



The Joy of Self-Pleasuring: Why Feel Guilty About Feeling Good?

Edward L. Rowan

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Psychiatrist and sex therapist Edward L. Rowan, M.D., has written this unique book to encourage us all to come out of the closet. Masturbation is surely one of the most common human activities, and yet most of us react to the subject with embarrassment. Americans are generally so uncomfortable with the topic that former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders was fired for indiscreetly suggesting in public that high school kids masturbate as a way of avoiding HIV infection.

Dr. Rowan points to the Elders incident as evidence that we are still victims of a negative cultural attitude spawned by the sin and sickness models of early Church fathers and medical practitioners who did not know any better. Unfortunately, they established a pattern of shame and guilt that is difficult to overcome in spite of our current knowledge.

Although masturbation is now recognized as a therapeutic tool in addressing sexual dysfunction and problematic arousal patterns, Rowan argues that it can be much more. Good orgasms, whether alone or with a partner, provide a sense of well-being and personal autonomy. Relationships are better when one does not have to depend solely on a partner to make them whole. Masturbation is also the safest form of safe sex.

While masturbation is a universal behavior, there are differences in motivation, frequency, technique, and fantasy patterns between men and women. Rowan discusses these differences while emphasizing that masturbation can be good sex and should be experienced for pleasure not just as a tension release.

Our attitudes are due for a change, says Dr. Rowan, and *The Joy of Self-Pleasuring* is designed to promote that change while offering the reader information, insight, and humor as well.



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