

a little bit more...

TEEN GUIDE

to Sex & Relationships

Is sex really
only physical for boys?

Why do boys like
breasts so much?

Are there such things as
good girls and bad girls?

What is a soul mate?

Is the sex in
"Fifty Shades of Grey"
realistic?



Matt Posner | Jess C Scott

PRAISE for *Teen Guide*

“Jaw-dropping bold, insightful, and informative.”

— [Bernard Schaffer](#), best-selling author of *Superbia*

* * *

“...very informative and something that every teen would be interested to read (and should read) because the information in the book is really useful and stuff that a lot of people would be too embarrassed to talk about or ask in real life.”

— Marie C., 18 y/o, Singapore (*via email*)

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“I’m sure there are many teenagers who will appreciate the frank and informative nature of this book and who will benefit in many ways from its insights. I give *Teen Guide* 5 stars due to the quality of the writing.”

— Intense Stories, June 2012 ([Smashwords review](#))

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TEEN GUIDE: A Little Bit More...

By Matt Posner & Jess C Scott



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1. Education—Reference
2. Teen Health—Sexuality

Summary: In this promotional eBook, Matt Posner and Jess C Scott talk about the themes and inspirations behind *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships*. Features a selection of additional questions from readers (upon publication of the original *Teen Guide*), along with interviews and excerpts from the *Teen Guide* blog tour.

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Books by Matt Posner

Author Bio: Matt Posner

Books by Jess C Scott

Author Bio: Jess C Scott

TEEN GUIDE: A LITTLE BIT MORE...

Preface:

Matt Posner and Jess C Scott are the co-authors of [*Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships*](#), an advice book that answers the important and confusing questions young people have about their bodies and their hearts.

Teen Guide: A Little Bit More is a freebie mini compilation.

In this promotional eBook, Matt and Jess talk about:

- (1) additional subjects (featuring new questions from readers, upon publication of the original *Teen Guide*)
- (2) the themes and inspirations behind their no-nonsense Q&A book for teens.

* * *

Introduction:

Hello, our names are Matt and Jess. *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships* is a Q&A advice book we co-authored.

Here's a concise author bio with a bit more information about us:

Matt's Bio: Matt is an NYC teacher who's willing to make controversial statements that he thinks are in your best interest. In his own words, *Teen Guide* "explains what mature, adult sexuality is and provides a useful guide to entering that sexual world at the right time."

Jess's Bio: Jess, a professional non-conformist, has a fresh youthful world view. As an author of relationship-based fiction, Jess is full of ideas on these topics. She's cool, supportive, and writes with both intellect and a lot of emotion.

We wrote *Teen Guide* because we both care about young people and their approach to sex and relationships. With *Teen Guide*, we seek to help teens work through the tough issues that will be on their minds as they move through an emotionally complex time.

Both of us believe there is so much sexuality in mainstream American culture that every teen is on some level encouraged already. It is better for teens to be well-informed and make intelligent judgments (rather than look to pop culture and entertainment for answers, or live up to the unrealistic expectation of being 100% sexually abstinent).

In *Teen Guide*, we cover all the questions we think teenagers might want to ask about falling in love, being in a couple, and making sexual choices. We give

the truth behind the cultural myths and we say what we really think rather than taking a polished pose that serves some political agenda.

We aren't shy on any topics because it wouldn't do any good to be bashful if we really wanted to reach out to readers.

While *Teen Guide* is comprehensive, its aim isn't to encourage or promote teenage promiscuity. We acknowledge that teenage sex is something that happens and that will always happen regardless of what anyone might say. Nothing a teen reads in a book is going to influence that reader if it runs contrary to common sense. If we were to pretend that teen abstinence is the only viable option, we would be rejected as inauthentic and we wouldn't be able to help anyone.

Teen Guide is divided into the following sections.

Sections in *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships*

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<https://www.smashwords.com/extreader/read/159152/2/teen-guide-to-sex-and-relationships>

MORE INFO:

<http://jessINK.com/teenguide.htm>

Teen Guide is currently available in both print and eBook editions at various online retailers.

We enjoyed writing *Teen Guide* and our goal was to present it as a useful and insightful advice book, with regards to tough questions teenagers might have about love, sex and relationships.

We hope you enjoy the *Teen Guide: A Little Bit More* mini eBook we've put together.

Thanks to all of you who are checking this out—both new and old readers :)

– Matt Posner and Jess C Scott, May 2012

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TEEN GUIDE: ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

These are add-on questions to *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships*, featuring questions from readers/customers of *Teen Guide*.



[Images by [Mary R. Vogt](#)]

* * *

1. Is sex really only physical for boys?

MATT:

I think for both boys and girls, the physical pleasure and intimacy of the sexual experience are appealing. When you are young, it's normal for you to want to try things out and see how they feel, and when you find that they feel good, you want to do them more often. I haven't been around girls who talk about their sexual desire, but women I know tell me that it's very intense, and that I shouldn't reinforce the old stereotype that boys are filled with desire and girls have to be on the alert to protect themselves.

With all of that said, there still remains the question: do boys just seek sex at all costs, without caring about an emotional connection?

Frustratingly, the answer is: yes and no. Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't.

1) Boys are driven by their hormones to feel intense sexual desire, and at the peak of their sex drives (maybe between ages 15 and 20) they are willing to consider sex outside a relationship in order to deal with their very powerful urges.

2) Boys who are not having sex can think that the sex drive needs to be satisfied one way or another, in a relationship or out. When they have sex for the first time, or find a regular lover, their feelings for the sex partner will be more complex, though.

3) Some boys believe that they can separate sex from love. In my opinion, this is mostly talk. What they say to their friends, before or after a sexual encounter with a girl, is not necessarily what is inside their hearts.

4) Boys with low self-esteem will feel a sense of conquest or triumph from getting girls to go to bed with them. This feeling doesn't last long, and they are soon looking to get laid again. Self-esteem issues aren't satisfied so easily. This type of boy is likely to take a "fuck-em-and-forget-em" attitude.

5) Boys (and girls) who use a lot of drugs will act out their psychological problems in ways that feel hurtful or impersonal to their sex partners.

With all these things said, I would have to deny that sex is just physical to boys. I think the better way to express it is this: boys talk as if sex is just physical, but that's just talk. Sex is emotionally important to them just as it is to girls.

JESS:

All points well-covered by Matt (so I won't repeat Matt's advice here).

Biologically, a male might be more "wired" to treat sex as a "physical" thing (more so than females). While this may be true, it is to the disadvantage of both males and females if people stick TOO closely to "gender stereotypes."

There will always be people who treat sex as a physical thing only. If you want fulfilling, healthy romantic and sexual relationships with others, then it's **impossible** to leave out the mental and emotional components of relationships.

In my personal experience, many of the boys/guys/males I've known have treated sex as both a physical and emotional thing (one was a 19 year-old male who described sex as being the best thing in life, something that's "mental, physical and spiritual"). I've met girls and guys who treat sex as "only physical" too. Those who want a satisfying relationship (that isn't just physical) are often aware of the importance of EQ (emotional intelligence) that's involved with being part of a rewarding relationship.

* * *

2. Why do boys like breasts so much?

MATT:

As babies, we are supposed to be breast-fed. Breast-feeding is a highly pleasurable feeling for both the mother and the child. We are chemically programmed to enjoy it; our brains release chemicals during breast-feeding that tells us it's a good thing. For boys, this non-sexual pleasure with the mother transforms with physical maturity into a sexual pleasure with another female.

Looking at breasts is appealing, touching them is appealing, sucking or nibbling them is erotic, because it's an adult manifestation of a once infantile pleasure (the pleasure a baby has). Additionally, breasts have soft skin, are yielding like pillows and are nice to touch and play with. Furthermore, because breasts are so visible, they are part of the curvature and profile that make a female look female, and that is a good thing.

Is it true that boys who like big breasts had more controlling mothers? I don't know. I think a boy is likely to be attracted to the size of breasts his mother has, or the size of breasts of the first female he was attracted to, but I can't say that for a fact.

Girls, if a boy loves you for other reasons, he will love your breasts whatever size they are. If a boy tells you to get your breasts enlarged to please him, he is a jerk. Break up with him.

JESS:

(Short Version): They're great to look at and touch.

(Slightly Longer Version): Being happy and sexy feels good (whether you're male or female). The breasts, hips and butt are the areas that are typically associated with "feminine curves." These are also the areas traditionally associated with fertility and childbirth (biologically-speaking, a man would want to seek out a woman who is physically capable of bearing his children and keeping the human species going).

In modern times, the breasts, hips and butt are often featured in a sexualized and provocative way (in advertisements and music videos to sell a person, brand or product). Sexuality is a natural component of human life, so it's understandable how breasts can be very visually and erotically appealing. It is also easy to fall prey to what we see in the media everyday (and how a woman with naturally "big boobs" can automatically lead some people to think she must be "slutty"; or conversely, how a very skinny person must be "lousy in bed" because they don't look muscular/athletic).

That being said, people's characters aren't determined by their body parts. So if you want to be in a relationship with a person (and not their most attractive/amazing body parts), focus on the personality to see how much you really like the person and whether you can get along well with them.

* * *

3. Why am I having trouble deciding if I want a relationship?

JESS:

I was always thinking of sex and relationships as a teen (I still do at age twenty-five—just in a slightly different way!).

