

Book review

Hard to Bear: Investigating the science and silence of miscarriage

Author: Isabelle Oderberg

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Hard to Bear: Investigating the science and silence of miscarriage by Isabelle Oderberg estimates that each year in Australia, at least 103,000 families are affected by pregnancy loss. In just under 400 pages,

Oderberg dissects the scientific, physical, psychological and sociocultural ramifications of this distressingly common experience.

Oderberg taps into her background as a journalist to summarise the latest knowledge on miscarriage in a clear and engaging manner. Oderberg delves into worldwide guidelines and research to contextualise the global experience of miscarriage. However, she ultimately grounds this in the Australian context by dovetailing statistics and studies with haunting, personal narratives. Each chapter explores a different aspect of miscarriage and ends with snippets of Oderberg's personal journey of recurrent pregnancy loss.

Oderberg explores the cultural and historical roots of the silence around miscarriage. She notes that, despite shifts driven by gender equality and an increased focus on reproductive rights, this silence remains unresolved in many ways. Through interviews showcasing a diverse range of experiences, Oderberg explores the

common themes of stigma, guilt and shame that continue to shroud pregnancy loss. She further highlights the experience of miscarriage in marginalised groups – such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as people of diverse sexualities and genders – to emphasise the many healthcare barriers that reinforce this silence and stigma around miscarriage.

Although not designed to be a summary of the latest research on miscarriage, Oderberg provides an approachable overview of the latest advancements in research around miscarriage. She discusses the role of new genetic tests, assisted reproductive technology and oral supplementation, with close reference to the patchy and limited studies available. She further uses this to emphasise the gaps between the latest evidence and the latest evidence-based guidelines, such as the limited guidance regarding pesticides and other environmental toxins on pregnancy and miscarriage. By doing so, Oderberg highlights that the silence surrounding miscarriage extends beyond personal experiences and into the science itself.

Hard to Bear: Investigating the science and silence of miscarriage, however, is also a call to action. In her final chapter, Oderberg directly addresses medical practitioners and underscores the critical role that we play in this experience. By sharing her own story, Oderberg highlights the many ways that medical practitioners can help foster pivotal positive change.

Overall, *Hard to Bear: Investigating the science and silence of miscarriage* is an engaging and insightful exploration of miscarriage, designed to challenge the silence around miscarriage. Oderberg provides an overview of the latest discussions around the sociocultural and scientific underpinnings

of miscarriage. She then follows this with an empathetic, personal perspective on the experience of pregnancy loss. *Hard to Bear: Investigating the science and silence of miscarriage* is an invaluable resource for anyone involved in reproductive health.

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