

Intimacy, Consent, and Sex in Fiction

By Rachael Bush

Roots of Intimacy:

- Babyhood (Hold me!)
- Childhood (Let me go, but not too far!)
- Adolescence (Leave me alone!)

Intimacy as Adults:

- Second Babyhood (New Love)
- Second Childhood (Healthy relationship strengthened by sex, parenting, and trust)
- Second Adolescence (No trust, no intimacy)

Woman vs. Girl:

- They're not the same thing
- Girls cannot give consent to intimacy
- Don't call women girls, it takes away power and perpetuates the idea they're the same. Words matter.

What is Consent? (based on Planned Parenthood's FRIES)

- Freely Given
- Reversible
- Informed
- Enthusiastic
- Specific

Consent is sexy! It's up to us to change the narrative about what a healthy relationship looks like.

Who cannot give consent? (based on *Consent is Sexy* series RWR by Sarah M. Anderson and London Setterby)

- Children
- Enslaved People
- Prisoners
- Intoxicated people
- Sleeping people
- Anyone in an imbalanced power dynamic that doesn't change

Imbalanced power dynamics that change over time:

- Situational:
 - Boss/Employee
 - Teacher/Student
 - Lord/Servant
- Intentional:
 - Dominant/Submissive in BDSM

In these situations, you must acknowledge the power dynamic – communicate and negotiate this imbalance, have them fall in love despite their situation not because of it, person with power must ask (not demand) and listen before responding, level the playing field (the person in the 'weaker' role should have power in other parts of their relationship), everyone must give and get consent, and all should be built on trust and intimacy.

Intimacy and Love:

- Humans are capable of total intimacy as adults, but what does this mean and why is it important? Intimate relationships are more than partnerships.
- Why is it important for your characters to fall in love? Your readers will care about your characters.
- Why is it so hard for some adults to fall in love? There's no bargaining.
- What is the science behind our behavior? There are twelve steps!

Twelve Steps of Intimacy: (based on *Intimate Behaviour* by Desmond Morris, 1971)

- 1. Eye to Body
- 2. Eye to Eye
- 3. Voice to Voice
- 4. Hand to Hand
- 5. Arm to Shoulder
- 6. Arm to Waist
- 7. Mouth to Mouth
- 8. Hand to Head
- 9. Hand to Body
- 10. Mouth to Body
- 11. Hand to Genitals
- 12. Genitals to Genitals

Don't skip steps! Different cultures may shuffle, but not by much. Skipping steps will feel rushed, boring, or scary. We want intimacy that leads to love. All the steps are important for this reason.

Questions You May Have: Want to know more about sexuality in women? Read *Come as you are* by Emily Nagoski

- Does my story need sex?
- Are all characters equally sexual?
- Do romance books always have sex?
- Do romance books sell?
- Am I writing romance?

What is Romance?

- Romantic elements must be the focus of the story
- Romance requires relationship building, love, trust, and a happy ever after
- Age level, subgenre, and heat levels can vary

Age Levels:

- Young Adult/Teen: below 18
- New Adult: 18-25
- Adult: 26+

Romance Subgenres:

- Historical
- Contemporary
- Erotic Romance
- Inspirational Romance
- Romantic Suspense
- Paranormal and Fantasy

Heat Levels:

- Wholesome
- Sweet
- Sensuality Levels:
 - Low Sensuality
 - Medium Sensuality
 - High Sensuality
- Explicit
- Erotic Romance
- Erotica

What Makes a Good Sex Scene?

- Arouses the author
- Teases the reader
- Has a pay off
- Clichés are used at the right moment
- Organic not mechanical
- Plot, character, and emotion-driven

How to Write Good Sex:

- Write with empathy and information
- Be authentic
- Sex should move the plot forward
- Remember that everyone is sexual
- Experience doesn't mean anything
- Orgasm should be brief and emotionally believable
- Afterglow connect characters
- The story must ring true
- Intimacy and trust are crucial
- Use descriptions not sex noises
- Four-letter words can't do the heavy lifting
- Describe all characters involved
- Conflict, doubt, or problems are necessary
- Be comfortable with the language you use
- Write sex because you love it
- Write privately

Things to Remember:

- Total intimacy is how we fall in love.
- Consent is sexy.
- Intimacy varies
- Total intimacy leads to deeper bonds, more satisfying sex, and a happy ever after.