If you're having trouble deciding if you want something in the first place (whether it's a relationship, or bar of chocolate, or whatever), it's likely because you have conflicting feelings about it.

As a teen I would go round and round in circles when it came to being in a relationship. These are some of the questions I would ask myself:

(1) Do I want to be in a relationship? If so, why?

(2) Would it have to be with a male, because I'm female? Since I'm not a typically feminine girl, does that mean I'm supposed to look for a typically non-masculine man?

(3) What's wrong with being single?

(4) Would I have enough time to be in a relationship?

(5) Am I going to be "left behind" if all my friends are in a relationship, and I'm not?

That's when you're not in a relationship, or considering being in a relationship. Things can, of course, get very complicated when you **are** in a relationship, but questioning whether it's something you want to continue being a part of. You might wonder if things are moving too quickly (on the other hand, if your partner is not as "serious" as you are about the relationship, things can get very stressful in a short amount of time). You might wonder if you're in a relationship with the "right" person. You might wonder about whether your relationship is the #1 thing in your life (to the extent that friends and family and your other interests take a "secondary" position to your relationship).

It is also easy to feel left out if you're single while most of your friends are not.

If you're single, I guess there comes a point in time where you have to decide for yourself if a relationship is something you absolutely NEED to have, right there and then at that point in your life (as Matt describes below). A person can be single and still lead an activity-filled, fulfilling life (as I do at the moment). A romantic/sexual relationship might not be the most important thing in everybody's life, even though it can seem to be this way.

You may have other goals in life—a career, high education, etc.—which a relationship might interfere with. It's getting increasingly harder to juggle "everything" in life, including a fulfilling relationship, though I suppose the best thing to do in the long run would be to have a balanced approach, and to not rush into things. Not rushing into things doesn't necessarily mean that a relationship

won't EVER happen in your life—just maybe a bit later than you thought.

And from my observations, it's far better to wait for the right person and right relationship, than rush into something because of the excitement/thrills. These initially supremely blissful feelings might fade over time, once both of you start settling into the relationship (one that isn't short-term or casual).

MATT:

There are two possible explanations for this. Either you do want the relationship but you're afraid; or you don't really like the person but are having trouble understanding why.

Starting a relationship changes a lot of things in your life. It takes away your time for your family and friends; it takes away time from school; it takes away your personal time. It requires you to shift your priorities. Also, it strongly affects your day to day life because someone else's needs and opinion force you to change your actions, more so than even your parents can do. Not everyone is ready for that. There exists, I think, a sort of emotional tipping point, at which your need to have someone special in your life finally outweighs your need for everything else. This moment came for me when I was in my late twenties and still single, and I settled down onto the floor of my apartment and pounded on the bed and said, "I don't want to be alone anymore." Different people reach this point at different stages of their lives. You may have trouble deciding about a relationship because you have met someone you like, but you are just not ready to be with anyone.

The odd thing is, though, that you may think you are not ready for a relationship, and then you meet someone, and suddenly you are, and the relationship happens. If this happens, it probably means that you weren't sufficiently attracted to the people you previously considered being with.

Everyone thinks on many levels. You have the level of conscious thought, which is what you know you are thinking, the flow of unspoken words in your mind. Then you have unconscious thought, which is thoughts and feelings that influence your behavior but that you can't identify or describe. If you are resisting getting involved with someone, then it may be that you have a reason that you can't consciously understand. A part of you has picked up on points of incompatibility that your conscious mind isn't aware of.

In the great novel The Same Moon by Junying Kirk, the young Chinese protagonist, Pearl, is under pressure to find a husband because she is marrying age and her girlfriends and classmates are already married. When she meets Ben, a man who seems socially suitable and is not unattractive, she moves forward in

her relationship with him even though she soon begins to find him annoying and even unpleasant. Not loving him, or even liking him much, she still marries him. It doesn't work out well.

This is an example of what happens when a relationship isn't personally right, but you force yourself to overcome your misgivings because it's socially right. In the novel, Pearl should have avoided marrying Ben. In real life, you shouldn't get involved with someone that you are having trouble deciding to get involved with.

* * *

4. Are there such things as good girls and bad girls?

JESS:

Many guys would ideally want a virgin who "knows her way" in bed. Many girls would ideally want a man who's a good "provider" (which basically means someone who is financially capable of taking care of a family).

I'd say there is such a thing as good girls and bad girls...and people want the best of both (which is quite impractical and perhaps even impossible).

As a real-life example, one of my friends is in a relationship with a married man who is several years older than her (she is the man's "mistress"; the man is in his late thirties or early forties). The man has described his wife as being "very good as a mother" (in other words, he is out to find something more sexually exciting/interesting than who he selected to be the "mother" to his child). In that example, his wife is the "good girl" while my friend is the "bad girl." It might appear that the "bad girl" would be having more fun in this arrangement, but to my knowledge, neither of the females involved in this situation is happy. There's a very high chance that the wife is aware of what's going on behind her back, and chooses to be silent about it while seeing to her duties as a mother. My friend complains occasionally about how the man pays more attention to his wife than her. And she sometimes says that she cannot trust him fully, because if he's doing this now to his wife, there's no reason why he wouldn't cheat on my friend too should they officially "get married" sometime in the future.

I've struggled with this "good girl" versus "bad girl" concept several times in the past, though things become a lot less complicated when you just be yourself and are aware of the potential consequences to deal with.

For Girls: Do you really want to be a "good girl"? This might mean that you are unaware of your own sexual needs and desires (since a "good girl" in the extreme is someone who is chaste and pure), which might cause you some

trouble when you want to be sexually active in an actual relationship. Do you really want to be a “bad girl”? This might lead to a higher chance of guys using you for sex, and you might get pregnant or contract an STD if you take a “YOLO” (You Only Live Once) approach to sexual activity. But try not to limit your life as to whether you’re a “good” or “bad” girl. There is a lot to savor and experience in life, in between these two “good” or “bad” extremes.

For Girls & Guys: It is a lot more fulfilling to be honest and sensible with yourself, so that you can also enjoy healthy relationships with others. This means allowing yourself (and others) to discover themselves at their own pace, which allows for more personal/sexual/emotional development (sex is not just totally about chastity or promiscuity). It would be far healthier to have a broader scope of what makes a “good” or “bad” person (for example: a good person is trustworthy; a bad person is not).

That being said, some of us thrive on drama, and are attracted to the bad boys/bad girls type.

It’d be wise to keep this saying in mind: “If you play with fire, you’re gonna get burned.”

MATT:

Are there good girls and bad girls? I don’t think so. I think that most people define “good girls” as girls who avoid casual sex and “bad girls” as girls who actively participate in casual sex. But I think these are false categories. There is wise and unwise behavior, but sexual behavior is not something I judge morally. A girl who makes unwise choices can wind up emotionally scarred or pregnant. A boy who makes unwise choices can’t become pregnant, but being the father in an unwanted pregnancy will mess up his life pretty thoroughly, too. And even without a pregnancy, he may still regret. Meaningless sex is something you tend to regret when you’re older. (“Why did I do something so stupid?” or on the flip side, “She was really cool, so why didn’t I try to see her again?”)

You don’t need to feel ashamed of what you have done with your body; however, you should set out to be as thoughtful as possible about your sexual decisions. Protect your long-term interests.

* * *

5. What is a soul mate?

MATT:

The term “soul mate” refers to a person who seems to have the same wants, thoughts, desires, and opinions as you do. If you meet your soul mate, the theory

goes, then the relationship you have with that person has very little struggle over priorities or decisions: you instinctively understand each other and act in accord almost all the time.

In other words, while both soul mates may be happy, this is really something that girls and women long for. Because the female personality (on the average) moves toward consensus-building, trying to keep everyone together, it is typically the goal of the female to feel that her mate is on the same page. (This desire is interpreted by the male as an effort to control him, and problems follow.) If the girl doesn't feel understood, she cannot be at ease. In this sense, nearly every girl wants to find her soul mate, so that she can feel the perfect contentment of constant accord with her life partner.

While a male can be half of a "soul mate" couple, it doesn't really suit the more typical male personality. Boys and men do like to share their intimate feelings at the right moment, but they do it less frequently, and on a different schedule, than girls and women do. A boy would like to carve out his own space, and establish his own identity, and no matter how in love he is, he can't relate to the concept of "we think as one." If he loves a girl, he wants to please and protect her, but he doesn't want to be emotionally united with her. He wants to be his own person, and love her and take care of her, and be appreciated by her in return. So if he seems to be a "soul mate," he is in a phase of being so happy with her that whatever she wants is okay. When that settles down, the accord will settle down, too, and love notwithstanding, there will be some quarreling.

It is certainly possible to find someone that you don't argue with, who is naturally good company for you. This type of accord doesn't have to be related to romance or sexuality. My best male friend, the master painter Eric Henty, always agrees with me (and I with him) on important issues, and he never gets annoyed or irritated about things I do that bother other people. And there is no way I would ever become angry with Eric—I just feel the trustworthiness radiating from the man whenever I see him. Despite our differences—he is older than I, and a churchgoing Christian where I am a free-thinking Hindu/paranormalist; he is a father, and I'm not—we are soul mates, sort of.

If such a close connection can exist between two boys or two men, then even more so, it can exist between two girls or women, or between a girl and her mother. So whichever gender you are, you may have a "soul mate" who is a friend or family member rather than a romantic partner.

