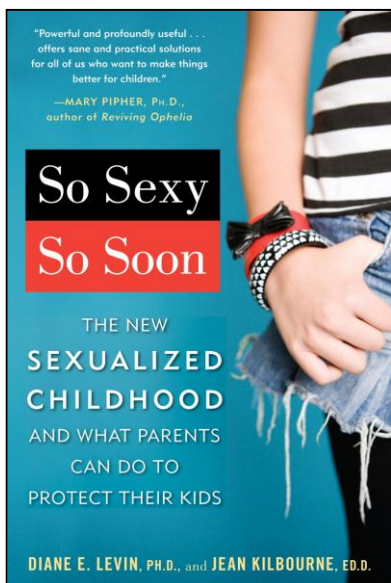


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SO SEXY SO SOON
**The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents
Can Do to Protect Their Kids**
Diane E. Levin, Ph.D. and Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D.

* To be Published as a Ballantine Books Trade Paperback On July 21, 2009 *



“This book is powerful and profoundly useful. It is packed with great stories and poignant examples of the stress children face in our sex-soaked culture. Best of all, the authors offer sane and practical solutions for all of us who want to make things better for children, parents, schools and the culture at large.”

—Dr. Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Ophelia*

“If you want to make the world safe for both the boys and girls you care about, you must read this book. Kilbourne and Levin show you a way to transform the world for your children--and make you feel empowered in the process.”

—Rosalind Wiseman, author of *Queen Bees and Wannabees*

“Timely and important . . . For parents who are troubled and worried about what their children are seeing and hearing, *So Sexy So Soon* offers helpful guidance and support; it not only documents the trends but provides parents with many useful strategies to combat them.”

—David Elkind, Ph.D., author of *The Hurried Child*

Thong panties, padded bras, and risqué Halloween costumes for young girls. T-shirts that boast “Chick Magnet” for toddler boys. Sexy content on almost every television channel, as well as in books, movies, video games, and even cartoons. Hot young female pop stars wearing provocative clothing and dancing suggestively while singing songs with sexual and sometimes violent lyrics. These products are marketed aggressively to our children; these stars are held up for our young daughters to emulate—and for our sons to see as objects of desire. These images influence how children feel about their bodies and their sexuality and how they think about gender and relationships. Without the emotional sophistication to understand what they are doing and seeing, kids are getting into increasing trouble. We are left with little girls wanting to go on diets so they can be “sexy,” little boys getting suspended from school for sexual harassment, and parents in desperate need of guidance. Parents are left shaking their heads, wondering: How did this happen? What can we do? Finally, there is help.

SO SEXY SO SOON: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids (Ballantine Books Trade Paperback; July 21, 2009) is a powerful antidote to this stepped up assault on childhood and the way it effects our kids’ vulnerable psyches. Written by Diane Levin, Ph.D., and Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., internationally recognized experts on the impact of the media on children and teens respectively, it is the first book that helps parents understand how sexualization affects children of all ages and genders *and* tells them what to do about it.

In **SO SEXY SO SOON**, Levin and Kilbourne explain that for children today, learning about sex too soon isn’t the issue. The problem is the synthetic and cynical *source* of a child’s information. And they understand that saying no to commercial culture—TV, movies, toys, Internet access, and video games—isn’t a realistic or viable option for most families. Instead they give parents the information, skills, and confidence they need to play a proactive role with their children around sexual issues. The book includes poignant stories that demonstrate how our kids

internalize what they see and hear, guidelines and sample conversations for talking with kids about these sensitive subjects, and offers practical strategies for counteracting the disturbing messages that bombard our children every day. For example:

- Help your children expand their imaginations by suggesting new ways for them to play with toys – for example, instead of “playing house” with dolls, they might send their toys on a backyard archeological adventure.
- Counteract the narrow gender stereotypes in today’s media: ask your son to help you cook; get your daughter outside to play ball.
- Share your values and concerns with other adults – relatives, parents of your children’s friends – and agree on how you’ll deal with TV and other media when your children are at one another’s houses.

SO SEXY SO SOON is an invaluable and practical guide for parents who are fed up, confused, and even scared by what their kids – or their kids’ friends – do and say. Filled with savvy suggestions, helpful sample dialogues, and poignant true stories from families dealing with these issues, it provides parents with the information, skills, and confidence they need to discuss sensitive topics openly and effectively so their kids can just be kids.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Diane Levin, Ph.D., is a Professor of Education at Wheelock College in Boston. An internationally recognized expert who helps professionals and parents deal with the effects of violence, media and commercial culture on children, Levin is a Senior Advisor to the PBS parent's website for girls, the co-founder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment, and the author or co-author of seven other books. She does over 25 major presentations a year and has appeared on “Good Morning America,” “Nightline,” and “Talk of the Nation.” She lives in Cambridge, MA.

Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., is internationally recognized for her pioneering work on alcohol and tobacco advertising and the image of women in advertising and is the author of *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. She gives over 80 lectures a year-- the *New York Times Magazine* named her one of the three most popular speakers on college campuses-- and her films (among them the award-winning *Killing Us Softly*), lectures, and television appearances have been seen by millions internationally. A Senior Scholar at the Wellesley Centers for Women, she has been a guest on many shows including "The Today Show," "20/20," and "The Oprah Winfrey Show." She lives in Newton, MA.

More Praise for SO SEXY SO SOON

“Every parent should read this eye-opening book. It is a rallying cry to take a stand against the commercial sexualization of children. I highly recommend it.”

--Alvin F. Poussaint, MD, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School and
Director of the Media Center at Judge Baker Children’s Center

“When four year olds talk about being sexy, elementary schoolers are exposed to pornography, and being popular is linked to revealing clothes, something very disturbing is happening...until now, we haven't had a compelling account of what's going on, how pervasive it has become and what it's doing to children. Diane Levin and Jean Kilbourne...have produced *the* definitive book on the sexualization of childhood. Complete with sample conversations, guidelines, and practical advice, this book will teach you how to keep your child healthy as you navigate the minefields of popular culture. Essential reading, for parents, educators and health professionals.”

--Juliet Schor, Professor of Sociology and author of *Born to Buy*

“Many parents today worry about the sexualized images and icons from popular culture that pervade their children’s lives and ask, ‘What impact are these influences having on my child’s sense of self and well being?’ ...Diane Levin and Jean Kilbourne offer insight and guidance that can help parents navigate the troubling waters of the new sexualized childhood...these authors show us how children learn about sex, sexuality, and relationships starting in the early years. Best of all, they give us concrete strategies to fight this harmful influence and help us nurture children toward wholeness and full, loving relationships now and throughout their lives.”

-- Nancy Carlsson-Paige, author of *Taking Back Childhood* and professor at Lesley University

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