



Betrayal of Trust: Sex and Power in Professional Relationships

Marcia M. Boumil, Joel Friedman

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Sexual abuse of patients has received much press in recent years. More victims have come forward documenting their experiences with professionals who abuse fiduciary and confidential relationships by engaging the victim in sexual liaisons. The work is written by a lawyer and a psychologist to examine the ramifications of these problems, and should be of interest to a wide audience of professional and scholarly readers, particularly those in the helping professions, and to college students especially in Women's Studies Courses with a focus on women and violence themes.

For generations, untold numbers of women suffered the silent horror of being sexually exploited by respected professional men whom society deemed above reproach. The frightened cries of these victims fell on deaf ears. Lately, the epidemic abuse of professional power for sexual favors has secured a prominent place in America's conscience. Victimized women are now empowered to speak out as society tries to understand how and why their pillars have fallen. In this thought-provoking book, women who have been coerced into sexual liaisons by lawyers, doctors, clergymen, educators, and other professionals reveal their experiences and the toll it took on their lives. Their recollections provide fresh insight into why some women are vulnerable to exploitation and what leads these men to risk their entire livelihoods to seduce their patient, client, or confidante. What ensues is an in-depth examination of a type of relationship that begins with trust, feeds on real or imagined attraction, and often ends in emotional ruin.

In Betrayal of Trust, studying the actual relationship is only the beginning. Friedman and Boumil dig deeper to educate about exploitative situations. Readers will learn about early warning signs for recognizing when a professional relationship is crossing the dangerous boundary line between professionalism and sexual abuse. On the legal front, new laws and statutes concerning sexual exploitation and malpractice are considered along with the time, financial, and emotional ramifications of lawsuits and other legal recourse. Victims are taken step-by-step through the long psychological healing process that leads from anger, shame, and guilt to vindication, resolution, and recovery. Related issues such as mutual consent and the ethics of sexual relationships between a man and woman after termination of their professional relationship are also discussed. The book not only sheds light on the misuse of power in professional relationships. It performs a valuable public service by pinpointing potential targets of abuse and offering hope for the thousands of victims who need to know why it happened to them and how they can pick up the pieces.

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