



The Ethical Slut: A Practical Guide to Polyamory, Open Relationships & Other Adventures

Dossie Easton , Janet W. Hardy

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THE GROUNDBREAKING BOOK THAT GAVE SLUTS A GOOD NAME

If you've ever yearned for love, sex, and intimacy beyond the limits of conventional monogamy, *The Ethical Slut* will open you up to infinite possibilities. Relationship pioneers Dossie Easton and Janet W. Hardy dispel myths about sluthood and show you how to maintain a successful polyamorous lifestyle through open communication, emotional honesty, and safer-sex practices. This updated and expanded edition includes new strategies for single sluts, advice on how to open an existing relationship or marriage, and exercises to help you and your partners define relationships on your own terms. Whether you're a card-carrying slut or just testing the waters, you'll learn how to expand your circle of lovers and partners, balance your family and personal life, and discover romance and friendship beyond your dreams.

PRAISE FOR THE SECOND EDITION OF *THE ETHICAL SLUT*

"This book is the definitive guide to having your marriage and eating other people too. *The Ethical Slut* made me the ethical slut I am today, and I am so proud!"

—Margaret Cho, comedian and author of *I'm the One That I Want*

"*The Ethical Slut* is one of the most useful relationship books you could ever read, no matter what your lifestyle choices. It's chock-full of great information about communication, jealousy, asking for what you want, and maintaining a relationship with integrity. An absolute masterpiece and a must-read!"

—Annie Sprinkle, PhD, sexologist and author of *Dr. Sprinkle's Spectacular Sex*

"Many people wish for and dream of a wider world sexually and live out their lives unable to find the courage to explore. This book is a thoughtful, practical, and loving look at that exploration."

—David Crosby, musician and author of *Since Then*

The Ethical Slut: A Practical Guide to Polyamory, Open Relationships & Other Adventures Details

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From Reader Review The Ethical Slut: A Practical Guide to Polyamory, Open Relationships & Other Adventures for online ebook

Mk says

So I realize that I probably lose radical queer points for not being that into this book, but so goes it. Though it contains some practical tips for polyamory, the tone of much of it rubs me the wrong way. The idea that sex solves everything is clearly oversimplified. No joke, at one point they come quite close to saying that if people had just been having more sex with more people the Holocaust wouldn't have happened.

Tate says

Totally the epitome of the "It was ok" rating. I think the only people who read this book and really really love it are people who are looking for some validation ("it's in a book - it's gotta be legit!") for polyamory. I think polyamory is pretty valid, but the authors seem self-righteous at times, and that really turned me off to this one.

Joey Comeau says

I wish someone could write a book about having multiple sexual or romantic partners without sounding like a god damn flake hippy.

Amanda says

This book is an absolute must-read for anyone planning on interacting with other people in any kind of sexual or romantic context, regardless of whether or not they are considering non-monogamy. It has a lot of good lessons on communication, unlearning jealousy, and talking frankly about your sexual needs and limits. There were definitely some paragraphs which made me stop and go: "Oh!" - I learned a lot about things I'd thought myself fairly well-versed in already, and came to some big new realisations.

The resources section in the back is likely more helpful to people diving into non-traditional relationships, and is by no means complete, but acts as a good jumping off point. The activities included in the text are probably best done as part of an existing couple, but are good food for thought. I would say if you can handle the very-obviously-written-by-flower-children tone of the book and the occasional references to tarot, paganism, tantra, and other alternative spirituality-based ideas, it is definitely worth getting a copy.

Jess says

This book helped me deconstruct the way I have been programmed to think about love, relationships, and how important it is to take care of yourself. Even if you don't plan on becoming a floozie anytime soon, this book is a really great read.

Paul says

I would really rate this 3-1/2 stars but I'm not allowed. It's funny that so many books about this stuff are so posi, I guess cuz you wouldn't bother writing a book about all of your failed experiments and the ragged pain and confusion and all that bullshit - maybe all those people just wrote fiction, or weren't writers. Not that I don't think it's worthwhile, but maybe that it's like how desert cookbooks don't talk about hypoglycemia or obesity or anything like that.

Ashley says

To be honest, I went into this book with a bad attitude. I read it as part of a book club. It's not so much that I'm pro-monogamy or anti-sex. I felt like the book is oddly dated, and that for all the moral panic about "hook up culture" if there is anything it's done (for women especially) it's separate sex and relationships.

Perhaps it's a generational thing. The two authors spend A LOT of time talking about how you can be sexual in different ways with different people at different times and I just kept thinking "duh, of course you can." Similarly, their advice is stuff like "schedule time for everyone," "communicate clearly," and "make sure you're making choices consciously." Maybe I was lucky, but I can't imagine anyone making ANY choice about love or sex without really thinking about it-- I mean, good Lord if you're promising a life to someone you SHOULD have given that a lot of thought. Again, perhaps this is just a generational thing?

