



# Girls Will Be Girls: Raising Confident and Courageous Daughters

By Joann Deak

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**Girls Will Be Girls: Raising Confident and Courageous Daughters** By Joann Deak

Now available in paperback is a bold, fresh, and timely work that "offers parents humor, understanding, parenting philosophy, and well-founded pearls of wisdom." --Michael G. Thompson, Ph.D., coauthor of *Raising Cain*

Mary Pipher told us about the problems girls face in *Reviving Ophelia*; now in *Girls Will Be Girls*, JoAnn Deak gives us the solutions. Deak looks past the "scare" stories to those that enlighten parents and enable them to empower girls. She draws from the latest brain research on girls to illustrate the exciting new ways in which we can help our daughters learn and thrive. Most telling of all, she gives us the voices of girls themselves as they struggle with body image, self-esteem, intellectual growth, peer pressure, and media messages. The result is a masterly book that addresses the key issues for girls growing up; one that fulfills a desperate need for clear guiding principles to help mothers, fathers, and their daughters navigate this chaotic contemporary culture.

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**Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Deak, a speaker, school psychologist and educator, offers a practical and reassuring guide for parents of daughters. The introduction explains why the message of this book is so important: "Girls face an extraordinary challenge in our changing world. They are dealing with more sophisticated issues than ever before, and they are doing so with less adult contact and guidance than ever before. Statistics tell the story of a population at risk both physically and emotionally: one in four girls shows signs of depression. Compared to males, twice as many females attempt suicide...." As any parent of an adolescent or teen daughter knows, even the most straightforward conversation can quickly deteriorate into an argument, tears and frustration on both sides. Deak offers a variety of scenarios along with suggestions for improving the communication: for example, when one girl immediately says she hates her school and the family must move, the parents are sympathetic and schedule visits to some other schools. Within a few weeks, the student has adjusted to the school and in fact chooses to stay there. The approach of "Listening and acting as a sounding board can always be part of the equation...." Deak discusses the differences between fathers and daughters and mothers and daughters and also some of the more common problems faced by teens, such as body image and peer pressure. While there are no instant fixes in these often trying times, this book provides an intelligent and reasonable plan that many parents will want to consider.

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From Library Journal

These two titles strengthen the burgeoning girl-rearing genre. A psychologist and speaker on gender equity, Deak aims to give answers to the problems raised in Mary Pipher's classic *Reviving Ophelia*. Quite a claim but she does it. To handle struggles with body image, self-esteem, intellectual growth, peer pressure, and media messages, Deak offers a strong framework that includes concepts like Crucible Events (defining life episodes) and the Strudel Theory (building a life with layers). That latter concept comes into play with Deak's objection to the theme of Laura Stepp's recent *Our Last Best Shot*: that is, if parents lose touch with their daughter during adolescence, their relationship is over. Many levels of experience make our daughters who they are; parents are never done connecting with their daughters, says Deak. Furthermore, girls need to be connected to other girls, which can, in turn, conflict with their need to compete, succeed, and find happiness. Finally, Deak deals with the newest issues of girls as manipulators/pleasers. Hers is a thoughtful philosophy based on years of counseling, research, and experience. Kelly, executive director of the national advocacy group Dads and Daughters, shares his perspective on raising girls (he is the father of twins). Although initially he goes a little overboard with his claims of a father's impact on daughters, he ultimately delivers an effective message: fathers can take an active role in raising confident daughters. As Deak also points out in her book, however, dads may have a harder time with daughters than mothers have raising sons. The teen years are especially trying for dads because of sexual issues, and Kelly expertly shows readers how to deal with them. Rather than stamp out girls' libidos, he argues, parents must help daughters recognize them. In an age of boundaries and abuse, he delineates the differences between nourishing touch and physical abuse. Live-away dads are not forgotten either. He's also open to homosexuality and tries to teach daughters new ways of coping (e.g., allowing his daughters a checking account at age 12). Michael Gurian's *The Wonder of Girls* describes more fully the role of intimacy, biology, and brain chemistry in girls' lives; Kelly just wants dads to know how very influential they are. Both *Girls* and *Dads* are highly recommended for public libraries. Linda Beck, Indian Valley P.L., Telford, PA

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From [Booklist](#)

This straightforward, comforting title joins the spate of recent books that offer insight into the complexities of teen girls. A veteran school psychologist and gender-equity consultant, Deak teams with Barker, who coauthored *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* (1999). In language that is both warm and authoritative, the authors speak directly to parents, beginning with a chapter about maintaining one's perspective and values in increasingly difficult, unclear situations: "How do you negotiate the gray?" Subsequent chapters give a brief overview of girls' physiological development, showing the fascinating relationship between brain growth and girls' behavior. There are also separate chapters about dads and moms and a final section that reminds parents that support and praise alone won't lead their daughters to self-esteem; it's successful, independent experiences that build the deepest confidence. Supportive and less bleak than many recent titles about the lives of teen girls, this no-nonsense book offers a wealth of practical advice for parents and teachers. Suggest Michael J. Bradley's *Yes, Your Teen Is Crazy!* [BKL Se 15 01] for more connections between physiology and behavior. *Gillian Engberg*  
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