My conclusion is that a "soul mate," a person who is supremely compatible with you, can exist in your life, but that this condition can't exist more than temporarily in a male/female romantic relationship. I have a feeling Jess will

disagree. Let's see...

JESS:

Matt is right that I disagree with his last point (haha!)—but let me elaborate a little bit before I get to that.

I'd describe a soul mate as someone you share an extreme compatibility with (on a mental/emotional/physical/spiritual level).

One of my male friends believes (or believed—I might have to catch up with him on it) that a person can have several soul mates over the course of their lifetime. As Matt described, my friend had a similar notion about “soul mates” not necessarily referring to what is commonly thought of as a soul mate (i.e. the one and only person you're meant to spend the rest of your life with).

Personally, I don't like anything that restricts freedom, so I like the idea of a soul mate being a friend, companion, etc. (rather than a romantic partner).

A lot of girls/women I know believe in soul mates in the conventional sense (one and only “true love” person to marry and settle down with).

I've never doubted in the concept of a soul mate existing in a male/female romantic relationship, because I had a rather early experience with somebody (somebody very tall and lean—let's call him “A.X.” over here). To summarize, I was A.X.'s first “romantic” interest, and A.X. was my first “sexual” interest (I took about eight years to catch up with him).

While we ultimately didn't end up together, it was a really intense, ethereal, weird, exclusive, exciting and special “thing” that we had for quite a while. We communicated a lot through song lyrics and music. If you Google the lyrics to [“Fireball” by Deep Purple](#), that pretty much characterizes what I felt about A.X. (and how the relationship played out).

While there were moments of extreme agitation during that relationship, there were also moments that were simply out of this world (in a very simple, magical, natural kind of way). A.X. liked the band “The Killers” a lot—if you Google some of their song lyrics, you'll get an idea of the type of ideal love A.X. had in his mind all the time (the problem was that it was often more in his mind than anywhere else).

I didn't end up with A.X., but there were instances during that relationship that I don't think I will ever experience again in real life.

That's not to say that all my other and future experiences “will be lousy” because “it was so good” with A.X. But there are some things I acknowledge that were very special/different about that first major and long-lasting, tumultuous relationship.

“We shared a moment that will last till the end” is a lyric from a song we both knew well.

What I shared with A.X. will last to the end on a soulful/spiritual level (from the high points to the low points in the relationship—nothing else so far has come close). We brought out the very best and worst components in each other (heaven and hell and everything in between). I would definitely consider him a soul mate.

* * *

6. Should I wait for true love?

JESS:

It depends on what you want, and what you define as “true love.”

I have one friend who was waiting to be in “one, true relationship” only with the one she considered to be her “true love” (the person she would get married to and live with for the rest of her life). She said that when we were nineteen. We’re currently twenty-five and both of us are single.

My definition of “true love” wasn’t exactly the same as my friend’s—personally, I define true love for myself as something very intense and exclusive. The emotional intensity and mental/sexual compatibility are far more important to me than the traditional “marriage” setting. It’s not that I don’t believe in marriages at all. I am just more interested in the soulful and intimate aspects to a relationship (I know that signing a piece of paper stating I’m “married” to someone does not magically mean we are destined to be together for the rest of time, because it’s “official”).

Relationships and love are things that can’t be forced. They can happen anytime and your needs/desires/values might change over time (your partner’s might too—which is when you will have to decide if you want to compromise and try to make a relationship work, or if breaking up would be the better thing to do).

It’s OK to wait for true love (according to how you define it), though it’d be good to be open to new people and experiences/perspectives along the way too. If you’re too overly focused on finding that specific type of true love, you might miss out on many things along the way. The best form of love is unconditional—one where there’s care and concern with nothing asked in return. Be very sure that you are with someone who also gives love unconditionally, if you do—or else, you’re going to end up in a very taxing, imbalanced, and exhausting relationship where you’ll be the giver 90% of the time.

MATT:

My turn. Well, I like The Princess Bride a lot—one of my favorite movies, in fact—but I don't really believe in true love. The idea that people were "meant" to be together raises all sorts of complex questions about who or what force meant anything to happen. I won't take that on here—although I do in School of the Ages novels—but I will say that overall I think there are many paths available to relationship happiness, and that what you have to do is find someone you can deal with who is equally as interested as you are in making things work.

How does love start, if it isn't just "meant" to be? Jess and I talk about that plenty in Teen Guide, so I'll just say a little here. There are varying degrees of attraction and desire, and certainly varying degrees of compatibility, but love is a pretty complex combination, which as often arises from conflict as from accord. You hate someone and hate someone, and then you realize that the hate has become love. You fiercely love someone with whom you fight all the time. And again, love comes from long experience, as in the case of the widow or widower, who, when thinking about the deceased spouse, most misses what was most irritating when that person is alive.

Your love affair can start in any sort of place, but wherever it starts, it will last only if it is built on a foundation of experience and shared activity and knowledge of each other.

* * *

7. Is the sex in *Fifty Shades of Grey* realistic?

MATT:

I can't respond to this question meaningfully, for a couple of reasons.

First, although I've had some friends over the years who were into BDSM, I did not share their interest. I don't know the intricacies of a real-life BDSM relationship.

Additionally, *Fifty Shades of Grey* bothers me on the personal level, because it is so badly written, and has made so much money nonetheless. As a writer who worked hard to develop his craft, I am appalled to see a book written with so little skill, with such ludicrous content, and with such shallow values, pull in millions.

Jess is better equipped to answer this question than I am. She's a writer of erotica. No, not pornography. (See *Teen Guide* for what we both have to say about porno.) Erotica is a category of literature which deals openly and excitingly with sexuality as a part of human experience. Jess' work is what we call relationship-based erotica, meaning that she shows the characters in a

detailed and complex way so that their sexual interaction is meaningful to them and the reader. Her writing is inspired by the classic literary texts of sexuality, such as Anaïs Nin and D.H. Lawrence.

Wikipedia is a good resource if you want to learn more about this type of literature, and find the classics. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erotic_literature

Over to you, partner.

JESS:

My answer is quite lengthy, so I shall split it up into two parts:

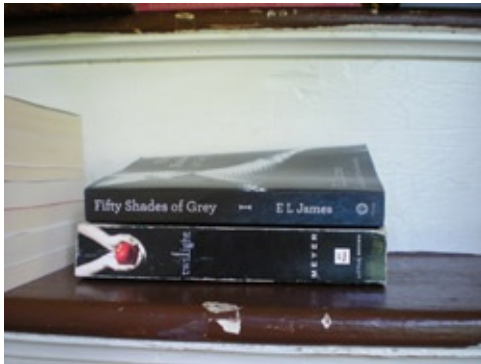
PART 1: *Fifty Shades* as *Twilight* fan fiction (it's romance, not realistic BDSM)

PART 2: *Fifty Shades* excerpts (exploring fantasy vs. reality)

* * *

PART 1: *Fifty Shades* as *Twilight* fan fiction

Fifty Shades of Grey was originally written as *Twilight* fan fiction.



[Image by [JCS / jessINK](#)]

There are many similarities between these two massively popular romances (it is important to keep in mind that both these works fall into the commercial “romance” genre).

Here are some of the similarities I’ve noticed so far:

(1) Both feature an ordinary virgin protagonist, whose Prince Charming comes in the form of a very rich/handsome prototype that is ONLY attracted to the virgin protagonist.

(2) The virgin protagonist feels good about herself and bases her self-worth/self-esteem, to a significant extent, according to the wishes and desires of “her man” (she needs constant attention from the man to feel complete/fulfilled/good about herself).

(3) Both these works are “safe” for the mainstream reader/consumer.

These are all very important points because of fantasy/escapism and reality.

In real life, a lot of guys dislike (or despise) these sort of romances, because of the way they reduce men to be “rich, handsome, 100%-attentive, perfect” heroes (and when they “fall short” of any of these qualities in real life, their female partners get disappointed). It is very similar to the way females are portrayed in commercial pornography (it can reduce women to be “sexualized, well-endowed, blemish-free, 100%-physically perfect” beauties (and some women expect themselves to have to look “that way” in order to sustain a male’s interest).

If *Twilight* is the only book you have read, *Fifty Shades of Grey* is going to be very “hardcore” (because of the BDSM themes in the book).

As a person with a long-time interest in bondage and the power play dynamics involved with BDSM, one of the things I disliked about *Fifty Shades* was the extremely narrow and limited portrayal it gives of the BDSM scene.

No, BDSM is not all about “Dom/sub” contracts (where a couple writes down, in detail, what their relationship entails). A “Dom/sub” relationship has the potential to draw out the best in each person, because of the intensity of such an extreme set-up (in *Fifty Shades*, you will see that the psychological intensity of a “Dom/sub” relationship is never really portrayed—it’s a fluffy version of BDSM, where the “romance” with the Prince Charming male is the backbone of the story—not the actual eroticism of true BDSM). In this type of relationship in real life, it is not the dominant’s job to be a control freak—it is the dominant’s job to make sure the submissive is “well taken care of” and fulfilled in their partnership.

To my knowledge, Ana (the lead female character in *Fifty Shades*) spends more time “biting her lip” and going “Holy Crap” and talking about her “inner goddess” than talking about the real aspects of a relationship strongly characterized by BDSM activity.

