



XY: A Toolkit for Life

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[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

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Media type:

Book

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Matt Whyman could be the kind of guy to 'make a man of you', as Mariella Frostrup promises on the cover of this guide to young men's health. But I doubt it. Matt, agony uncle for Bliss and AOL (the Internet provider), comes across as a street-wise straight talker who wants to offer 'clear and balanced info about issues central to your life, and leaves the smart moves up to you'. The advice is sensible enough, yet there's not a lot of it for a book that covers everything from your voice breaking to 'coming out' as gay. It's all delivered in a tone that seems to get in the way of the message as much as it gets it across. While Matt is encouraging young men to be more open about their anxieties about health and relationships, he does it with terse Johnny Vaughan like captioned instructions to 'deal with it', 'accept the situation' and 'express yourself'. The laddish style - even the use of toolkit in the title is a nudge and a wink - sits uncomfortably with the content. It's worrying that there is little evidence that any care has been taken over the book. The cartoon illustrations are a humourless gesture. The highlighted 'real-life' problem quotes are a worn-out device, unlikely to convince anyone. More worrying is the impression that no one has been too concerned about achieving a balance between necessary health advice and causing alarm where there needn't be any. Perhaps, in view of testicular cancer, it is necessary for young men to examine their balls regularly. However, the list of excruciating (and hopefully unusual) conditions gruesomely described in the chapter on looking after your private parts ('tackle it!') is accompanied by no hard information about how likely anyone is to suffer from them. There are a lot of better, more responsible books available.

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