



The Rhetoric of Pregnancy

Marika Seigel

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It is a truth widely acknowledged that if you're pregnant and can afford one, you're going to pick up a pregnancy manual. From *What to Expect When You're Expecting* to *Pregnancy for Dummies*, these guides act as portable mentors for women who want advice on how to navigate each stage of pregnancy. Yet few women consider the effect of these manuals—how they propel their readers into a particular system of care or whether the manual they choose reflects or contradicts current medical thinking.

Using a sophisticated rhetorical analysis, Marika Seigel works to deconstruct pregnancy manuals while also identifying ways to improve communication about pregnancy and healthcare. She traces the manuals' evolution from early twentieth-century tomes that instructed readers to unquestioningly turn their pregnancy management over to doctors, to those of the women's health movement that encouraged readers to engage more critically with their care, to modern online sources that sometimes serve commercial interests as much as the mother's.

The first book-length study of its kind, *The Rhetoric of Pregnancy* is a must-read for both users and designers of our prenatal systems—doctors and doulas, scholars and activists, and anyone interested in encouraging active, effective engagement.

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