



The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures

Stephen P. Hinshaw, Rachel Kranz

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The Triple Bind that girls face today:

- Act sweet and nice
- Be a star athlete and get straight A's
- Seem sexy and hot even if you're not

In many ways, today is the best time in history to be a girl: Opportunities for a girl's success are as unlimited as her dreams. Yet societal expectations, cultural trends, and conflicting messages are creating what psychologist and researcher Stephen Hinshaw calls *The Triple Bind*. Girls are now expected to excel at "girl skills," achieve "boy goals," and be models of female perfection, 100 percent of the time. Here, Dr. Hinshaw reveals key aspects of *The Triple Bind*, including

- genes, hormones, and the role of biology in confronting *The Triple Bind*
- overscheduled lives and how the high pressure to excel at everything sets girls up for crisis
- how traditionally feminine qualities (such as empathy and self-awareness) can put girls at risk for anxiety, depression, and other disorders
- the oversexualization of little girls, preteens, and teenagers
- the reasons girls are channeling pressure into violence

Combining moving personal stories with extensive research, Dr. Hinshaw provides tools for parents who want to empower their daughters to deal in healthy ways with today's pressures.

The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls from Today's Pressures Details

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Carrie says

I was skeptical when I picked up this book because I didn't think the author could prove his point. However, I found the book chocked with research as well as popular, real life examples. Overall, this was a very good book that was easy to follow along with. The only criticisms I have are that I thought he could have expounded more on the solution as well as his tendency to be repetitive.

sharon says

An important book on pressures facing adolescent girls, though at times repetitive or one-note. Hinshaw's analysis of media influences is insightful and the writing is engaging. I appreciated that Hinshaw's respect for girls shone through in every line. He's never patronizing, precious, or pearl-clutching, while still making clear that these are important issues. It would have been nice if the conclusion of the book could have offered some more potential solutions.

Erin says

The triple bind of being good at girl things and boy things and making it all seem effortless is a great way of phrasing the discussion of working moms verse stay at home moms. Women now feel they have to work all day and be career driven yet still be a perfect mom AND make it seem easy. It was an interesting way to look at a social issue that has polarized women rather than unite them (to work or not to work, to be a cliche mom or to be a what works for you mom).

Jodi says

My daughter is not even a tween (scary our society needs this word today) but I can already see some of society's pressures at work on her. She is very aware of fashion, weight, and social acceptance. I try so hard to convince her that people come in all sizes, shapes, colors, abilities, etc. but I can still see those wheels turning in her head as she gets messages from our culture. Also, I see how she is drawn to inappropriate fashion (which I can win on now because I am buying the clothes) and her love of Bratz dolls (UGH)! Even though I am trying to raise her with Christian morals, society as a whole is competing with me. Even sometimes I wonder how I am sabotaging her - I am concerned with my weight and I try to look my best when I step outside. I am trying not to pass my perfectionistic personality on to her, but I see it rearing its ugly head from time to time. As the book stated, I would like for my daughter to be pretty, sweet, nice, athletic, and get good grades, but I don't want her to feel that she has to be impossibly perfect which is the triple bind in this book. I wish there were more solutions presented in this book other than one quick chapter, but I guess that being aware of the pressure today's girls face will hopefully make me more aware of my daughter's needs as she grows.

Angela says

An excellent study on perfectionism, the dichotomy between being good and being smart, and how to help girls not only balance excruciating schedules of work, school, homework, achievement, volunteering, friends, sports and job in the effort to get into the best colleges-- but also see what is more and less important in the grand scheme of things.

Kaethe says

I'd have to call this a waste of paper. Not because I disagree with the author. I absolutely agree that adolescent American girls are in a dreadful place. I even agree with the pressures he identifies: to excel at traditional girl stuff (empathy, concern for others, being supportive of others); to excel at traditional boy stuff (sports, grades, competition); all the while, being expected to excel at hotness as well.

Unfortunately, Hinshaw is a clueless dude, barging in and telling the girls he knows how to fix things. His advice boils down to two real points: adolescent girls should become involved in something greater, something that ties them into a larger community than their own school/family sphere; and hey, you know what would be a great idea? another women's movement. I want to smack him. Although many resources are listed at the end of the book dealing with a number of specific issues, the utter cluelessness of this effort is clear in that there isn't a single feminist website or book listed. Not one. And how absurd is it to say that young women are stressed by all the demands our culture places on them, but the way to save them is to place yet another demand on them? Seriously, does anyone think the way to save girls from eating disorders and depression is to force them to get involved in community service projects? If only the girls would devote themselves to solving all the problems in the world (charity work being another traditional girl effort) it would totally free them from all the other pressure they're under to do everything beautifully and effortlessly.

Okay, I'm not trying to blame Hinshaw too much for his blindered vision. I do however blame both he and his editor for not making an effort to correct that vision. That's just sloppy. Furthermore, I blame him a whole hell of a lot for not once reflecting on what he's written and asking himself what members of our society can do who are not adolescent girls nor their parents. That's where he really failed.