For me, the BDSM activity was light and sanitized in *Fifty Shades* (but that’s because I’m familiar with the works of Anaïs Nin, and other writers of classic, high-quality erotic literature). *Fifty Shades* appears to be hardcore for people who (1) don’t read much and (2) have absolutely no knowledge of the BDSM scene.

A real BDSM relationship is not about who’s the richest or most beautiful (it is not about the romance with a Prince Charming prototype). It is not about a submissive who’s actually a “princess” and gets whatever she wants—as dictated by what her male partner desires.

A real BDSM relationship is about the power exchange, the trust issues, learning to respect your own self/needs and that of your partner, and the combination of fear and arousal.

Yes, Ana initially reacts with shock/fear/surprise at Christian Grey's ways...but in the end, *Fifty Shades* is about “dominant” (Prince Charming) Christian giving all of his adoring attention to “submissive” (Princess) Ana.

Put aside the generalized BDSM components in *Fifty Shades*, and that's what *Fifty Shades* is at its core: a fairytale (for adults).

* * *

PART 2: *Fifty Shades* excerpts (fantasy vs. reality)

I have selected a few examples from the book to better explain what is fantasy (i.e. the “romance” in the book) and what is realistic (i.e. how things would go down in real life).

Let's explore fantasy and reality with the following four questions:

(a) Does Christian Grey depict what a Dominant partner is like, or should be like, in a real BDSM relationship?

(b) Is *Fifty Shades of Grey* about real BDSM?

(c) The scene where Ana loses her virginity and has sex with Christian for the first time—is this realistic?

(d) Is obsession the same as true love?

* * *

(a) Does Christian Grey depict what a Dominant partner is like, or should be like, in a real BDSM relationship?

My answer: **NO.**

From Page 287 of *Fifty Shades*:

Christian says that Ana “isn't meant to like” being spanked. He adds, “I like the control it gives me, Anastasia...you will learn to behave the way I desire.”

From Page 349:

Christian says to Ana, “I want you, and I want you now. And if you're not going to let me spank you—which you deserve—I'm going to [do it with you] on the couch this minute, quickly, for my pleasure, not yours.”

The above two excerpts do not show what a true sane/stable Dominant is. The excerpts show a control freak.

Yes, this “control freak” aspect can happen in or out of a BDSM relationship,

but it should not be taken with the attitude of, “Oh, so this is what all Doms in the BDSM scene are like...”

In contrast, a real Dom would not be self-centered to the point of telling their submissive that “it is only the Dominant’s pleasure that matters.”

I know people (males/females/in different locations around the world/of different ages and cultural backgrounds) who are into BDSM. Many of them are very normal on the inside as well as on the outside.



[Image from [Tricks](#)]

One of them had an online friend who opened a BDSM dungeon in Los Angeles (where people pay money for discreet BDSM services).

The place was operated and owned by women. Dominants were never hired unless the individuals had experienced being a submissive. The owner felt that without the experience of being a sub, it would be difficult to get inside the sub’s mind to give them what they needed during the session (this is mentioned in the second story of *Play*, a realistic BDSM short story anthology I wrote in 2011).

In real life, BDSM practitioners have to walk a delicate balance between shared awareness and intensity. It is always about the pleasure of both the dominants and submissives involved.

BDSM is not about asserting your power over another person in a sexual situation, and justifying that you don’t need to care about their pleasure because “you’re the one in control” (that’s mental/emotional abuse, which doesn’t accurately define what a fulfilling BDSM relationship is about).

From Page 293:

Christian Grey (in an email) says to Ana, “So you felt demeaned, debased, abused, and assaulted...do you really feel like this or do you think you ought to feel like this? Two very different things. If that *is* how you feel, do you think you could just try to embrace these feelings, deal with them, for me? That’s what a submissive would do.”

That's *not* the job of a submissive—the job of a submissive is to give to the dominant partner power and authority over the submissive's body in exchange for the submissive's happiness and health (this is part of the “power exchange” in a real, fulfilling, BDSM sexual relationship).

A truly emotionally supportive partner doesn't tell their partner to “deal with their feelings” on their own (especially since the conflicting feelings involve the other partner too!).

It is the responsibility of both people in any kind of relationship to be open and honest to each other with their feelings.

(b) Is *Fifty Shades of Grey* about real BDSM?

My answer: **NO**.

Fifty Shades is a romance with BDSM window-dressing (marketed as a “BDSM novel” for some “spice” and “edge”).

From Page 98: This is the description of Christian Grey's “Red Room of Pain.” The room is described as having “walls and a ceiling that are a deep, dark burgundy...the floor is old varnished wood...there is a large wooden cross like an X fastened to the wall...an expansive iron grid suspended from the ceiling...” and there are “ropes and chains”...and an “assortment of paddles, whips, riding crops, and funny-looking feathery implements.”

This description is a very stereotypical set-up (not every person in real life is insanely rich like Christian Grey to be able to afford a beautiful room in one house JUST for “play”).

A person does not need ALL the above equipment to be considered a “real” BDSM practitioner (it's not about quantity; it's about quality).

So in *Fifty Shades*, we have the “playroom” (Christian sex room which is a stereotypical BDSM set-up with BDSM props and equipment), a Dom/sub contract (where Christian and Ana list down in detail the limitations of what they're willing to explore in their supposed BDSM relationship), and the sexual scenes (which are more “mild kink” for real-life practitioners of BDSM).

But if you take away these BDSM elements, the plotline of *Fifty Shades* still works, because of the “emotional relationship” and “romance” between Christian and Ana (**that** is the backbone of the story, **not** BDSM).



[“Night Romance” Image from [Google](#)]

How can a story be about real BDSM when the story is still there when all the BDSM elements are removed?

Christian Grey never actually “trains” Ana to become his “submissive sex slave” (something that is done in a real life BDSM relationship).

Perhaps this is why many people into the BDSM lifestyle don’t like *Fifty Shades*.

It’s like slapping an LGBT label onto the thing for coolness factor, then deciding in the end that “being straight” is where it’s at. That might be the case for some people in real life, but in that case the thing shouldn’t be marketed as “LGBT” (or “BDSM”, in the case of *Fifty Shades*).

Fifty Shades presents BDSM as something bad/naughty and “forbidden” (like the “forbidden love” in *Twilight*), and suggests to the reader that the romantic love Ana yearns for is not compatible with BDSM, because BDSM is something that stems from a wayward/abusive past (Christian Grey has an abusive past).

The message is that BDSM is a fetish kink that stems from abuse (and that it’s not something that ordinary or “normal” people should be into).

The above is not true. The sane and serious practitioners of BDSM are into BDSM *because* of how BDSM enhances their sexual and personal life.

Yes, you’ll have some psychotic people who are into the BDSM lifestyle (as in other areas in life), but this minority of twisted beings should not be seen as “representative” of the entire BDSM community.

Fifty Shades was not written to explore BDSM or personal sexual themes. *Fifty Shades* was written as *Twilight* fan fiction (entertainment) to please *Twilight* romance fans.

In other words, *Fifty Shades* does not offer an authentic portrayal of a real BDSM relationship.

(c) The scene where Ana loses her virginity and has sex with Christian

for the first time—is this realistic?

My answer: **NO**.

Good heavens, my answer is definitely ‘no’.



[“Sexy Bed” Image from [Jodi & Alicia](#)]

Ana Steele in *Fifty Shades* is a twenty-one year old virgin. If a girl/woman has never had sexual intercourse, she is likely to be tight (she would need to be “relaxed” beforehand so that there is less pain during penetration).

From Page 117:

“I’m going to fuck you now, Miss Steele,” [Christian] murmurs as he [gets ready to enter me]. “Hard,” he whispers, and he slams into me.

“Aargh!” I cry as I feel a weird pinching sensation deep inside me as he rips through my virginity.

One and a half pages later, we are told that Ana has experienced “two” very amazing “orgasms.”

This is not realistic—please don’t think that just because you’re with a “hot, handsome” guy, first time sex with him is bound to be amazing.

There can be blood and pain during first time sex even with a good partner/lover, who’s sensitive, considerate and aware of their partner. This “virgin to sex machine who can keep up with the amazing Christian Grey” transition in Ana in *Fifty Shades* is PURE fantasy.

It takes skill and effort to be a good lover in bed (but that’s another story for another day...).

(d) Is obsession the same as true love?

My answer: **NO**.

Is this trendy if you’re part of the *Twilight* generation?

Yes.

And it can get very dangerous if you think that obsession, in real life, means

true love.

The main character, Ana, describes their relationship as an obsession.

From Page 221:

He's so passionate, mesmerizing. This is obviously his obsession, the way he is...I can't take my eyes off him.

From Page 355:

"This man, whom I once thought of as a romantic hero, a brave shining white knight—or the dark knight, as he said. He's not a hero; he's a man with serious, deep emotional flaws, and he's dragging me into the dark. Can I not guide him into the light?"

From Page 360:

"I need to be able to show him affection—then perhaps he can reciprocate."

This, dear friends and readers, is something that is romantic fantasy—in real life, all the love in the world CANNOT and WILL NOT “fix” a partner's deep emotional issues (I know because I have experienced such people and situations in real life). A person with “serious, deep emotional flaws” needs to work on their issues to understand themselves—their problems are not going to magically disappear because of “true love” (that is why romance novels are ESCAPISM, not REALITY).