Anyway, I suppose that if you're looking for information about how to have more thoughtful relationships with lots of the people in your life (sexual or otherwise) this book might be helpful. However, this book did NOT really challenge any of my assumptions about relationships or about the way my partnership functions.

Oh, and a note on the style. The authors are a little too aware of how cute and vixen-ish they are. They "wink" at the reader way too often. Plus, it's repetitive. I read it in a day only because you can skim A LOT.

Mephistia says

Before I write my review, I want to say something. I don't normally read psycho-babble self-help relationship-help type books.

Maybe it's because I've been in therapy since I was a teen, maybe it's because I regularly read psychology and medical texts, maybe it's because I have an immediately visceral and negative reaction to the idea of trying to change another person. This is probably due to the fact that people have been trying to "change" me for so long, convince me mental health issues are figments of my imagination; fallacies I can overcome by strength of will.

And too often, self-help books and relationship manuals rely on what I perceive as the negative perpetuation of the idea that one can improve serious issues like depression, bipolar, dissociative personality disorders,

PTSD, and other serious mental health issues through "happy thoughts" and "positive thinking" and "spiritual energies" and other hoo-ha.

Most relationship "help" books also tend to tilt too far in one direction or the other: Here's how to change him/her (you can't change another person, it's an exercise in futility and only hurts everyone involved), or, alternatively and supposedly more realistically: You can't change them, so accept them faults and all and love them as they are. Live with it.

Both of those tactics are depressing and horrific and probably help attribute to the high divorce rate, as neither of those tactics are in any way conducive to honest communication.

Which is why The Ethical Slut is so freaking awesome. The authors are proponents of polyamory, or open relationships, that's true. But the basic tenants of communication and how to strengthen a core relationship, the little exercises for opening up the lines of discussion between a couple -- everything in this book is invaluable.

I loved the concept of "agreements" rather than "rules" -- it's so easy for someone to say, "This is a rule," and we think of something strict and unbreakable and feel boxed in and itchy and, even if we often don't admit it, angry and wanting to break it. Rules beg to be broken. But agreements sound so flexible, so easy and negotiable.

As my husband pointed out when I discussed this with him, they have safety rules at his place of work and they get broken all the time (which irritates the crap out of him, as a forklift driver). But they also have employee agreements, which are re-negotiated every two years, with employee input.

And I can see how that parallels so easily. It makes sense.

Another thing the authors discussed was arguing -- obviously, all couples argue. Everybody argues. We have to argue, it's how we hash out the difficult issues, paying bills and visiting inlaws and everything big and little that we disagree on. The authors introduced two new concepts to me: Scheduling fights (?!?) and the win-win idea.

I'd heard of scheduling sex. I'm pretty sure that anyone married more than 3 years and definitely anyone with a kid has been introduced to the concept of scheduling sex. At first it sounds weird, but then you get used to the idea, and then it makes perfect sense. There's still spontaneous sex, yeah, but there's also scheduled sex.

Well, the authors discussed how scheduling fights and learning how to fight constructively -- letting each person have uninterrupted time to air their feelings, practicing fighting over small issues using a timer, learning to walk away and calm down for 10 to 15 minutes when things got too heated -- can strengthen a relationship.

The concept of a win-win is brilliant, too. It's basically compromise, but I love how they phrased it, because we all go into an argument wanting to win. It's how we're wired -- we want to make our point and we want to win, and once we do, it'll be done because we've won, right?

Except it's not done just because we've won, because somebody's lost and a loser is never happy. They're still angry and mulling over their loss and what happened and one day that same damn argument will swell up and bite you in the ass, even though the winner thought it was over and done and behind them -- they won, so it was done, right?

That's where win-win, compromise, agreements come in. If everyone feels like they've won, then there are no losers and the argument is truly over. It won't come back to bite anybody in the ass. But only if you've

hashed out a compromise that's truly a win-win for everybody, something that everyone is happy with and can live with.

And all these things seem so self-evident, so, "Well, duh, I knew that."

They're the type of things that when you read them, you're nodding and laughing and going, "Yeah, I totally get that!" and making little notes in the margins and underlining phrases and entire paragraphs. Because even though in some part of your brain you knew that and you totally understood how that worked, you couldn't quite figure out how to phrase it in just the right way.

I swear, this book is a must have for everybody in a relationship or anybody who wants to be in a relationship. It's awesome. It doesn't matter if you're in a monogamous relationship, an open relationship, or curious about an open relationship. It's great for anyone, seriously. Read it.

