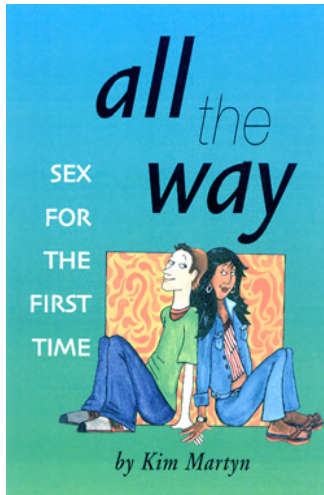


All the Way: Sex for the First Time

By Kim Martyn Sumach Press, 2003

124 pages \$16.95 Cdn

Reviewed by Laura Wershler



All the Way: Sex for the First Time, by Kim Martyn is an important resource because it tells the truth about youth sexuality to teens and parents.

What makes it different from other books about sex for teens? The title for one thing. This book promises and delivers the information needed to **prepare** to have sex for the first time. Martyn's aim is twofold: to assist teens anticipate most of the possible outcomes of becoming sexually active and to provide information they must have to create positive sexual experiences for themselves and their partners.

Kim Martyn is a Canadian sexuality educator with almost 20 years experience. She knows that "just say no" is a no-no when it comes to sex and youth. *All the Way* provides the information youth need to know to make the best decisions about **with whom, where** and **when** to have sex for the first time.

Most kids won't know the stuff that's in this book by age 13 or 14, but perhaps they should. Martyn says most girls who wish they had waited longer before going "all the way" experienced first intercourse at 13 to 15 years of age. Would a book like this have helped them make different choices?

Martyn guides readers through a comprehensive sex ed curriculum, complete with exercises, quizzes and concrete information on everything young people need to know **before** becoming sexually active. Stories, anecdotes, cartoons and youth-friendly language make it accessible and meaningful to a wide audience.

The book includes facts about bodies, sexual intercourse and protection. Stories, both good and bad, from people who've been there. Ideas on how to communicate about what you want and don't want. And the author's views on how to know if you're ready for sex, how to make it safer, what to expect and how to give yourself more time.

What you won't find is a discourse on abstinence. The word, writes Martyn, is "loaded with sex-negative tones". Regardless, the book is just as helpful for teens waiting until marriage to experience sex as it is for those who are not.

The author handles tough subjects like sexual coercion, HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy, but does so from a sex-positive perspective that acknowledges the downside without promoting a fear based approach to sexual decision making.

Martyn doesn't overdo the facts and statistics, providing just enough to clarify risks and motivate harm reduction efforts. She concentrates on problems most young people are likely to run into. Birth control information is complete without being complex. Additional resources include confidential hot-lines, web sites, books and videos for kids and adults.

Young readers and many parents will appreciate Martyn's non-judgmental, respectful approach to youth sexuality. She addresses the sexual differences (body and mind) between guys and girls but does so without denigrating young men as often happens in discussions about teen sex. She also, straight-forwardly, includes youth who are not straight – the lesbian, gay, bi, transgendered, etc. adolescents who fit into the catch all designation: LGBTTQI.

Parents and mentors are not ignored. In *“for parents and others (who won’t be there)”* you’ll find pointers on how to talk to teens in healthy, helpful ways and how to handle issues like sleepovers, supplying condoms and sharing personal experiences. Adults are meant to read this book and pass it on to kids, who no doubt will then share it with their friends.

All the Way reads more like an engaging conversation than a sexual health guidebook. It’s the long, interesting version of the “sex talk” all parents wish they could have with their kids. It has the potential to become a popular sexuality resource for parents, educators and youth workers alike who believe that young people have a right to accurate, unbiased information and healthy, pleasurable sexual relationships.