[“Don’t forget to love yourself” | Image from [The Budding Rose](#)]

My very-clever friend from the U.K., a male in his 50s, has this to say on the subject of “charming bad boys”:

In real life, the selfish brutes can be very suave, confident and charming. So they win women over. After all many women like men to take charge and show some strength and passion. This is how many women become trapped in destructive relationships with men who are selfish and abusive (i.e. men who aren't sensitive, caring and affectionate).

I will paste excerpts from a short email correspondence here between myself

and a *Twilight* fan (I shall call her “Bianca” here) to share some perspectives:

===

From: Jess C Scott

Subject: Fifty Shades

Date: Sat, Jun 30, 2012 at 11:08 PM

To: Bianca

Hi Bianca,

I remembered your email about the “intensity of Grey’s emotions” and thought I’d send you a quick email (I’m about 100 pages into *Fifty Shades*). I burst out laughing at one point about how Ana’s inner goddess was sitting in the lotus position.

I can see how Grey’s emotions are intense and will continue to make my way through *Fifty Shades*.

I am not the target audience (romance reader) for *Fifty Shades*, so I find the actual supposed BDSM elements of *Fifty Shades* to be disappointing (it feels like BDSM spice thrown in, rather than the realistic exploration of the depth of an intense BDSM relationship with strong power play elements). There’s references to Dom and sub and a contract, but like many others into the BDSM lifestyle, I found the actual sex scenes to be mild kink (hence making it a “safe” and marketable BDSM Lite product for the masses).

Fifty Shades is very much like *Twilight* in the fairytale sense (virgin protagonist defines her self-worth according to “her man” that comes in the form of a supremely attractive + insanely rich alpha male prototype). If Christian Grey wasn’t **good-looking** or **super-rich**, I think many more female readers would consider him a **pervert**.

I sometimes think of some of these female fans who’ll take a male’s obsession with them to mean “true love,” which might eventually lead them to get into a really intense BDSM-type relationship in real life without being prepared for it—yeah, there’s less chances of a fairytale ending happening there.

===

From: Bianca

Subject: re: Fifty Shades

Date: Sun, Jul 1, 2012 at 11:50 AM

To: Jess C Scott

Hey Jess,

LOL. I am not a fan of her writing but in fairness to James (author of *Fifty Shades*), the story did start out as a fan fic that went popular among the *Twilight* fans because she fulfilled their Bella-Edward fantasies in the sack.

I wasn't really into Ana that much and her inner goddess. Grey's unraveling or unmasking starts in book 2 and maybe his past doesn't fully justify his current deviant behavior but I like the tortured soul part. People with a background of abuse, especially men, have different coping mechanisms and I'd like to think Grey's is one version of it. But I agree with you, **if Grey isn't a powerful, handsome AND wealthy guy, I probably won't like him so that adds to the illusion.**

BDSM seems to be a hot topic lately and between you and me, it's not as "romantic" as some people make it out to be especially if they're basing it on this book. I agree, there are a lot of things that can go wrong with BDSM and I'm a little disappointed that some people **overly romanticize** this in their head. Mild kink is fine and a lot of people are into it but beating up your partner is a different story all together. I was so mad by the end of book 1, I felt that the conflict was hastily written and Ana is so dumb! But then again, this was a fan fic written in leisure so I have James some leeway for that.

Well these "tortured", **possessive men are only good on paper** because **we know how it ends** and the author guarantees that they live HEA (Happily Ever After—this is a requisite for a romance novel) & the victims are redeemed. I think I'll go **berserk if this guy is for real** and wants me signing contracts before we have sex.

* * *

REFERENCES:

[To all members of the BDSM community...](#) (Amazon Forum)

& Jess's (+ her friends') personal experience/s

* * *

Guest Posts/Interviews + Excerpts:

1. Mixed Messages Young People Receive about Love and Sex (Guest Post)



[Image by [Maaïke Boot](#)]

* Originally published on 8 May 2012 at [Maria Savva's blog](#)

MARIA:

Today, author Jess C Scott takes over my blog to tell us a bit about her new release (co-authored by Matt Posner).

I met Jess on Goodreads a couple of years ago and she is one of my favourite indie authors. I have read and enjoyed her books [EyeLeash: A Blog Novel](#), [Porcelain](#), and [The Other Side of Life](#), and look forward to reading her other work when I have time. She is a prolific writer with many books to her name.

Her latest release is a non-fiction work. In this book, Jess and her co-author seek to answer many of the important questions teenagers may have about sex and relationships. It's a very important subject, so without further ado, here is Jess's message.

JESS:

Thanks so much for having me today, Maria!

Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships is a non-fiction book I co-authored with Matt Posner. It's an advice book that answers the important and confusing questions young people have about their bodies and their hearts.

Matt is a teacher and he sees teens in emotional and sexual difficulty as part of his daily work. I write about sex and relationships and often hear from readers who relate to the themes in my stories.

Our goal with *Teen Guide* was to guide teens to a better understanding of their bodies and their feelings. Matt and I wanted to make a difference by cutting

through media nonsense, cultural myths and the shrouds of mystery covering certain topics to give young people a mature view.

The emails I receive from readers motivate me to keep resisting ‘sheeple programming’ (i.e. accepting “the messages from the mainstream mass media” as The Truth).

An angry 16 year-old male recently sent me the following email:

“i really f*cking hate faglight...dracula from the castlevania video gaming series. have you ever heard of it? it used to be soooo popular. now theres only like 70000 fans. meyer sucks at writing shes a slut no offense. only reason why twilight even makes money is because edward and jacob are so hot. girls dont care about who you are they just like your muscle. no offense if edward and jjacob werent soooo hot twilight wouldnt make dirt i swear to f*cking god

wait this is a girl? are you gay or something? no offense.

im not trying to be rude or offensive or anything but what is the point of a love relationship when all you basicly do is look at eachother and do eachother?”

Apart from the spelling errors (he was texting, so I’ll let that slide), there are many very important and “telling” facts embedded in the above email.

For example, the word “fag” is associated with a gay sexual orientation and “being stupid.” From a young male’s point of view, it’s girls who “don’t care about who you are [they just like your body or how hot you look].” I am a female that doesn’t like *Twilight*, therefore I must be “gay” (as in “lesbian,” which is why the phrase “no offense” was included because it was in reference to my assumed sexual orientation only, not my IQ level). From this young male’s point of view, a “love relationship” is defined by a couple gazing at each other’s beautiful faces or bodies, and doing each other (i.e. the “love relationship” is solely defined by “a hot shag”).

It might seem hilarious—until you realize that people everywhere *are* receiving mixed messages about what love, sex, and relationships are supposed to be all about.

To borrow a quote from another [male reader/customer](#) of mine:

“A lot has been lost to appease a tween generation or to generally confuse people of all ages on the expectations of romance...”

I’ve seen and heard 15 year-old females say, in all seriousness (about boys they’re judging based on boyfriend material): “He’s hot, so it must be true love.”

Can we really blame the 16 year-old male quoted above for being so angry with the concept of love and relationships?

This is why Matt and I wrote *Teen Guide*: to provide an honest, insightful and informative sex education for teenagers, so that they're well-informed and able to make clear decisions when it comes to love and sex. We hope readers will enjoy the comprehensive yet concise text, and above all, find it useful and helpful.

MARIA:

Thank you, Jess. I am sure this will be a very insightful and informative read.

To find out more about Jess and Matt's new book, *Teen Guide*, follow this link:

www.jessINK.com/teenguide.htm

* * *

2. Inspiration for Teen Guide (Guest Post)



[Image by [HotlantaVoyeur](#)]

* Originally published on 7 May 2012 at [Simon Palmer's blog](#)

SIMON:

Hi All,

I want to share a blog post I received from my friend and fellow author, Matt Posner, (below).

Matt and I first became friends when he chose to review my book, *Losing the Hate*. He is a credited writer, and it gives me great pleasure to share his latest work with you all; a work which, I believe, is of great importance, given the climate in which we all live in.

Many Thanks

Simon P

MATT:

Hi Sye,

Thanks for giving me a chance to appear on your blog to talk about *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships*. Since reading and reviewing *Losing the Hate* was how I got to know you, I know you care deeply about the health of teenagers and you have written your powerful memoir in order to give them (and adult survivors of abuse) strength in difficult times.

Jess and I have also written because we care. I'm a teacher and see teens in emotional and sexual difficulty as part of my daily work, while Jess writes about sex and relationships and hears from readers every day who make connections between her writing and their own lives. We want to make a difference for these young people.

Our goal with this book was to guide teens to a better understanding of their

bodies and their feelings and to cut through media nonsense, cultural myths and the shrouds of mystery covering certain topics to give them a mature view.

There are all sorts of confusing and painful feelings that teens have when they are new to dating and forming romantic and emotional bonds. I think about all the misunderstandings and mistakes that I faced when I first fell in love at age fourteen (which did not go well) and I wish I had had access to the kind of advice that this book contains, when it seemed like all I had was a bunch of nonsense written in the early 60s showing people dressed like characters from *Leave it to Beaver*.

Jess and I both understand that teen sexuality happens, and we want to give our readers the chance to get what sex is really about and how to do it in the most healthful way possible.

That doesn't mean we encourage teen sex—we absolutely don't—but even if they don't have sex, teens still need to know what it should and should not be like when the right time comes.