Angela says

Let me preface this by saying that I am non-monogamous and do not have a problem with the relationship structure the authors are advocating. But I do not like being talked down to, and I do not like assumptions that people who need or want monogamy are unevolved or unloving or unfair. There is plenty of all of that in this book. I read it during a time when I was trying to get okay with non-monogamy, and it actually set that process back for me because I was so insulted and felt so much like I'd been put on the defensive. This book is always touted as some kind of polyamory bible, but I am certain there are far better resources out there.

Rhonda Anderberg says

I have had this book for several years, 2010 to be exact. I bought it when my then husband of 10 years and his (still) married girlfriend were trying to tell me that "WE" were in a polyamorous relationship (I had no idea what that meant), I wasn't asked, I was told. Just as I was told if I wanted to continue to remain a part of my husband's life I must learn to get with the program and play by their ever changing rule book, I bought this book to help me navigate this unknown world. Things unraveled quickly as they usually do in bad situations and I never got the chance to read the book. Fast forward to Mar 2014, I am now a happily single 48 year old woman, learning to love who I am at this stage in my life as I navigate through the world of singledom. The opening of chapter three of this book defines me as I have always been, the rest of chapter three however confirmed what I suspected (especially once the girlfriend told me that she "owned" my husband), the bullying, neglect, alienation and manipulation my Ex and his girlfriend were dishing out, was not "polyamory," it was them trying to give a warm fuzzy name to their game, a.k.a. "the inhumane experiment."

I recommend this book to everyone who wants to be a grown up who is not ashamed of what they want and feel as caring, and yes, sexual beings. Break out of the square box you have been conditioned to stay in because it makes everyone around you comfortable. As far as I know, we only get one life, live yours the way you want. As Dossie says in the book "sex is nice and pleasure is good for you" (p.22). The most important thing of all is to be HONEST, with yourself and everyone you are in contact with, lies and deceit eventually hurt someone.

Mickey Schulz says

This book is lauded as a sort of "Poly Bible." I don't know how I feel about that. It's a little twee in parts, but includes a whole lot of good information about how to communicate that can be used by everyone, not just people looking to practice open or polyamorous relationships.

I do have a couple of bones to pick, though. I don't agree that "anyone" can do poly or open relationships. Some people just don't have the psychological wherewithal, and THAT'S OK. And the book does actually say that if you don't want to, that's ok. It still has a sort of inference that you should want to, but at least it does throw monogamous folks a bone.

I think that asking the wronged partner in a cheating situation to be mindful of the feelings of those who cheated on them is kind of weird. I'm also highly skeptical that an open relationship founded on the basis of one partner already cheating can grow into a healthy relationship. I'm sure it's not impossible, I'm just highly skeptical.

Also, I would not recommend introducing a monogamous partner to the concept of poly or open relationships by just giving them this book without prior conversation. Really. Like as not that's going to just get it thrown at your head. I think you need to broach the subject first and ask (beg or plead) with your partner to read it. Not just spring it on them. Granted, probably better than coming home and saying, "Guess what? I already have another partner, you need to adapt," but still.

I stress again, that the book has a LOT to recommend it. Excellent communication tips, and advice to challenge views about sex and sexuality that you did not consciously form, but were instead indoctrinated in you by society/parents/church. They also discuss being more mindful of your partner(s)'s feelings, and making sure you take the time to find out what makes them tick emotionally and sexually. And while they do stress that this will be hard work, I don't think they emphasize this enough, and instead spend most of their energy telling you how AWESOME it will be when you are sexually open. And granted, part of that may just be my annoyance with the bulk of poly evangelists I've known IRL, who annoy the piss out of me, because they tend to leave a string of broken people behind them who wonder what's "wrong" with them that they can't do poly.

Teresa Jusino says

This book should've been called "How To Be a Human Being." :) Everything it talks about has to do with how to have effective and enriching relationships in all their forms. Own your feelings, be honest, be open about what you want, be willing to compromise, talk to each other, listen to each other... I was particularly interested in what it had to say about owning one's feelings - that no one can make you feel anything. That idea goes a long way in making strong emotions more manageable. Also, I really appreciate that it acknowledges those emotions. It doesn't say you shouldn't feel a strong, negative emotion, it says that what's important is how you act on the negative emotion, and how you let it affect the people you say you love.

Also, reading this definitely corrected certain assumptions about polyamory that I had. It's funny...but a lot of what's considered "polyamorous" is stuff that I wouldn't consider outside the bounds of what I would consider a monogamous relationship! The key is, though, any relationship can work as long as everyone involved is clear about what they want, and honest about their intentions.

