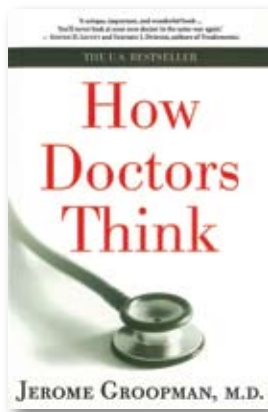


**How doctors think**

Jerome Groopman

Boston: Houghton Mifflin  
Company, 2007

ISBN 978 061 861 0037, \$32.95



■ If you don't know what 'attribution errors', 'retreating from zebras' or 'satisfaction of search' are, then you'd better read this book. Because if like me you've been in medical practice for a few years, chances are you've done them all! Jerome Groopman applies his considerable academic and clinical experience to answer the following question: when and why does thinking go right or go wrong in medicine? The answers he finds implicate the emotions of doctors, their communication skills, and their cognitive habits as potential barriers to good medical thinking. I recommend the book highly, but since it will probably call to mind every error you've ever made in your career, as it did for me, I don't suggest it as a relaxing holiday read.

Groopman writes in an engaging, conversational style, telling stories from his own practice and that of his colleagues, of medical mishaps and masterpieces. He claims to have written the book primarily for patients – so they can learn to handle their doctors in such a way that cognitive errors are avoided. There are problems with this approach. First, I shudder to think what effect the many anecdotes about delayed diagnosis might have on patients who are still looking for the 'cause' of their illness. Second, it seems ambitious, and perhaps even misguided, to suggest that patients should take so much responsibility for the thinking process in medical consultations. Groopman encourages patients to ask questions such as, 'What is the most serious thing that this could be?' to challenge their doctor when communication seems to be failing, and even to maintain 'a disarming sense of humour' in communicating with their doctor so as not to come across as completely neurotic. I think this is a lot to expect of the average patient. These strategies might be useful if it is the patient that has read the book. I suspect, though, that a lot more would be achieved by the doctor reading it.

Petrina Barson  
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**Girl Stuff  
Your full-on guide to the  
teen years**

Kaz Cooke

Australia: Penguin Group, 2007

ISBN 978 0 670 028870, \$39.95



■ In general practice I am often asked to recommend something to help parents with 'the facts of life talk' with their children. Kaz Cooke has produced an entertaining and well researched book aimed at girls aged 10–18 years. It is also a valuable resource for parents and those working with young people.

'Girl Stuff' addresses all the expected subject areas for such a text. Refreshingly however, it also includes important topics not often seen in books aimed at teenagers. Cooke does not assume that young girls are only concerned with boys, sex and periods. For example, a section on financial matters discusses how to manage mobile phone costs.

The section on skin care confronts many of the myths perpetuated by magazines and other media sources aimed at teenage girls and provides practical information about common skin and hair conditions. Information is included about sun protection, solariums and body piercing/tattoos.

'Girl Stuff' deals very well with the many aspects of different relationships. The advice promotes positive sense of self, has some practical suggestions about resolving conflict, and is inclusive of both opposite gender and same gender relationships.

The health information, in particular about sexual and mental health, is factual and well presented. The chapters about body shape and healthy eating are presented in a positive way and tackle the subject of dieting in a way that focuses on the positive aspects of being healthy.

'Girl Stuff' is a comprehensive resource that highlights the positive aspects of young women's lives. Young women are faced with a barrage of messages, particularly from the popular media, which are often not factual and may undermine their confidence and sense of self. This clever and amusing book seeks to combat this in a way that is accessible and credible. I will certainly be recommending it to young women and their families.

Sonya Morrissey  
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