There are two sets of answers to all the questions in *Teen Guide*. There are two authors, one female and one male, each with a distinct view and the ability, when necessary, to address the experience of a particular gender on the issue. Also unusual is the fact that we are from different generations—I am in my early 40s, Jess in her mid-20s—so that we sometimes look at things differently for that reason.

One thing both authors have in common, though, is caring about kids. We give the best advice we can based on our knowledge and experience. Sometimes this advice may be controversial, but a lot of the time it's just common sense, and it's spoken directly without being buried in a lot of jargon and unnecessary elaboration.

We enjoyed the process of working on this book. There was a positive vibe at every point, not only because it felt so good to be sharing our knowledge and thoughts, but because it was the first real collaboration for either of us. Knowing someone else believes in what you're doing and is teaming with you to make it work is a great feeling.

* * *

3. Jess's Interview with Junying Kirk ("Let's Talk about Sex")



[Image by [Getty Images](#)]

* Originally published on 10 May 2012 at [Junying Kirk's blog](#)

JUNYING:

I met Jess last year through a mutual writer friend Matt Posner, who interviewed me, labelling me a “[Multicultural Icon](#)”. Shortly after that, Jess kindly offered a space on her wonderful site and we had an interesting chat about my books, publication and tips for writers ([Jess C Scott Interviews Junying Kirk](#)). Today it's my greatest pleasure to welcome Jess and she will reveal what she has been up to since our last virtual meeting.

Jess, Can you please tell us something unique about yourself?

I was born during a full moon!

Oh, I wasn't expecting that answer—you are not crazy, are you :)? Who, living or dead, do you most admire?

Many people, though all of them lived or live their lives with both passion and purpose.

What inspired you to write your latest book?

Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships is a non-fiction book I co-authored with Matt Posner. As a teacher Matt sees young people every day who are going through a variety of troubles, most of which are related to love and relationships.

It's difficult for a teacher to directly intervene, but Matt thought he could make a difference and help some young people out there as a writer. I really liked the idea of the project when Matt first mentioned it to me in late 2011 (he was looking for a female writer to provide a “female perspective” to the book, since the book is structured in a simple Q&A format).

It turned out to be a great collaboration as we worked together to achieve one

common goal, which was to provide a teen sex education that was insightful and informative (and above all, helpful and useful).

How was it like working with a co-author on *Teen Guide*?

We both really believed in the project, so the collaboration was rather smooth-going (something that's not to be underestimated!). While we don't agree 100% on every single point or topic mentioned in *Teen Guide*, our basic views and perspectives are more or less compatible. Working on a project that was sincere and comprehensive took priority over various minor "disagreements."

I'm very thankful for email and the Internet. It would have been significantly harder to work with a co-author if those two things were not available.

I agree. Isn't Internet one of the greatest inventions of modern times?! Does the book encourage "teenage sex"?

It doesn't promote a promiscuous lifestyle, though it doesn't stick to an "abstinence-only" perspective either. There's nothing wrong with abstinence, but it's unrealistic to expect that type of sex education to be sufficient.

A person needs to be equipped with facts and a wide range of honest opinions, so that he or she will be able to make a well-informed decision when it comes to sex and relationships.

Keeping things to a very narrow perspective is not going to be conducive in the long run, because life at its best is expansive (where we feel alive and "discover" more about ourselves throughout the process of living).

What Matt and I encourage is for the reader to get in touch with their own sexual beliefs, behaviors and attitudes, not to be "promiscuous" but because a person's sexual being is a big part of their identity. It should be something that's treated with care and respect (and not exploited, cheapened/devalued, or "swept under the carpet").

Absolutely, Jess. I can relate to that. I so wish when I was a teen, I had an opportunity to read a guide like yours and had a better understanding of what sex was about. But hey, that was a different era and I was in a different world :) As a teenager, what were your experiences with sex and relationships like?

I've always been interested in sex, though the first time I was *really* sexually attracted to someone I knew in real life probably happened shortly after I'd turned sixteen.

I was quite "exploratory" in my own way(s), but I always needed some kind

of depth and mental compatibility when it came to relationships (I'm in my mid-twenties now, and still seek those qualities in any type of relationship).

As a teen, sex to me was more than just a pastime or something physical to do. A relationship was more than something light and fluffy—I liked intensity that wasn't based on something superficial like external looks only.

I found myself very uninspired/bored/irritated with the way sex and relationships were mostly depicted by the mainstream mass media. They seemed to gloss over the emotional and spiritual components to sexual activity, which is something I include in most of my writing (whether it's fiction or non-fiction).

Gosh, Jess, you're an early starter :) I think my sexual awakenings were much later :) Do you use Social Media for promoting your work and communicating with other writers? What's your take on it?

Oh yes—I'm mostly on Facebook, Twitter, WordPress, Goodreads, and LinkedIn (in that order). I try to have some kind of a balance between self-promotion and sharing “useful information” and/or “funny anecdotes” (which are sometimes more snarky than I originally intended).

I'm not on social media ALL the time—it can easily become distracting. I usually just wait for people to contact me if they're interested in collaborating on a project or would like to offer some cross-promotion. Writing is just so time-consuming...

Oh yes! They are most definitely distracting and time-consuming, and I confess that I spent far too much time, and I follow more or less the same kind of order and pattern as you do. Do your characters talk to you? Have you ever used people you know as a character?

I think they mostly talk amongst themselves and I record whatever I observe as the writer/person in the background.

Most of the time I do use people that I know as characters. I would like to point out that the same person features in [*EyeLeash: A Blog Novel*](#), and [*Jack in the Box*](#).

Jess, I'm curious. I know you grew up in Singapore and are currently living in Maine, USA. If you could go anywhere in the world to write your books, where would it be?

Anywhere that has an exotic charm and/or a rich, historical heritage and culture.

Here is a challenge: describe your latest novel within 140 characters, as in a tweet.

Teen Guide is an advice book that answers the important and confusing questions young people have about their bodies and their hearts.

Many Congratulations to Matt Posner & Jess C Scott and best of luck with the new release!

If you have a teenager in your household, grab a copy now :)!

* * *

4. Matt's Interview with Mande Matthews ("What's controversial in Teen Guide?")



[Image by [Getty Images](#)]

Q&A with Matt Posner, Co-Author of Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships

***Mande:** I'm glad to welcome back my friend Matt Posner who was last featured here a few months back. Matt's new book is Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships. It's a nonfiction book, but I think that sounds like a great novel title too.*

Matt: You know, I think it does, in a Judy Blume sort of way, and maybe Jess and I should do a novel like that, too.

***Mande:** Your book looks interesting, so please tell the readers about it.*

Matt: The book features from-the-heart advice for teenagers about the broadest range of sex and relationship topics we could come up with: everything from how to know if you're in love to how to respect your partner during a sexual encounter. It's not a sex manual and not a relationship book but a little of both, a reference to give the reader a reality check on almost every topic important to young people. Jess and I wrote in a Q&A format, with each of us answering the same question separately. Since we are from two generations and different genders, our values and perceptions vary sometimes, giving teens more than one piece of advice for every situation. Of course, we do agree on issues related to safety and we agree that the path to contentment involves sincere emotional bonds between people; but I am more conservative and so more likely to say, "don't do it because it's a bad idea" whereas Jess will say, "think about your real goals and be true to yourself."

***Mande:** What makes you guys qualified to write a book like this?*

Matt: We aren't doctors, psychologists, or counselors. We're just people who

are on your side, giving heart-to-heart advice. Our only qualification is life experience, the same as if you were asking a relative or an older friend. I know about teenagers because I work with them every day as a teacher, but more than that, I know about teenagers because I remember being one and I remember what was going on inside me and inside the people I knew. Jess is a very relationship-smart person who writes about the subject of authentic feelings and genuine connection in all of her fiction.

***Mande:** So what kind of questions do you answer?*

Matt: The book is divided, for ease of browsing, into the sex section and the relationship section, even though these topics aren't really separate in life. In the sex section we go through all the basics of physical intimacy, for straight and gay and in between, and then we talk about the other sex related major issues, such as masturbation, birth control, abortion, drugs, rape, pornography, body image, and less mainstream forms of sexuality. In the relationship section we discuss all stages of the formation of a couple, from first attraction all the way to breakup, talking about who is good to be with, how you know who is right for you, what being in a relationship feels like, how to make a relationship last, and how to know if a relationship needs to end. We tried to be as comprehensive as possible in our selection of questions, and our beta readers didn't point out too many things we'd missed (what they did point out, we added in!).

***Mande:** Is there anything controversial in your book?*

Matt: I expect there is, given the broad difference of opinion in the United States about what is sexually acceptable for teenagers. We said what we felt was best for the health of young people, but our advice doesn't necessarily fit every political or religious agenda. We don't consider ourselves to be sexually explicit in this book, but we think we are giving just the standard information that young people need to make good decisions and conduct themselves properly. And as far as guiding young people's choices, we gave them all the facts they need to make smart sexual decisions, including identifying the consequences of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. But you know, honestly, *Twilight* probably stirs up more romantic and sexual feelings than *Teen Guide* possibly can...

***Mande:** It sounds like you're tackling big issues, Matt! I appreciate that you're not skirting tough issues and speaking matter-of-factly. Too often, "adults" push their own agendas on young adults when all anyone wants are frank, honest answers. Seems like you're filling that gap. I want to thank you for visiting my blog, and letting us know about your new guide, Matt. Always a*

pleasure.

