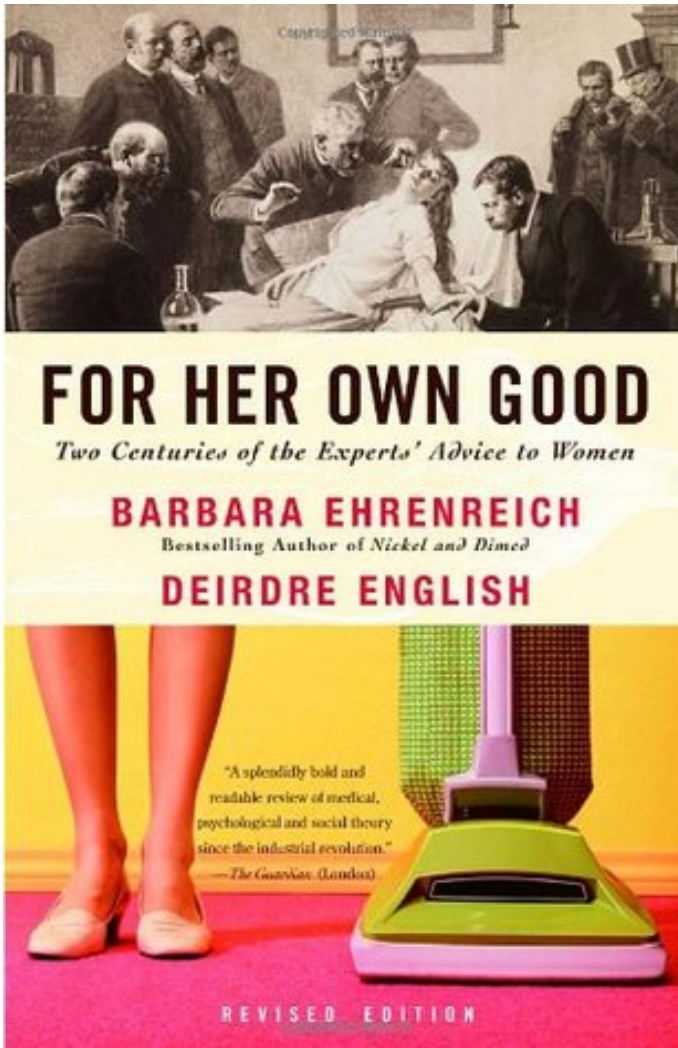

Barbara Ehrenreich

For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women



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Description

First published in 1978, this classic history, now revised and updated, brilliantly exposes the constraints imposed on women in the name of science. Authors Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English have never lost faith in science itself, but insist that we hold those who interpret it to higher standards. Women are entering the medical and scientific professions in greater numbers but as recent research shows, experts continue to use pseudoscience to tell women how to live. This edition of *For Her Own Good* provides today's readers with an indispensable dose of informed skepticism.

Insightful reviews

Sarah: this just in: men have believed ridiculous things about women. did this book really need updating?

Kate: I enjoy Ehrenreich and her ideas about life and work. In this book she gives a research-filled history of how women were seen by medical doctors, psychologists, men, ad agencies, and employers. It's almost vulgar to think of frailty and sickness were sought-after traits in an upper-class woman. It's fascinating to see how advice on things like femininity, child-bearing and child-rearing has changed. Expert "opinions" aimed at women have largely been based on false assumptions and quackery. This book takes you through many of them. I found it fascinating, angering, and even a little eye-opening. I finished this book feeling grateful that I have enough power in my life to make my own choices.

Cindy Dyson Eitelman: This turned out to be a dense, scholarly book. I enjoyed it immensely, but I'm not enough of an expert to comment on it. I think it's sound, quite sound. Some of the theories may lack support, but I took them as theories, not conclusions, and so was not perturbed.

I especially appreciated the author's determination to refrain from making snarky comments about the absurd, ridiculous or downright hateful nature of the experts' advice. Ninety-nine point nine percent of it was pure bullshit--in a cultural context. Losing the race to the moon? Our children needed more discipline to grow up to be engineers. Or...

First--as she outgrew her girlhood--a woman had to renounce the pleasures of the clitoris and transfer all sexual feeling to the vagina. [...] When a woman accomplished the task of renouncing the clitoris, she symbolically set aside all masculine strivings (penis envy) and accepted a life of passivity.

That definition of the woman's role--passivity, lack of pleasure except in service to others--resulted in the ultimate stupid theory of all stupid theories: women were inherently masochists, and menial labor and sexual humiliations were what it took to make her truly happy.

The authors did remark, at that point:

(The explanation of "masochism" is so convenient and totalistic that we can only wonder why the psychomedical experts didn't think to extend it to other groups, like the poor and racial minorities.)

I'll let 'em have that one. How can you not get a little snippy in the face of so much well-meaning (or ill-meaning) stupidity?

Caitlin Jellybean: This publication made me so very angry, which i feel used to be the point. How can a person learn what was once believed through specialists a trifling forty years in the past and never have a whole rage aneurysm, in particular due to the fact such a lot of individuals are confident that sexism and misogyny are at the back of us, or even by no means existed at all? It certainly eager about white, middle/upper center classification women, that's half the subject material (the "experts" have been most likely so much concerned about advising this group) yet was once additionally rather distracting at times, because the adventure of bad girls and ladies of colour used to be within the publication peripherally, and that i stumbled on myself eager to be aware of more, within the context of the topic matter.

Wealththeow: Ehrenreich and English examine what sort of recommendation we now have been given for the final 200 years. even supposing they supply a great deal of social, political, economic, and common history to the advance and evolution of experts, the half i discovered such a lot attention-grabbing used to be at the construction of what we think about clinical doctors. I hadn't discovered how culturally specific, oft-changing, and purposefully created our smooth belief of drugs is. For instance, the cultural ancestors of recent medical professionals have been simply dudes who had sufficient funds and sophistication prestige to visit college and examine classical languages. They by no means discovered anatomy or find out how to deal with health problems in any evidence-based manner. In fact, to take care of their prestige as "gentlemen," they did not contact their sufferers (instead leaving the shelling out of medicines, bone-setting, childbirth, and so forth to others) or obtain check for his or her providers (they have been as a substitute given "gifts"). yet on condition that their scientific wisdom used to be solely dependent in classical literature, they weren't rather helpful. Instead, most folks used what we now time period folk-medicine (practiced through a healer of their area), which *was* ordinarily evidence-based and intensely a lot according to sleek conceptions of drugs (understandings of anatomy, palpating the lymph nodes, understanding what the sufferer ate, what their stools regarded like, etc). yet "regular" medical professionals had the wealthy on their side, so whilst technological know-how and the clinical procedure started to achieve credence, they have been in a position to lay declare to technological know-how first, whereas concurrently suing to have all medical professionals who did not visit their particular universities be thought of criminals in the event that they practiced medicine. It worked! Oh classism. And thus, for the subsequent hundred years or so, the united kingdom and US have been left with medical professionals who had a truly slim figuring out of what to appear for to pass judgement on health. psychological state, nutrition, environment...all of this fell through the way-side. Ehrenreich and English additionally speak a piece approximately how quite a few credentials got here to be and the double-binds created through psychologists for women. and do not imagine ladies have been martyred saints, either--white, center and top classification ladies have been instrumental in all kinds of bs events to "improve" the negative and minority groups.

Overall, a very good read, with nuggets of biting sarcasm to check the evidence and anecdotes.

Kirsty: Re-read. like it simply up to I did seven years ago.

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