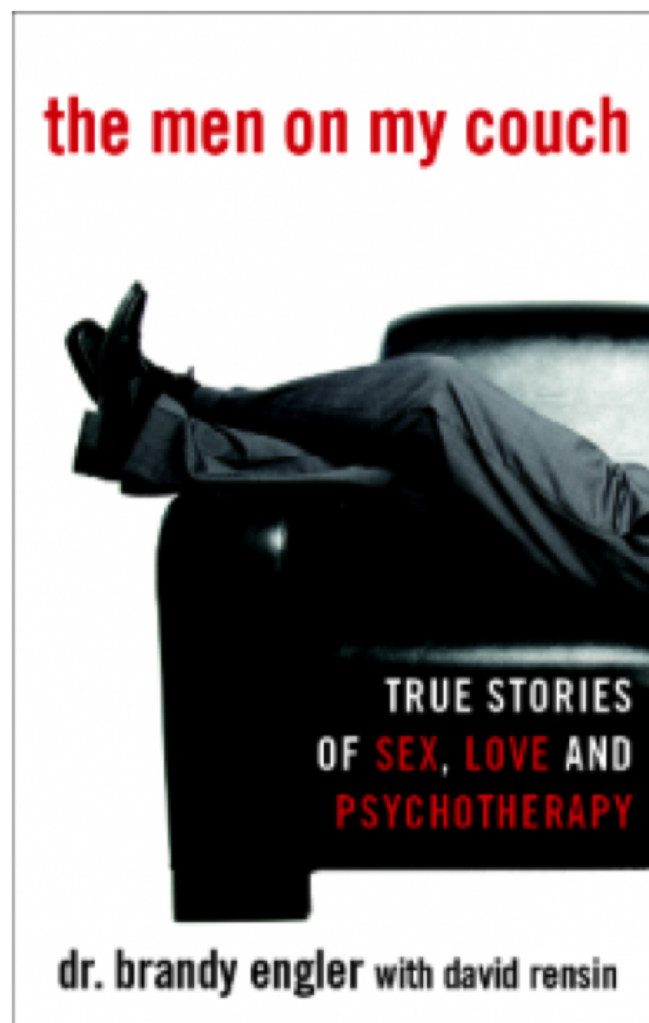


Dr. Brandy Engler Says, “‘The Men on My Couch’ Taught Me That Love Is Hard and Complicated”



By Whitney Baker

When Dr. Brandy Engler opened her sex therapy practice for women in New York City, she was shocked that it was mostly men reaching out for her help. As she began working through their heartache, she discovered that she had her own issues to face as well. In *The Men on My Couch: True Stories of Sex, Love and Psychotherapy*, Dr. Engler, along with David Rensin, weave together her personal story and her patients' journeys, sharing the lessons both learned and taught throughout her first year as a psychologist. We chatted with the first-time author about her new book and what she has coming up next.

Why were you surprised that more men than women came to you after you opened your practice?

Traditionally, men tend to seek psychotherapy less than women for issues like depression or anxiety. Similarly, I hadn't seen any statistics that showed that men were more interested than women in sex therapy.

What question about love and relationships do you find your clients asking most often?

The question that they tend to come to therapy with is: Should I break up with my significant other? They feel confused about a decision, which drives them to therapy. The second thing that most often brings people to me is feeling broken-hearted and wanting to know how to stop hurting.

Once in a while, couples that are about to get married or are newly married come in as well. They want to know how to communicate or understand each other better. They're usually in pretty healthy relationships but are just looking for guidance.

What motivated you to write a book about your experiences during that first year?

Because of my time spent with these men, I gained a lot of new insights that really excited me. The more I sat with them and explored their true motivations for being there, I felt like I was uncovering answers that went far beyond the simple and conventional conclusions that we draw about men – things like men just want to have sex, men want sex more than women or men are less emotional about sex. The more I listened to them, the more I saw how vulnerable they were.

The first chapter of *The Men on My Couch* talks about a guy named David, who was a relatively happy guy. He recognized that he was cheating a lot, which led him to the question, “Am I even capable of love?” I thought that was such an interesting question. It ended up becoming a theme in the book, which is why I put it in chapter one.

Can you tell our readers a bit of your personal story, as discussed in *The Men on My Couch*?

Originally, I wasn’t going to include my personal story; I just wanted to focus on what was happening during my sessions with the men. But I realized that I was learning a great deal, which I thought would be important, particularly for female readers.

Initially, I felt taken aback by some of the men’s behavior. Like the guys who were total womanizers. They made me nervous, and I started to become super jealous and unsure of myself. I had to start working through my own anxiety. I started looking at my relationship and asking myself, “Is this really love?” I had to assess my own notions about love.

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What lessons learned during your therapy sessions most impacted your own life?

Psychologists are necessarily trained on “what is love” – that’s more of a social or philosophical question than it is

psychological. So I had to really examine that idea, and throughout the book, that's really what I'm learning. I learned that love is much more of a skill and that it's actually kind of hard and complicated.

I had to learn to be patient and understanding with each of my male clients even when it was hard for me. It felt amazing when I was actually able to be very loving towards my clients. My ability to do so became very healing for them; instead of me just reaching them in a cognitive way, I was now fully present and invested in helping them.

If you had one piece of advice to share with our readers, what would it be?

This is another theme of the book: to truly understand your own motivation. You need to become more conscious about the way that you love. Instead of really loving each other, a lot of people bring fear and deficit to a relationship. They're trying to get a need met instead of bringing fullness to the relationship. People don't realize that though; they feel some sort of want, and they go after gratifying it, so they're basically using the other person. When people become more aware of what's driving them, they become very full and happy and satisfied in their relationships.

We understand that ABC recently optioned your book for a TV series – anything else you can share with us about this deal?

Yes! We have an amazing writer – she worked on 'Will and Grace' and 'Ugly Betty' – who wrote the pilot. In January, the networks will decide what shows to pick up, and ABC is interested this year. It was a contender this past January as well, and it made it to the final round.

And finally, you're already working on another book called *Libido*. We'd love to know more about this project!

Libido will be all about women and how they get in touch with

their desire, which was the original focus of my work. It'll be conversational in tone (as was *The Men on My Couch*) and include some history as well. In the past, women were viewed as very sexual – even more sexual than men. So this narrative that we have that men are more sexual than women is only a couple of hundred years old. It's a totally manufactured story that a lot of people buy into, but it's not true.

To purchase 'The Men on My Couch,' click here. You can also learn more about the book by visiting her site or following her Twitter.