I tend to bristle whenever anyone perports to have "the answer." Now, I know this book was primarily designed for people who are already considering a polyamorous lifestyle, or are at least interested in the

topic, and several times it said something like "monogamy is fine if you actually choose it"...but then it would go on to talk as if monogamy=depression and polyamory=freedom. Taking one kind of dogma and replacing it with another does not equal freedom to me. The only thing I believe means actual freedom is the ability to make a choice and allowing an environment where people don't feel ostracized for making one choice over another. If someone chooses "vanilla sex" with one person for the rest of their life, they shouldn't be made to feel as though they are somehow lesser for being "less adventurous" or "repressed" any more than someone who chooses an open relationship should be called "promiscuous."

Lastly, I had trouble with some of the logic used in this book. For example, when they say that "do parents of nine children love their children any less than the parent of one child loves him/her?" And the thing is, YES. Parents always have a favorite. Parents always love one child (or several children) more than the others. This doesn't mean that they don't love the other children, but it does mean that they are loved differently. They shouldn't love all their children the same. If what separates human beings from animals is the ability to make conscious choices, then we can't balk at the idea that there is one thing or one person we would choose over something or someone else. I mean, even the distinction between "primary" and "secondary" relationship illustrates that.

I think the biggest problem for me with this book is that there was no real distinction made between emotional and sexual monogamy. Monogamy is simply used as the all-encompassing opposite of polyamory. But as was illustrated in so many of the relationships used as examples in this book, very often people in a group love relationship have one person they are the most emotionally committed to - and not even that they are interested in being "life partners" with, owning a house or having kids with - but two people who are committed to each other, and committed to a certain lifestyle together. There's always a person we enjoy being with the most. It doesn't mean we don't love and enjoy being with our other friends, lovers, family, whatever....but people have favorites, and ultimately, a most favorite. Pretending that's not the case seems silly to me.

Rita Brinkerhoff says

I feel like it is written for/by pagan couples in their fifties who go to the Renaissance Faire, i.e. not bisexual ladies in their twenties. It's a good introduction to these concepts, though. Interesting stuff like your hippie parent would tell you about, without having to listen to said parent talk.

Nicola says

Firstly: make no mistake, this is a self-help book. Be wary if you are someone who dislikes endless cheerleading on why you should respect and love yourself! and others! and the birdies and the treeeeees! -- okay, I'm exaggerating, but people who find self-help jargon grating should proceed with caution. There's a LOT of "learning to love yourself" stuff in here -- much of it not relating to polyamory at all.

However, beneath the cheerleading, there is also practical advice, along with some charming personal anecdotes. Even for those who aren't really looking to plunge into a polyamorous lifestyle, there's some thought-provoking stuff about sexuality in this book -- all of it presented a non-judgemental way.

The Ethical Slut could do with being a hundred pages shorter (it's fairly repetitive), but otherwise, it's a good read.

Darren says

I see labels... and am glad to see some of the women stigmatized by the norms of patriarchal attitudes turned the negative to positive.

I know I tend to sound like a broken record with this observation but it is tragic that so many things are still dictated by an ignorant notion that women are property.

This of course is obvious in the double standard that men can be studs yet women should be chaste. I think that the example shown by those of same gender preference is the best way to deal with the word slut. Just as they claimed, the words queer, fag as their own, and devalued them as insults, women should claim the word slut. Many women have already including Janet Hardy who authored "The Ethical Slut"

Before the word slut became prominent, the word males used to describe any women who was deemed promiscuous (or even enjoyed sex) was nymphomaniac.

Kinsey had the right idea when commenting on the erroneous concept stated humorously

"A nymphomaniac is "Someone who has more sex than you do."

A slut was a person who in their peers eyes were indiscriminate about with whom who they had sex. This was based more upon appearance and often personality clashes then upon actual knowledge of person's sexual habits.

In high school, I hung out with an older crowd many of whom had already graduated or dropped out. I remember the term slut being used in a friendlier manner to describe casual sex; I think the term was "slut puppy" as in "your such a slut puppy" or I was such a slut puppy last night" I also recall the word "whore" being a more derogatory term and associated with a person using sexuality for unscrupulous purpose.

However, it was also used erroneously because of personality clash or jealousy. I had a relationship in my late teens with a girl who had grown up in a suburb of Cleveland. She was estranged from her family because of an incident that happened to her in her SR year of high school.

She was a ministers daughter who was pretty much mainstream in her teens.

However, she attended a party, got drunk, and went to bed with the town Romeo. Several of the girls from her father's church had also attended the party and became jealous. These girls engaged in an active campaign against her and she became the "slut". She related to me that until that experience she had been a virgin. While traumatized at the time by the whole experience she related, "It had a positive effect in her growth as it lead to rejecting the values she was raised she felt if it had not been for that incident and her families lack of support she would have wound up like her mother
