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Open: Love, Sex, And Life In An Open Marriage

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J E N N Y B L O C K



Synopsis

Finally, a book about open marriage that grapples with the problems surrounding monogamy and fidelity in an honest, heartfelt, and non-fringe manner. Jenny Block is your average girl next door, a suburban wife and mother for whom married life never felt quite right. While many books on this topic presuppose that the listener is ready to embrace an "alternative lifestyle", Block operates from the assumption that most couples who are curious about or engaged in open marriages are in fact more like her - normal people who question whether monogamy is right for them; good people who love their spouses but want variation; capable parents who are not deviant just because they choose to be honest about their desires. Open challenges our notions of what traditional marriage looks like, and presents one woman's journey down an uncertain path that ultimately proves open marriage is a viable option for her and others.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Bookslut review nails it: [...]I have no issue with the practice of polyamory. My issue is with the messenger. Jenny is a clever woman who easily wins people over with her warm demeanor and self-deprecating wit. However, I cannot take what she says at face value. Her book is supposed to be about open "marriage", but it has been (rather sheepishly) dedicated to her girlfriend. This subtle but cavalier gesture underscores the self-centered attitude that drives the story within. We learn of Jenny's amazing power to attract youthful lesbian lovers who previously identified as straight ("whee"). We learn how she cheated on her spouse for the simple reason that she really, really likes

having sex with other people (who doesn't?). And we learn how her husband is "the rock" in a marriage where he seemingly only exists to help her reach "the sky"... her girlfriend. How nice. I'm sure every spouse, male or female, aspires for such a role. I agree with Jenny that our culture is overdue for a reexamination of monogamy. This simply isn't the book to accomplish it. Jenny is bisexual and has an arrangement that allows for male and female lovers if she so decides. However, other bisexuals practice a form of "gender monogamy" in which only partners of the same gender are allowed. Still others consider themselves sexually monogamous but engage in extramarital emotional relationships. Essentially, we can live as we please as long as it is for the betterment of everyone involved. Which is why it would be nice to hear the argument from her husband's perspective instead of exclusively from a person who is so gung-ho about wanting it all, at any cost. If mainstream America is ever going to buy into this lifestyle, we need more than lip service and a ring on the cover.

My wife and I have loved "Open". As other reviewers have stated this with more eloquence, I won't belabor the point: Ms. Block's disarming honesty makes the book more useful than straight-up "pro-nonmonogamy" tracts. The reader can follow through her journey and draw their own impressions. As we amass a small library pondering the joys and perils of open marriage, we've found this book to be among the most useful yet, tying the utterly honest Polyamory: Roadmaps for the Clueless & Hopeful. I will say this against the book: it fundamentally mischaracterizes Iris Krasnow's *Surrendering to Marriage* as a throwback to the 1950s "women submit to men" culture. This is simply wrong; Block has not read Krasnow carefully, or intentionally misread her. As Krasnow states (explicitly on page 14, implicitly throughout the book, including dust jacket and subtitle), the book is meant for both men and women. Krasnow (like Block!) writes about marriage from a woman's perspective simply because she is a woman. I wouldn't make a big deal of this, but Block does: 7 pages are given over to an anti-Krasnow crusade. At one point, Block likens her to a "crackpot", and claims Krasnow has set back "countless years of fighting for women's rights." Nope. Block's misunderstanding.

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