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Trends



MUM'S THE WORD
Treats that will brighten up her Day

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SHUTTERSTOCK

This should HIT THE G-SPOT

Scandinavian bestseller *The Wonder Down Under* is the book everyone should be talking about, says **Claire Coleman**

WOMEN should masturbate every day! And come up with a better word for it than “masturbate”, which sounds like a disease.’

I can’t see the faces of the other guests sitting near us in the posh London hotel where this interview is taking place but I don’t imagine this was the sort of conversation they were anticipating overhearing on a damp winter Wednesday.

Still, in a way that’s exactly why we’re having it. I’m talking to the authors of a book out this week called *The Wonder Down Under*, subtitled *A User’s Guide To The Vagina*. Published last year in their native Norway, the book became an instant bestseller, selling out in less than

three days, and this year, to their surprise and delight, more than 32 foreign language translations are being published.

‘We didn’t think it would sell outside of Scandinavia,’ Nina Brochmann, one of the authors, tells me. ‘Maybe Germany, but we never thought the Catholic countries would take it – but it’s being published in Spain and Italy, translated into Arabic and Chinese. They’re publishing a book with a vulva on the front!’

‘It just shows that everybody has these problems and that there are no books tackling these female issues in a way that everyone can understand,’ adds Ellen Støkken Dahl, Brochmann’s co-author.

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WONDER DOWN UNDER FACTS



Nearly all women don’t reach orgasm on a one-night stand. In one study of US college students, only one in ten had an orgasm the first time they slept with a new partner; 70 per cent had an orgasm when they’d been in a relationship for more than six months.



Between five and ten per cent of women are anorgasmic – in other words, they’ve NEVER had an orgasm, either alone or with another person. For men, the opposite most often applies – they struggle with coming too quickly.



A major British study found that 21 per cent of women aged 16 to 24 found it difficult to have orgasms during sex.



The famous ‘G-spot’ was named after German gynaecologist Ernst Gräfenberg, who discovered the extra sensitive point in the vagina in the 1940s. Researchers have been searching for the G-spot ever since and its existence has yet to be proved.

No need to be SHY

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So just who are these Norwegians and how did this book come about? Well, the pair met at medical school in Oslo when they both volunteered for a sex education organisation, providing help and advice for teenagers and sex workers. They became aware that there was a real dearth of education when it comes to female sexuality and reproductive systems.

'Between secondary school and pregnancy care there's really nothing,' says Ellen, 'so people read stuff online that is not necessarily based on sound medical sources.'

As a result they set up a blog, The Genital Area, an informative and approachable hub of information about sex and science that proved hugely popular and led to their book deal. At almost 300 pages, the book is a comprehensive guide to everything from anatomy and periods to sex, contraception, STDs and more, with chapters dedicated to 'Hairy tips', 'PMS – the pain-and-murder syndrome', and 'Intense itching and rotten fish – genital problems you'll certainly encounter'. There are no punches pulled here and with good reason.

'This knowledge is very empowering,' says Ellen. 'It helps women feel secure in their own bodies and reclaim the power that may have been taken away.'

She doesn't add 'by the patriarchy'

but they both acknowledge that along with the #MeToo movement, their book is part of a bigger societal shift that sees women refusing oppression on all levels – something they clearly think is long overdue.

'It's taboo to say it hurts because you're bleeding from your genitals,' says Nina. 'But why should we package our bodies in certain ways to avoid offending men?'

However, they both want to point out that although the book was written with 17- to 35-year-old women in mind, everyone can get something from it.

'My 65-year-old mother-in-law, who is a nurse, says she learned a lot, and a gay guy who reviewed our book said the chapter on anal sex was one of the most informative things he's read on the subject!' says Nina.

They are particularly keen for parents to read it and to share it with their children.

'Young teens are exposed to sexualised pressure much earlier,' says Ellen. 'They watch porn and have distorted expectations about how they should behave in sexual encounters. We need to take that seriously and talk to young people



about what they see on screen and what they should expect in reality.'

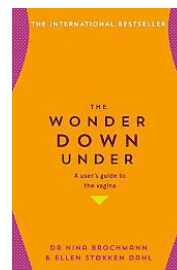
As for female masturbation, Nina is deadly serious.

'Male masturbation used to be a taboo but now it's fine to talk about "jerk off", but the same isn't true of women,' she says. 'Some surveys found that around 40 per cent of young women never or rarely masturbate. For men that figure is nine per cent.'

'The result is that women know less about their own sexuality, are less comfortable with their bodies and have worse sex. If you don't work out how to please yourself, how is anyone else going to please you?'

Ladies – you heard the woman. Time to discover your own wonder down under.

The Wonder Down Under by Nina Brochmann and Ellen Støkken Dahl (Hodder & Stoughton) is out today



THE MYTH OF THE HYMEN

Of all the topics covered in their book, this is the one Nina and Ellen feel could potentially have the most impact.

Nina says: 'Even in Norway, some girls are not allowed to cycle because their mothers worry they will "ruin" their virginity, and around the world young women are still examined to see "if they are virgins".'

However, in extensive



research, which involved delving into forensic literature that was more than 100 years old, the pair discovered categorically that the hymen is not like a balloon that can be burst but more like an elastic doughnut. Put simply, you can't tell by looking at a hymen whether or not its owner is a virgin.



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