

## Review

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**Nagoski, E. (2021). *Ona ma siłę. Przelomowy poradnik o seksualności kobiet [Come As You Are. The Surprising New Science That Will Transfer Your Sex Life].* Warszawa: Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal**

Dr. Emily Nagoski is an American sexologist, psychologist, and therapist who researches sex and sexuality, in addition, she is involved in sex education, during which she teaches women how to enjoy their own physicality. The author has dedicated the book “Come As You Are. The Surprising New Science That Will Transfer Your Sex Life” to her students. The reviewed book is the second edition, new and expanded. The book consists of an introduction, nine chapters organized into four parts (“Basics [and more]”, “Sex in context”, “Sex in practice”, and “Ecstasy for everyone”), and a conclusion. The text is enriched with numerous figures, tasks for readers, descriptions of four specific women who are imaginary but combine the reported problems of real people, as well as surveys and space for free notes. Each chapter ends with a summary. The book runs to a total of 368 pages.

In the introduction, the reader learns the great importance of individual differences in sexuality. Moreover, the author strives to normalize different behaviors, preferences, and needs. Nagoski treats the normalization of different behaviors in this area as one of her biggest goals, but also as a success in her work as an educator, as evidenced by feedback from her female students, who, after the course, stopped treating their functioning as an expression of a disorder and started treating it as a form of healthy interpersonal difference.

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The first part “Basics (and more)” focuses on anatomy of the genitals and the relationship to them, and also focuses on the mechanism of sexual response in the brain. The author describes the development and anatomy of the genitals, dispels myths, as well as clarifies the meaning of several important terms. Here she discusses in detail the dual control model: inhibition and arousal. Sexually, it involves distinguishing the sexual arousal system (SES) and the sexual inhibition system (SIS), which are responsible for moving through the four phases of the sexual response cycle. In this section, the author encourages the reader to fill out a sexual temperament questionnaire (she also includes an interpretation of the results), which serves to better understand herself within the arousal and inhibition. In addition to self-awareness, the reader can also find in this section ways to change the response of the arousal and inhibition mechanism and appreciate the importance of context as an important determinant of sexual satisfaction (low stress + high affection + unambiguously erotic situation). The section concludes with materials for self-reflection.

The second part, titled “Sex in Context”, focuses on the emotional and relational aspects of sex, and perceptions of one’s body and sex. This is a more psychological part of the book than the first part. In the beginning, the author dissects the topic of stress, the impact of which on sex life is indisputable. She also stresses the importance of closing the stress response cycle and training self-compassion. She then describes love and attachment. She encourages self-reflection around treating oneself well, minimizing stress, and, by extension, one’s sexual well-being.

The third part of “Sex in Practice” is a place to dispel prevailing myths of sexuality. The incongruence between genital response and subjective sexual arousal is natural and a frequency domain of women, and desire can be both spontaneous and responsive. Normalizing the above can facilitate the pursuit of sexual happiness.

The last part of the book “Ecstasy for Everyone” is an expression of encouragement for women to get the most joy out of their physicality. The author emphasizes that the key to success is in our feelings about our bodies. This time, in the context of orgasm, she again emphasizes the issue of incompatibility and individual differences but also looks for solutions to difficulties that may arise. She emphasizes the importance of feelings and that ecstasy is a state of mind in which it is important to be non-judgmental and free from cultural standards that can limit the enjoyment of sex.

The end of the book is a suggestion for exercises with one’s body. An undoubted advantage of the publication is the combination of practice and science. The author’s reflections are the result of compiling the knowledge and experiences of people Nagoski has met over 20 years of work. The content is conveyed in a clear and easy-to-read manner, allowing the book to target not only mature women but also young adults and even teenagers. Although it has a guidebook character, which is also specified in the subtitle, it shows a way of thinking about women’s sexual gratification that is innovative and based on scientific research, as evidenced by the extensive list of literature. Among other things, the author describes attachment styles, awareness of which can make a huge difference in

the maturity of partners' relationships. What makes it difficult to read is the editorial inconsistency (redirecting to a page with exercises that cannot be found on the indicated page, editorial errors), which may be the result of translating the original into other language versions. Nevertheless, such minor shortcomings do not detract from the vastness of the knowledge and supportive atmosphere to be found in the book.