or diabetes. Excellent advice from Stephanie Buehler on reclaiming sexuality after a health event is tucked into the cancer chapter, but it could be easily missed by someone who is not interested in the chapter topic.

Some very basic information is missing, such as an explanation of what a vibrator is, before the item is recommended for masturbation. While readers are advised to explore "women-friendly" adult stores, no suggestions are given as how to locate such stores. Likewise, no recommendations are provided for where nononline shoppers can purchase recommended personal lubricants that are not stocked in pharmacies.

Photos or illustrations would help readers visualize sexual aids or intercourse positions. Price refers readers to her Web site for more information, but that may not be sufficient, since only 44% of adults ages 65–73 and 20% of adults over the age of 74 have broadband Internet connections at home, according to the Pew Research Center.

These are slight weaknesses, however, compared to the book's overall strength. *Naked at Our Age* is compassionate and well written, and it provides carefully researched information and advice. The book was a pleasure to read and will provide a wealth of information and reassurance to older adults and the professionals who work with them.

## ORDERING INFORMATION

*Naked at Our Age* is available online from <http://joanprice.com> and <http://www.amazon.com>.

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