Matt: My pleasure, and please keep working on the *Shadowlight* series. I want to see another novel this year!

Mande: *Oh, you bet! I'm on it. That goes for you, too. Best of luck with Teen Guide.*

* * *

5. Excerpts (3 Questions)

This is an excerpt from *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships*, featuring three questions from different sections of the book.



[Image by [Fanny71](#)]

* * *

1. How does dieting affect sex?

MATT:

That depends upon the diet. Diets that give you proper nutrition and leave you feeling satisfied with your meal should not harm your sex life. Diets that leave you hungry, feeling unsatisfied, will decrease sexual interest and sexual pleasure. A person who is dieting in order to please a partner, and is hungry as a result, will probably be angry. In fact, hungry people are often angry in general. I am not a dieting expert, and if you look at my picture, you can tell that I don't diet at all. However, I know that you need a minimum number of calories per day, that you need a wide range of nutrients, and that you need to feel full. Moderate portions, eliminating the worst foods, and exercise are your best options.

Diet pills don't work. Think logically: if they worked, doctors would recommend them and everyone would use them. Liposuction is dangerous and won't stop you from gaining back the fat it removes. Having your stomach stapled works, but it is only available to people with severe weight problems. Eat moderately, improve your nutrition, and exercise. Weight-loss companies like Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig work for some people.

How do supermodels stay thin? Some of them are young and can eat whatever they want. All of them work out intensively. Some of them have nutritionists. Some of them are bulimic and throw up their food. Some of them use drugs to suppress their appetites.

Here's the secret about models and thinness. I have worked with fashion designers (as a college instructor) and I have reason to know. Models are thin because thin women show off the clothing better. Designers like the straight up-and-down lines of a tall woman with no roundness to the hips, breasts, or butt because it is easier to make clothes look good on her. Somehow the tall, thin look has become the American standard of beauty. Too bad. For me, the pinched cheeks, hollow neck, flat chest and butt I see on runways and in fashion magazines are turn-offs.

Boys, don't worry too much about a girl's weight. I promise you that if she likes you and you like her, then she will feel good when you touch her.

Girls, worry about your weight only for health reasons. Not all boys like a girl to be as thin as a supermodel.

JESS:

What you eat does affect how you "taste" in terms of bodily fluids. The more water and healthy food you take in, the better/cleaner you taste (it's a fact).

In terms of dieting as in "eating more" or "eating less," I suppose eating more could make you feel more sluggish during sex (depending on how much you eat, and how soon after you eat that you have sex). Being overweight does affect your libido (i.e. sex drive). Starch and sugar can lead to physical sluggishness also (for better libido and better health, eat non-starchy fruits and vegetables instead).

If you're at a normal weight and go on a diet to become skinnier, I guess this might actually decrease your energy and stamina for sex (unless you "recharge" and have a bite in between your bouts of sexual activity).

You shouldn't aim to be "skinnier" or "curvier" thinking that if your body were a certain body type, you'd enjoy sex more. Sex is enjoyable when you're physically fit and healthy.

There should always be a spark for each partner in a relationship to stay in love and have a great sex life. When you are with your lover, be together mentally as well as physically (and encourage each other to lead healthier lives) and you will enjoy yourself.

* * *

2. Can gay people pretend to be straight?

MATT:

Historically, gay people have pretended to be straight in order to fit into society. They have married and had children with opposite-sex partners and

either suppressed their homosexual feelings or kept them on the down low. I can't imagine how awful this must be: considering the reverse situation scares the hell out of me. As a heterosexual, who is attracted exclusively to women, I would not be able to tolerate being required by society to get married to a man. Throughout history, though, these pairings have occurred. Often the gay member of the mixed-gender couple cares for and respects the spouse, but can never feel romantic or sexual love. It has also been common for a gay man to marry a lesbian so that they can enjoy the social benefits of marriage and enjoy each other's company and appear straight to a judgmental society.

There was a time when psychiatrists and psychologists treated homosexuality as a disease and tried to "cure" it, but of course it didn't work. The gay people could only tolerate the brainwashing for so long before the gay feelings returned that were totally natural for them. Some people have even been locked up in mental hospitals for their sexual preference. Horrible and ridiculous.

The term "beard" refers to a woman who publicly dates a gay man to help him appear straight. The term "fag hag" refers to a woman who hangs out with and has friendships with gay men.

JESS:

Can gay people pretend to be straight? No more than straight people can pretend to be gay ;)

It's unnatural to force a person to be something they're not (especially when it comes to sexual orientation and other deeply personal aspects). Some gay people do have to keep up a pretense due to homophobia (irrational fear against gays, often resulting in violent and/or hostile behaviors or attacks). This is something sad but real, unfortunately, which is why some gays feel that they need to pretend they're straight.

Ultimately I don't believe people can be forced or turned into something they're not. For instance, programs that try to turn gay people into straight people generally do more damage than good. A person's natural preferences are not going to change so that they can conform to a "normal" standard.

Sooner or later one's true nature is going to start to appear, and it's better to deal with it earlier than bury something and have it "explode" later (at a level which might be very difficult to properly deal with). No one likes to be forced into doing or being something that they're not.

Pretense can get annoying and tiring in the long run (you've got to remember to hide and upkeep the appearances you take on with different people). It's best to be secure with your own self and your own identity, and allow people to be

who/what they want to be as well.

Gay people desire to have romantic and sexual relations with people the same gender as them. How can this desire be “unnatural” when it occurs naturally to people who find themselves attracted to people of the same sex? What’s unnatural is forcing a gay person to be in a situation that society demands them to adhere to (forcing a gay man to marry a woman is as “natural” as forcing a straight man to marry a man).

* * *

3. How do you tell the difference between love and lust?

JESS:

Lust is very much focused on the physical desires. You crave to be with the person physically/sexually. You might think about their fantastic abs/body/some particular body part or physical feature more than anything else.

Love can be trickier to define—each of us has our own way of describing it. Love goes deep. You share a connection with the person that goes beyond satisfying physical desires. You admire the person for something that goes beyond how good they look or how smooth they are sexually.

Yes, it’s possible to sometimes mix up love and lust. It sometimes happens with “friends with benefits” arrangements. A deep love is often free from tension and drama. It runs on compassion, kindness, and acceptance, and has a positive effect on both people that are sharing the deep love (a genuine love tends to encourage and inspire each person to “be better” versions of themselves, compared to if they were absent in each other’s lives).

It’s lust if two people want to be with each other for the rest of time because they both find each other “hot.” It’s lust if you could hate the person, but still have sex with them because the sex is just so good. It’s lust if all you think and care about is how “hot” the person is (you don’t really care about their personality, and emotional involvement doesn’t feature when you think about the person).

I once knew an old couple. The lady had to undergo surgery when she found out she had breast cancer. She was worried about the operation because one of her breasts needed to be removed, and she feared that her husband would no longer find her attractive. The man replied, “I married you for you, not because of those things!”

That’s love.

MATT:

Lust means the desire to have sex with a person regardless of whether there is a personal connection. You see someone and you think about having sex with that person, and your body responds by getting ready to have sex. Lust is about meeting your body's need to have sex or about other emotional needs that you have—to feel powerful, or to feel special, or to feel in control. It is a very strong motivation when you are in your teenage years, especially for boys. It isn't unusual for a teenage boy to go around the school in a constant state of sexual attraction to girls that he sees. This condition eventually passes, and if you get into a sexual relationship that works, then it will go away, and lust for everyone around you will turn into more manageable attraction.

The more connected you are to a person and the more you understand that person, the more lust turns into something else. If you become friends with that person, lust becomes love. If you aren't compatible with that person, the dislike should make the lust less intense, although you can have strong sexual desire for people you don't like. If you're a boy, this happens because lust is partly about feeling in control, and you want her more because having her would mean you had triumphed over that difficult personality.

If you're a girl, you may find that you're attracted to boys who are aggressive, rude, or rebellious, so called "bad boys." There is some biological programming that tells you these bad boy personalities will make good protectors.

I suppose that successful relationships have come out of these feelings over the years, but if so, only because the lust developed into friendship, commitment, and trust.

* * *

TEEN GUIDE TO SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS

CONCLUSION:

Teen Guide features questions that are relevant to teenagers as they make their way through the 21st-century landscape of love, sex and relationships.

We corresponded through email over the course of several months, in order to complete all the questions. Jess designed the book cover shortly before the first draft of the book was done. There were two original draft covers (which you can check out in the photos album on Jess's [Facebook page](#)). We selected the cover that we thought was eye-catching and appealing to both genders.

The first draft cover was slightly more “sexualized” image than the final cover. We thought it was important not to over-emphasize sexuality, since the title does say the book is a guide to “sex and **relationships**.”

Our aim with *Teen Guide* was to provide an honest, insightful and comprehensive sex education. It was our goal from the onset to provide material that covered the mental and emotional aspects of human relationships (not just the “physical” components of sexual activity, where the emphasis tends to be on the correct labeling of body parts, along with “which body part goes where”).

Above all, we hope teen readers find the book helpful and useful.

We hope you’ve enjoyed a behind-the-scenes look at *Teen Guide* via this mini eBook.

If you’d like to check out *Teen Guide to Sex and Relationships* in its entirety, here is some information about it. The book is available in print and digital formats.



