

EJACULATE RESPONSIBLY

The Conversation
We Need to Have
About Men and
Contraception

GABRIELE BLAIR

THE
NEW YORK
TIMES
BESTSELLER

'A tactical, full-throated cry for men to step up' *Vogue*
'A gorgeous manifesto' *Oprah Daily*



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‘Blair’s fresh reframe should be required reading for any person who has sex, wants to have sex or is raising someone who might have sex in the future. This slender book has what it takes to be the foundation for a movement’

Washington Post

‘Flashes of acerbic humour and eye-opening statistics bolster Blair’s common-sense case. This polemic has the power to change minds’ ***Publishers Weekly***

‘Any reader of this gorgeous manifesto, men especially, would be hard-pressed to walk away from it without being reminded (*mind blown emoji*) that putting the entire, very heavy, burden on women to not get pregnant, or to be unable to terminate because of all that’s gone on to make abortion illegal or inaccessible, makes *a lot* less sense than just *not getting them pregnant* in the first place’

Oprah Daily

‘A tactical, full-throated cry for men to step up’ ***Vogue***

‘Hats off to Gabrielle Stanley Blair for pointing out so clearly the elephant in the room in any discussion about contraception or abortion – that it’s high time for men to stop focusing on legislating women’s bodily autonomy and instead turn the spotlight on their own role in unwanted pregnancy. A small but mighty book’

Milli Hill, author of *Give Birth Like a Feminist*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Blair is the founder of the parenting Website of the Year (*Time* magazine) DesignMom.com. Her first book, *Design Mom*, was a *New York Times* bestseller. As a thought leader in often difficult or taboo topics, Gabrielle has moderated hundreds of discussions and interviews, and her writing has been quoted in many publications across the world. She is an American pro-choice mother of six children who lives in Normandy, France.

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Penguin
Random House
UK

First published in the United States of America by Workman Publishing 2022

First published in Great Britain by Penguin Life 2023

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Design by Bonnie Siegler

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-65059-2

www.greenpenguin.co.uk



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*To the people of the future
who get to live their lives with no anxiety
about unwanted pregnancies,
and to the responsible ejaculators
who I'm confident can and will make that possible.*

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a crucial refocus: IT'S THE MEN.

Dear Reader,

In 2018 I wrote an essay proposing several ideas about the often-overlooked causes of abortion. In the essay, which this book is based on, my key claim is that 99 percent of abortions are the result of unwanted pregnancies, and *men cause all unwanted pregnancies*. An unwanted pregnancy doesn't happen because people have sex. An unwanted pregnancy only happens if a man ejaculates irresponsibly—if he deposits his sperm in a vagina when he and his partner are not trying to conceive. It's not asking a lot for men to avoid this.

Currently, conversations about abortion are entirely centered on women—on women's bodies, and whether women have a right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. But this focus on women is a fundamental mistake because, as I argue in this book, *men* cause all unwanted pregnancies. We've put the burden of pregnancy prevention on the person who is fertile for 24 hours a month, instead of the person who is fertile 24 hours a day, every day of their life.

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In the past five years, I've heard from thousands of people from around the world, who have read my words and experienced a significant shift in how they think about and approach pregnancy prevention and abortion. As an American, I was writing from the perspective of watching women's rights being restricted in the United States. But based on the international response, I quickly learned my arguments were hitting a nerve worldwide. People everywhere are concerned about issues related to abortion and pregnancy—cultural structures around power, responsibility, and the work of pregnancy prevention are lopsided across the globe.

I don't know what your thoughts are on abortion, but you picked up this book, so I assume you care about it—as a right to fight for or a problem to solve. Whatever your feelings and beliefs, I'm going to ask that you momentarily set them to the side. I'll do the same (though anyone really curious about where I stand can google me). The arguments I lay out in this book are an attempt to shift the conversation away from the usual for-or-against debates that have stymied this issue for decades. As you'll see, these aren't complicated, esoteric arguments, they are simple and straightforward and are based on factors like basic biology and cause and effect. I present a new approach that I hope you'll find refreshing and productive.

My sincere gratitude for being open to a new way of thinking,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GBL' followed by a stylized flourish.

Gabrielle Blair

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A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

I want to let you know right from the get go that the arguments I'm presenting are written from a cisgender heterosexual perspective. While I welcome all readers and I hope everyone learns something from my arguments, applying LGBTQIA+-inclusive language to my arguments would only serve to erase the singular experiences of queer, trans, and nonbinary people, whether they are people who produce sperm or people who can become pregnant. Ultimately, I make a cisgender heterosexual argument for people engaging in cisgender heterosexual sexual relationships (say that ten times fast).

It's important to make that clear so that you can manage your expectations before you begin, but also because I want everyone to feel comfortable here. Yes, it's a cisgender heterosexual perspective, but perhaps you'll find descriptions in these pages, about things like power dynamics and responsibilities, that can serve all perspectives.

While we're on the topic of language, two vocabulary notes: When I use the word *ejaculate*, I'm referring to ejaculation that releases semen. When I use the word *abortion*, I'm referring to elective abortions due to unwanted pregnancies, which make up approximately 99 percent of all abortions. I am not referring to the abortions of intended pregnancies as a consequence of health issues for the developing fetus or the mother. Additionally, I want to acknowledge that while I fully understand some people experience temporary or permanent infertility, the arguments in this book are assuming full fertility for both men and women.

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ARGUMENTS

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NO. 1

MEN ARE

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TIMES

MORE

FERTILE

THAN WOMEN.

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It starts with biology. A woman's body produces a fertile egg for approximately 24 hours each month, from puberty until menopause, which is about thirty-five to forty years. Since the 24 hours might start midday on a Monday and end midday on a Tuesday, we like to say the egg is fertile for two days, but really it's about 24 hours.

A man's sperm is fertile every single second of every single day. And though we know his sperm gets crappier as he ages, a man can produce sperm until the day he dies.

At eighty years old, a woman who menstruated for forty years will have experienced 480 days of fertility.

At eighty years old, a man who hit puberty at age twelve will have experienced 24,208 days of fertility.

So let's do the math. 24,208 divided by 480 . . . carry the 4 . . . and it turns out that compared to women, men have a little more than fifty times the number of fertile days.

Most times when a woman has sex, she cannot be impregnated because her egg is not fertile. Every time a man has sex, he can potentially impregnate someone, because he is always fertile. In theory, in any given year, a fertile man could impregnate a different fertile woman (or more than one!) every single day and cause 365 (or more!) pregnancies. During that same year, a woman can only experience a full pregnancy once.

This enormous disparity in fertility is important to recognize at the outset. I'm not trying to overdramatize this—it's a simple fact of biology. But it points to the reality that men and women are not two equally matched parties when it comes to fertility and potential to cause a pregnancy. One party is more fertile by orders of magnitude.