

Book Review for: Real rape, real pain: Help for women sexually assaulted by male partners

by

Patricia Easteal & Louise McOrmond-Plummer.
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This was one of the most difficult books I have ever had to read - but that is the point. Marital rape is domestic violence, but even within the domestic violence sector we seldom talk about it or call it by its name. The authors of this excellent book, Patricia Easteal and Louise McOrmond-Plummer, admirably achieve what they set out to. Based on the real life testimonies of women raped and sexually assaulted by their male partners this book names rape as central to the domestic violence discourse and in the process breaks down the unhelpful differentiation between sexual and domestic violence. Just seeing the words marital rape within women's testimonies of violence and abuse really brings home the reality that for many women rape is part of their experience of domestic violence.

The authors acknowledge from page one that the content of this book might be distressing for women and seek throughout to offer practical guidance and support for women who identify with the experiences being discussed.

The book starts with the 3 aims of healing; identifying sexual assaults; and confronting society's denial. It includes chapters examining stereotypes; relationships in which marital rape happens; the wounds; not dealing with it; staying with a partner who has raped; secondary wounding; partner rape and trauma; leaving and safety; whether to pursue justice; various chapters on healing; and sexuality after marital rape. This book addresses itself primarily to women who have experienced marital rape and domestic violence, but also includes a chapter for their supporters.

The final chapter of this book is called breaking down the bedroom door, and that is exactly what this book aims and succeeds in doing. By the time I reached the end of the book rape ceased to be something extreme, strange, other or different. Rape became something real that is directly central to women's experiences of domestic violence. Something we so often forget or choose not to see because it is difficult to deal with. This is a book written by women for women. It is an excellent training tool for domestic violence workers to begin to understand the relationship between rape and domestic violence and invaluable to women dealing with rape as part of their experiences. The chapters which address trauma make this a good book for counsellors, therapists, and other professionals whose work involves dealing with any form of gendered violence.

This book is practical, powerful, and above all, has the power to change, for the better, many women's lives. I would highly recommend this book.

Dr. Emma Williamson.
Domestic Violence Information Manager,
Women's Aid.