SUMMARY:

Teen Guide answers the important and confusing questions young people have about their bodies and their hearts. It’s an advice book from two authors who care about young people and want to help them work through the tough

issues that will be on their minds as they move through an emotionally complex time of their lives. Every question is answered in a conversational way, as if the author were sitting next to you speaking from the heart.

Co-authored by Matt Posner and Jess C Scott.

MATT and JESS answer questions about:

- * Love vs. Lust
- * Looks vs. Personality
- * Whether you should have sex
- * How important money is in a relationship
- * Pornography (separating reality from fantasy)
- * Sexual Orientation (is it okay to be “gay”?)

. . .and more

GENRE: Teen Health/Sexuality | 70,000 words

* * *

Videos:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kzMx9ne3zM (jessINK Book Trailer)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=txJtU0MCAZY (Matt Posner on *Teen Guide*)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovukYrmmWyY (How to Put on a Condom; clean video)

* * *

Product Page (with links to Amazon, B&N, and other retailers):

www.jessINK.com/teenguide.htm

BOOKS by MATT POSNER

Matt Posner is the author of the *School of the Ages* series of novels featuring America's greatest magic school. Located on a secret island in New York Harbor, *School of the Ages* is the starting place for exciting tales of growing up magical! Follow Simon, Goldberry, Leah, Robbie, Mermelstein, Dr. Archer, and an ever-expanding cast of friends and foes as they travel around the world and through time for confrontations full of triumph and tragedy.



Praise for *The Ghost in the Crystal*:

“...[T]he magic is impressive. I got the feeling I was attending the school by correspondence, and that the magic was authentic.... Simon has friends and enemies and aspires to romance as he struggles to make his way. This is good reading.”

— Piers Anthony, world-famous fantasist

* * *

“Though it’s inevitable that one would want to compare a book about a school of magic to Harry Potter, stop right there. This book would have a place of honor in YA literature even if J.K. Rowling had never existed. As a matter of fact, this book truly crosses over the YA genre. It’s an intelligent, fascinating book for readers of any age over 12.”

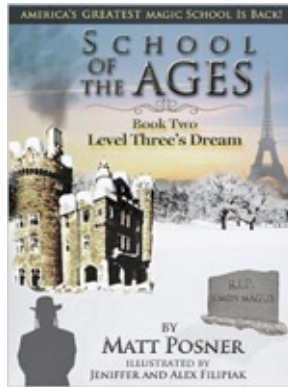
— Georgina Young-Ellis, bestselling author of *The Time Baroness*

* * *

“This is a book that takes magic and makes it feel real, like if we were to believe a little bit more we would see it. As one would say ‘seeing is believing,’ but in this case ‘believing is seeing.’ This book is so well written, you feel everything the characters are feeling. We felt the darkness with only candles to light the way. We felt the cold that no amount of clothes could heat. To put it lightly, we felt as if we were Simon. This is the type of book that pulls you in,

and you will not be able to put it down.”

— Kiki and Jules Reviews



Praise for *Level Three's Dream*:

“The author is able to render a full characterization of not only Simon but also of all the other characters surrounding him and does so with easy, bold strokes, through the way they speak, their actions and gestures. You will find no lengthy descriptions or unnecessary details. The writing is stripped down to its bare essentials so that it shines in its simplicity. This polished style, coupled with lots of action and suspense, makes for a fast pace.

The author’s wit and humor shine through every page of this book. Not only are the dialogues natural-sounding and funny, the world inside Level Three’s head, based on Carroll’s stories, remains true to the original’s surreal, irrational feel, while the play on words and expressions is dazzling. If you are a lover of Carroll’s wit, then this is certainly a book for you.

I was glad to see that, instead of an all-white Caucasian cast, the author included different ethnicities, marked by their beliefs and mode of speaking, both in their syntax and vocabulary choices, a fact that not only added to the character’s three-dimensionality, but to that of the created world as a whole. The depth of emotion described and evoked was a pleasant surprise and one of the strengths of this story.”

— Chrystalla Thoma, author of *Rex Rising*

The School of the Ages series

Book I: The Ghost in the Crystal. Published 2010.

Book II: Level Three's Dream. Published 2011.

Book III: The War Against Love. Coming Summer 2012.

Book IV: Simon Geeta. Scheduled for Fall 2013.

Book V: The Wonderful Carol. Scheduled for 2014.

Also look out for School of the Ages short stories at Amazon.com.

Matt Posner is a member of the [Kindle All-Stars author group](#) and a contributor to the *With Love* anthologies.



Author Bio | Matt Posner:

Matt Posner is a writer and teacher from New York City. Originally from Miami, Florida, Matt has been married to Julie since 1999.

Matt teaches English in a city high school and is an active supporter of the teachers' union. Matt's college education includes MFA in Fiction Writing from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, MA in English from Florida State University, and BA in Humanities from New College of Florida. The child of two musicians, Matt also works as an SAT tutor and college professor and is the poet and percussionist for The Exploration Project, New York City's premier avant-garde multimedia band.

Matt's interests include cultural studies, music history and performance, visual arts, film, religion, and professional wrestling.

When not writing *Teen Guide*, Matt is the author of the ongoing *School of the Ages* series of books about America's Greatest Magic School.

Connect with Matt Online:

Facebook: ([*School of the Ages Series*](#))

Twitter: ([@schooloftheages](#))

Matt's Books on [Amazon](#)

BOOKS by JESS C SCOTT

Jess writes in a variety of genres including urban fantasy, young adult fiction, cyberpunk, and poetry. Here are some of her titles for a teenage audience.



1) EyeLeash: A Blog Novel

* Recommended for older teens.

EyeLeash captures self-discovery in the 2000s, and showcases the colorful, intricate drama in two youths' relentless search for themselves—and what's really in their hearts.

GENRE: New Media / Popular Culture / Teenage Memoir / Coming of Age /
Dating & Sex

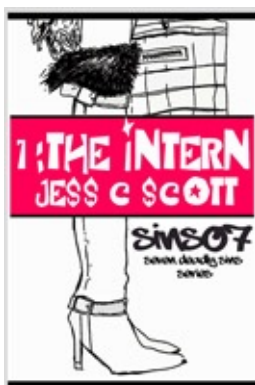
MORE INFO: www.jessINK.com/eyeleash.htm

Praise for *EyeLeash: A Blog Novel*:

“Jess C Scott is the 21st century Judy Blume.”

— Amazon Review (unsolicited), 2011

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2) The Intern (Book #1, *Sins07* Series)

* Score: 4.50 / 5 – A Reviewer Top Pick @ [Night Owl Reviews](#)

Book #1 (Lust) in Jess C Scott's *Sins07* “seven deadly sins” series—a teenage version of *Dirty Dancing* meets *Punk'd*.

GENRE: Contemporary Fiction / YA with adult crossover appeal

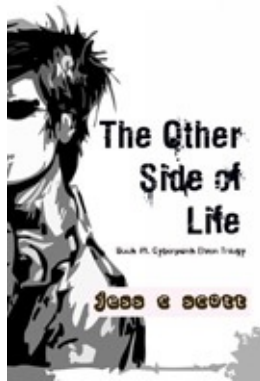
MORE INFO: www.jessINK.com/sins07_lust.htm

Praise for *1: The Intern*:

“Despite the ‘lust’ [Suzie] feels for Josh, there is a certain innocence about Suzie, which I can’t help but like. What I liked best about the book was the description of the dancing. I love how Jess describes dance moves. They have been so vividly described that it was as good as watching a movie.”

— Review @ *My Love Affair With Books*

* * *



3) **The Other Side of Life (Book #1, *Cyberpunk Elven Trilogy*)**

A thieving duo's world turns upside down when an Elven rogue uncovers the heinous dealings of a megacorporation. Elven intrigue, cyberpunk action, and a deadly dose of danger come together in *The Other Side of Life* [Book #1 in the (Cyberpunk) Elven Trilogy].

GENRE: Urban Fantasy / Cyberpunk

MORE INFO: www.jessINK.com/tosol.htm

Praise for *The Other Side of Life*:

“I have to honestly say I was pleasantly surprised by *The Other Side of Life*. Not only was it extremely well edited, but the plot was more well written than some house published books I've read. Truly, this was an incredible fantasy novel and a series I'm hoping Jess C Scott keeps up with, because she's obviously extremely talented.”

— Review @ *There's A Book*

* * *

The Cyberpunk Elven Trilogy

Book I: The Other Side of Life. Published 2011.

Book II: The Darker Side of Life. Coming Summer 2012.

Book III: The Arcane Side of Life. Coming Summer 2012.

Also check out Jess's freebie short story for animal lovers, [*Skins*](#), featuring Laer the dark elf (PG-13; brief mention of non-graphic nudity).

Jess is a member of [BestsellerBound](#) and a contributor to *BestsellerBound Short Story Vol. 3*.



Author Bio | Jess C Scott:

Jess is an author/artist/non-conformist who's dedicated to writing original stories that are both meaningful and entertaining.

Jess holds an English/Business degree from Adams State College. Her literary work has been featured in a diverse range of publications, such as *ITCH Magazine*, *The Battered Suitcase*, *55 Words*, and *Word Riot*.

Most of Jess's work is fueled by an intense drive to inspire others to favor social/spiritual values over shallow values.

Jess is also the founder of jessINK, an innovative publishing company that focuses on substance over short-term success with current fads and marketing hype.

Connect with Jess Online:

Facebook: (www.facebook.com/jesscscott)

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