Marie says

An interesting look at the potential causes for rising depression, anxiety, suicide, eating disorders, etc. rates among teen girls. The Triple Bind is basically this: girls are expected to be pretty, sexy, etc. ("girl" qualities), successful and competitive ("boy" qualities), and make it all look effortless (be perfect at both). This sets an impossibly high bar that many a hormonal, young, and emotionally inexperienced girl can't handle. The author also broached the topic of depression and its role in the lives of girls who have very empathetic personalities thus making them more susceptible to the illness. Very interesting. This book was a bit repetitive, did not offer much of a "solution" to the Triple Bind and pointed the finger (not surprisingly) at media a lot but for the most part I feel I learned something. Plus Dr. Hinshaw is the chair of the Psychology dept at my alma mater.

Kathleen says

- * Be pretty, sweet, and nice
- * Be athletic, be competitive, and get straight A's
- * Be impossibly perfect

That is the premise of *The Triple Bind* --that the expectations for young girls growing up in today's society have gone overboard--expectations set impossibly high and difficult to achieve. A girl is supposed to be good at "girl stuff", like friendships and emotional support of her family, yet excel at "boy stuff", like math and science and athletics. And all the while she is expected to be pretty, thin, dress fashionably, and look "hot".

Hinshaw does a great job of pointing out the messages that pop culture is sending - shows like *America's Top Model*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and bands like The Pussycat Dolls come in for heavy criticism. Studies are cited and interviews with teens are quoted to identify who is at greatest risk for dropping off the edge and falling prey to eating disorders, depression, and suicide. It's not an encouraging picture, and very scary for those of us who are parents currently raising our girls in this day and age.

Unfortunately, only a few scant pages at the end of the book offer any possible solutions or suggest ways to help our daughters find the resilience and strength to fight the pressure and create a new culture. We all try to be there for our kids, but how many more Megan Meiers are out there, needing to hear the message that it's okay if you aren't perfect?

Ami says

"The Triple Bind" is about the three contradictory tenants that the author feels all girls in today's society are subjected to: be sweet and nice like a girl, be ambitious and competitive as a boy, and be sexy but not sexual. The trick, the author says, is that girls are pressured to be all this, all the time, and perform effortlessly. I do feel the author has a point. In this "modern" age, girls and women are told they can and should do it all. And today there is more pressure than in earlier decades to look sexy or hot. It is true the media is as vicious as ever to a girl's psyche and that parents and schools place more pressure on girls to achieve.

I do not buy however, the authors premise that this "Triple Bind" is the root of all evil in our young girls' lives. I think there are many things that corrode our girls' foundations and prospects such as broken families, absent parents, too many sexual encounters that come too early in a girl's life, and a rising number of girls who have not been taught a faith in a power higher than oneself.

I also felt the author fell a little flat in his analysis of some solutions to this "triple bind" phenomenon. He spends 170 pages telling us what the problem is and only 6 pages telling us in the most vague way how to attempt to fix it. That doesn't seem very balanced to me.

If you are looking for a good book about helping your daughter cope in today's world I suggest "Stronger Fathers, Stronger Daughters." It was much more insightful, practical, and helpful.

Rhlibrary says

Marie says...

Ever wonder why more adolescents suffer from troubling emotional problems today than in decades past? Dr. Stephen Hinshaw (chair of the Psychology Department at my alma mater!) points to what he calls "The Triple Bind." Today's young girls are feeling more and more pressure to "Be pretty, sweet, and nice" and at the same time "be athletic, competitive, and get straight A's" and the cliché... "be impossibly perfect". This is an interesting read for anyone who has a teen girl in his or her life - or ever was one.

Katie says

I would very much recommend this book to the parents of daughters, despite the fact that it suggests very few solutions. The author brilliantly lays out the "triple bind" that girls are trapped in today, articulating the many contradicting pressures that they are subject to. It can be hard for the fish, so to speak, to describe the water we are swimming in, yet Hinshaw sees it all very clearly and names each factor precisely. The book is worth reading for that reason alone, and for the discussions it should hopefully spark between parents.

Ruth says

There is a lot of truth in this book, but the author was repetitive and I felt like he could have gotten his point across in a lot less pages.

Kate says

Lol-worthy observations; lengthy and repetitive.

This is absolutely a first. I don't think I've ever complained about a book seeming to drag on in 178 pages. I'm bored, annoyed, and I haven't learned anything. This is extremely disappointing considering the sources/appearance of research that went into it.

Let me help you: Pass.

Jele says

Detailed description of the challenges and pressures ("binds") facing teen girls. Lots of stories and statistics. Weaker on "what to do." I skimmed the whole book; it does get a bit repetitive.

Rebekah says

here's the triple bind:

be feminine (aka compassionate)

be masculine (aka successful)

and

be sexy

i could see his point. this could have been an article, not a book
