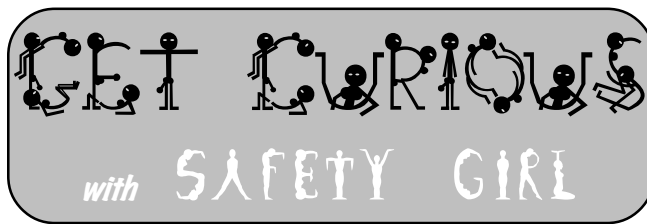


Send letters to curious@safety.com
or Agenda, PMB #542,
528 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104



This month's topic is masturbation, inspired by a letter whose sender wishes it not to be published. Thank you for your letter.

If you would enjoy a more explicit discussion and disclosure check out my web site, www.safetygirl.com. There you will see my personal favorite dildo, and read about my first time using it. I hope this topic will inspire others (especially women) to feel more comfortable and confident about masturbating. It is also my hope that people will discover how masturbation can be incorporated as a safer sex alternative to intercourse.

Your comments and questions are always welcome; I revolve this column around the letters I receive each month.

This month's television show, "Get Curious with Safety Girl" is titled: "How to Strip for Your Honey." It airs live on Tuesday, July 6th, at 9pm on Channel 9. It replays the following Thursday at 10pm and the following Monday at 11:30pm. You can also call Community Television Network to replay any show, or download shows from my web site.

Now, on to the topic "at hand" ...

If you do it, you will grow hair on your palms. It shouldn't be done unless you have a man to do it with. It can make you go blind. It is a sin. You're a pervert if you do it. You might become addicted to it. You won't want to have sex with your partner if you do it. (How can something so natural be so bad?)

It's Healthy for Women to Masturbate

Let me start by saying that I do it! It's the kind of thing that I and a lot of women choose to do, but most of us are too uncomfortable to talk openly about it. It is not only natural but also healthy for a number of reasons; these reasons are valid testimonies of real women, including me. For starters,

masturbation helps to relieve you.

When you begin to feel that sexual ache, those particular urges trigger all sorts of naughty sensations (the physical sensation beginning with the lower abdomen, creeping down towards the pelvis). You find it moving in all directions throughout the body. The urge causes you to perspire. The urge causes you to weigh out the advantages and disadvantages of taking care of it on the spot.

This is a sin? I am guilty and should ask for forgiveness? Masturbation is a sexual deviance, causing perverted sexual deeds? What concrete evidence is there that supports this? The Bible is not evidence. It does not prove that it is bad. The famous passage in Genesis 38:9 can be interrupted many ways: Those who argue it is a sin believe that "spilled his semen on the ground" refers to masturbation. Others, including me, interpret it as "coitus interruptus". Onan pulled out of Tamar and then ejaculated. This made God angry because He wanted Onan to impregnate his dead brother's wife.

The commonly Christian belief that sex is for procreation only, that pleasure is a sin, really screwed up a lot of people during the 18th century and still haunts us today. I had one woman who would buy a vibrator from me every year. But because of guilt, she threw every vibrator in the trash a few months later. Every year it was a traumatic experience for her, as if she were buying drugs. We had to meet at night, behind a building somewhere out of town. She was a member of a church that preached the sins of masturbation. The third year she confided in me as to why. Trembling, tears flowing out of her eyes she said, "Tanya, I'm a single, overweight woman. I get these terrible sexual urges

and fight them as best I can. But they are so strong that I have to give in. I can't let my church find out, the only place where I have friends that care about me and love me. I can't let them find this out about me."

This, to me, is evidence that preaching about the sins of masturbation directly causes emotional pains and anguish for some "good Christians". Never mind those sex-therapy programs that make masturbation a focus for self-awareness, or that about 50% of women cannot achieve orgasm through intercourse, but do with masturbation. Totally disregard the research done by Kinsey and Masters and Johnson stating that masturbation is healthy, for our mental, emotional, and physical well being.

Here's the deal. I welcome the urge. Even when it comes at a bad time like when I'm at work. I absorb those sweet, naughty fantasies and sexual thoughts. They really do help make the day go by faster. When I'm home, alone I can really take advantage of those feelings. I can experiment with different ways of masturbating, finding new ways that bring me to an orgasm. It helps me to be the best teacher for my body, finding out what gives me the most pleasure and then relaying my findings to my sweetie.

