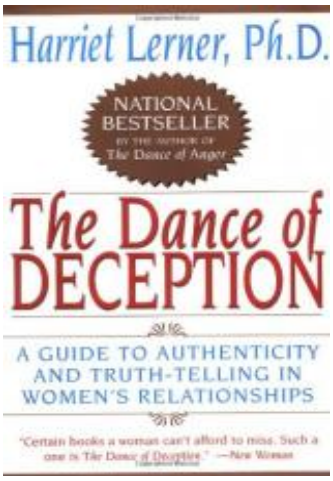
The Dance of Deception

by Harriet Lerner



About the Book

When The Dance of Deception was published, Lerner discovered that women were not eager to identify with the subject. "Well, I don't do deception" was a common resonse.

We all "do deception", often with the intention to protect ourselves and the relationships we depend on. The Dance of Deception unravels the ways (and whys) that women show the false and hide the real-- even to our own selves. We see how our relationships are affected by lying and faking, by silence and pretending, and by brave-- but misguided-- efforts to tell the truth.

Truth-telling is at the heart of what is most central in women's lives. It is at the foundation of authenticity and creativity, intimacy and joy. Yet in the name of "honesty", we can bludgeon eachother. We can approach a difficult issue with such a poor sense of timing and tact, that we can actually shut down the lines of communication rather than widening the path of truth-telling.

Sometimes Lerner's advice takes a surprising turn-- for example, when she asks us to engage in a bold act of pretending in order to discover something "more real"; or when she tells us not to parachute down on our family to bring up a "hot issue" without laying the necessary groundwork first.

Whether the subject is affairs, family secrets, sexual faking, or the challenge of"being oneself", Lerner helps us to discover, speak, and live our own truths.

Discussion Guide

1. Women are socialized to pretend, to settle, and to call our compromises "life." Our bodies are harder to fool. Discuss how the body may signal us when we are not living authentically or speaking truly. (Chapter 12)

2. How do we distinguish between "privacy" and "secrecy"? When do claims to privacy hurt rather than protect the integrity of our relationships and our selves? (Chapter 4)

3. All families have "hot issues" and secrets. Discuss the role of secrets and silence in your family. (Chapter 10) Use the case examples throughout the book to plan the best way to open up a difficult subject with a family member.

Quotes for Discussion

> "From the moment we are first wrapped in a pink or blue blanket, we learn stories we can tell and whether there is an ear to hear them." (Page 82) "If we are not told the truth, we cannot trust the universe --- including our internal universe of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. (Page 82) "Children are the least empowered family members; as such, they can afford to take few risks, whether real or imagined, with adults on whom their very survival depends." (Page 97) "Most of us can count on our bodies, like the dreams of our unconscious, to at least try to keep us honest."

Author Bio

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