

THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

Worksheet for Jolene Brighten | Finding Balance Beyond the Pill (Episode 259)

Since its introduction in the 1960s, the birth control pill has done more good than harm for the women of the world — but it's not without its potential pitfalls, and its effects are more far-reaching than just preventing unwanted pregnancies. It can mask symptoms of serious health problems, it can disrupt your microbiome, and it might even dictate who you find attractive.

In this episode we talk to Dr. Jolene Brighten, author of *Beyond the Pill: A 30-Day Program to Balance Your Hormones, Reclaim Your Body, and Reverse the Dangerous Side Effects of the Birth Control Pill*. Even if you're not a woman taking birth control pills — or even if you're a man — there's a lot of fascinating science here for everyone to take in.

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Why Sex Education Matters

Dr. Brighten confesses that she didn't understand a lot of the basics about her own body until she was already in medical school, which is alarming when you consider that most of us are similarly operating without a user's manual and may never understand these basics. Imagine experiencing symptoms of big problems that go unchecked because you don't understand what they're trying to tell you — it's like being stuck going 80 m.p.h. on the freeway without knowing how to pump the brakes.

"The reality for most women is that they don't actually learn how their body works until they want to have a baby, which is a big problem in society as a whole," she says. "When you look at the statistics, very few states mandate scientifically accurate sex education. We're not even teaching scientifically accurate information about our bodies. I knew a woman in her 60s, she was like, 'I read your book. I haven't menstruated in over a decade, but I finally don't feel crazy. Like I know why I had these symptoms. I finally understand how my body was working all of those years.'"

Do you feel your education has adequately prepared you for understanding the basics of your own physiology? Are you confident that you know enough about your body to tell when something's a bit off and it's time to talk to a medical professional? Could you accurately describe what's wrong once you're in the doctor's office? If the answer to any of these questions is "No," how would you suggest the current generation is educated to be better prepared for these questions?

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The Pill Buddy System

While Dr. Brighten and I agree that access to birth control without parental consent is crucial for many young women in less-than-ideal situations, the hormonal disruption that results from taking the pill may lead to depression and suicide ideation. If someone is experiencing these kind of symptoms, what can she do to ensure she gets help before it's too late — especially if she and her doctor are the only people who know she's taking the pill?

Dr. Brighten says: “I would have their doctor inform them and then I would have them tell their BFF or someone close to them: ‘I’m starting this. If I start ignoring your text messages, if I stop hanging out with you, if you notice I’m crying all the time, I break up with my boyfriend — if these things start happening, can you please remind me I need to go talk to my doctor?’ And you know, teenagers, their brains haven’t totally formed yet. So we want to judge them a lot. In a lot of ways, they do have each other’s backs and this is one way that like girls can stick together to take care of one another.”

If you’re taking the pill, do you have a confidant who can keep an eye on you and pull the emergency brake if your behavior becomes noticeably erratic? If you suspect someone near to you is on the pill because their behavior has become noticeably erratic, have you had a conversation about being available to them if they’re in need of a confidant?

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Beyond Belief

“We need to be curious,” says Dr. Brighten. “We need to educate women and we need to listen to women’s stories. So you know, women are, as I talked about in the book, they die of heart attacks at a higher rate because they’re dismissed going into the ER, told that they’re having a panic attack, they’re stressing too much. I have had so many women write me saying, ‘I had a clot.’ There’s just this Amazon review that went up. I cried so hard because the woman had a clot and was turned away. She’s like, ‘If I hadn’t read this book, I wouldn’t have known to advocate for myself and I did and I lived because of it.’”

“Just to be clear, birth control doesn’t cause clots, but it can elevate the risk because of all of that estrogen that you’re on, but most of the time when we see — so the parents who’ve written me and they’ve lost their daughters to birth control because of a clot, they all had the genetic risk factors, but they were never screened and it was never brought up.”

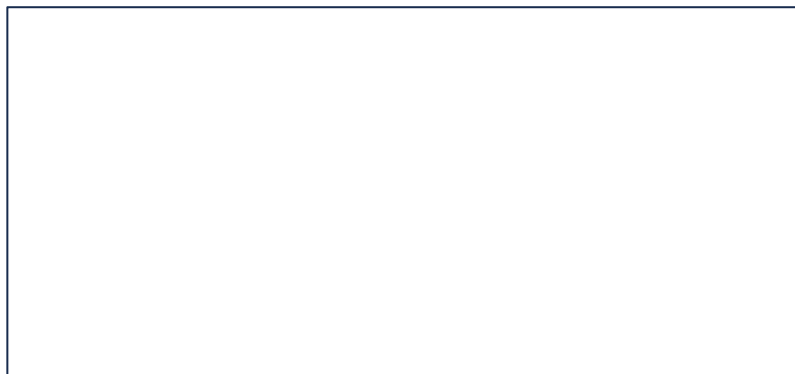
Whether you’re a woman or man, have you ever had valid medical concerns casually dismissed by your doctor? If so, you might want to consider getting a second (or third) opinion and determine whether or not another doctor might be a better fit for you.

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Romantic Chemistry in the Lab

“There was one study where they brought women in and they gave them basically computer images of faces and said, ‘Manipulate it to make it look more attractive.’ So they got men’s faces and women’s faces to play with. On the screen, all these women not on birth control, they are making the faces look more masculine. Just think Gaston from Beauty and the Beast, like that strong jaw. He sings all about how he’s so masculine. And so in that they then put half the women on birth control and had them come back. And what they found is the women, three months later on birth control, started to make the faces more feminine.”

I can’t think of a practical here beyond just being aware that the way you and your partner feel about one another on birth control may differ from how you feel about one another off of birth control. Before making any big life decisions together (like marriage or buying a house or having kids), you might consider testing this in practice to see if it applies to your own relationship.



Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here.](#)

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We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth – and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these valuable insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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