The saying "use it or lose it" came from Dr. Ruth, who says that people who often do it are the ones who enjoy it well into old age. If you think about it, crying and laughing are natural releases. It is harmful to hold back these feelings. Telling me that we shouldn't masturbate is the same as telling me we shouldn't cry or laugh. Masturbating helps me to unwind, release the built-up stress, and heal my emotional, psychological state of mind. I still make it to work and school, I still have great sex with my husband, and above all else it makes me a happier, more relaxed person to hang out with.

If the flesh is evil, and the spirit that resides inside it is at battle with it, then why the heck doesn't it just move out? The Bible is full of contradictions, we could argue about this till the end of time. All this arguing has gotten me flustered; I have got to go and masturbate now.

Letter to the Editors

Send letters to editors@agenda2.org or to Agenda, PMB#542, 528 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Greetings,

I enjoy your publication, and I assume (please correct me if I'm wrong) that the publishers agree with the content and opinions expressed in the articles.

If this is the case, I was wondering why 1) an article critiquing Star Wars was printed, but right near it is an ad for Star Wars collectibles?

And secondly, an article was written about the exploitation of women in advertising, but there is a Crazy Wisdom ad with a topless woman strewn on a tiger?

Granted, I understand artwork, but I don't really know what that woman does or how it applies to books.

-Thanks for reading, Summer

Thanks for your very thoughtful letter.

Though I'm not in agreement with all the articles I publish in Agenda, I don't have any relevant gripes with the Star Wars and sexism-in-advertising (SAPAC) articles.

The idea that there are serious ethical problems with the Star Wars movies is reason to call attention to the movies, and to make the relevant points to those who have an interest in the movies. I chose to juxtapose the ad and the article, rather than to separate them, for this reason. Due to the widespread and intense criticism of the blatant racial stereotypes in the latest effort, for instance (evil Asianesque aliens, swindling Mediterraneanesque aliens, heroic Caucasianesque aliens, etc.) it could be that there is a net *improvement* in people's awareness of racial issues due to the release of this clumsy movie.

As for the Crazy Wisdom ad, I asked the store's owner, Bill Zirinsky about it. It is a very simplified and decolorized version of a painting called *The Black Pearl*, by artist Durga Bernhard. Bill says that the Black Pearl symbol is taken from the Taoist *I Ching*, and that the painting depicts a "goddess" on a tiger, not a "naked woman" on a tiger. Crazy Wisdom purchased the rights to use the painting in the store's logo. Bill provided the following artist's description of the painting's symbolism:

"Symbol of clarity, awareness, and profound tranquility, a black pearl is suspended at the center of the universe. Born of the innermost emptiness that surrounds it, the pearl is in mysterious relation to a stalking tiger and his sleeping consort. The tiger and woman have broken through the complex weavings of time and space. Now they circle the mystic pearl without effort, free of the constraints of the material world, a perfect union of strength and receptivity, motion and stillness, male and female, animal and human."

So whatever else one thinks about the ad, at least it doesn't bear a random relation to books and to the sort of culture that Crazy Wisdom makes available.

I'm not an art historian, but I'm sure there's a systematic tendency in the art world to depict feminine figures (human or divine) as "consorts" of beasts, and a systematic tendency not to depict masculine figures that way. In this culture, the male/animal connection seems reserved for insulting jokes about rural people. Something's not right here.

The SAPAC article asks us to consider whether advertisements "focus on a limited standard of beauty" (women as young, white, thin, and airbrushed). In my judgement the goddess's only clear relevant feature here (besides nudity) is whiteness. SAPAC warns against stereotypical displays of women (or, no doubt, of goddesses), but sleeping on a tiger is not an *obvious* stereotype. At a deeper level the stereotypes can be of "weakness" or "subordination", but a weak woman could not easily subordinate a tiger. SAPAC also criticizes the depiction of violence against women, but this is entirely absent from the ad.

Perhaps all that remains is SAPAC's concern about "the use of body parts to sell products" which "reflects the view that women are to be possessed or to be used as props". Though no doubt the naked figure serves to draw certain kinds of eyes to the ad, it is not juxtaposed with a product such as a car or a beer, and not presented as a mindless source of pleasure for the purchaser. Instead, in my judgement the depicted figure's own state of mind is the focus—she is relaxed and in harmony with nature, for instance. The ad seems to say "do thou likewise" (with the store's help) rather than "do thou her".

I've been unable to reach the artist for comment.

-Eric Lormand