



PRESS KIT

CARALENA PETERSON

Author of *The Effortless Perfection Myth*
www.caralenapeterson.com

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ABOUT CARALENA

Caralena Peterson
Press Kit
caralenapeterson.com

SHORT BIO

Caralena Peterson is a speaker and writer educating both college women and their parents on the “Effortless Perfection” Myth and the mental health crisis it has spurred on campuses across the United States. Known as the Effortless Perfection expert, she has written about the Myth for places like *Inside Higher Ed*, *The Week*, *She Knows Media*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Rewire News*, *Bustle*, *Garnet News* and *Elite Daily* and dives deeper into all of its effects and solutions in her forthcoming book, *The Effortless Perfection Myth: Debunking The Myth and Revealing the Path to Empowerment for Today’s College Women* (September 2022). To learn more, visit www.caralenapeterson.com.

LONG BIO

Caralena Peterson is a speaker and writer educating both college women and their parents on the “Effortless Perfection” Myth and the mental health crisis it has spurred on campuses across the United States. Known as the Effortless Perfection expert, she has written about the Myth for places like *Inside Higher Ed*, *The Week*, *She Knows Media*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Rewire News*, *Bustle*, *Garnet News* and *Elite Daily* and dives deeper into all of its effects and solutions in her forthcoming book, *The Effortless Perfection Myth: Debunking The Myth and Revealing the Path to Empowerment for Today’s College Women* (September 2022).

While experiencing the harmful and overwhelming effects of Effortless Perfection firsthand during college, Caralena added a women’s studies major to her college load to get to the bottom of it all. After graduating from Duke University in 2015 with majors in Women’s Studies and Public Policy, she set out to educate as many college women and their parents as possible about what she uncovered. Today she writes regularly on the topic and travels to high schools and colleges throughout the nation to speak about Effortless Perfection, mental health, healthy relationships, consent and disordered eating.

Caralena is also a mixed-medium artist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times* and *Washington Life Magazine*. When she is not busy with all her side hustles, Caralena works full-time as a high school English teacher at an all-girls school in New Orleans, Louisiana. To learn more, visit www.caralenapeterson.com.



AS SEEN IN:

- THE NEW YORK TIMES
- INSIDE HIGHER ED
- THE WEEK
- MS. MAGAZINE
- ELITE DAILY
- SHE KNOWS
- BUSTLE
- GARNET NEWS
- REWIRE NEWS
- WOMEN'S E-NEWS






CARALENA PETERSON IS KNOWN FOR SAYING...



- Effortless Perfection isn't just a white girl issue or a rich girl issue.
- We like to believe that if we can make our lives *look* perfect, then they will start to *feel* perfect too.
- Girls are taught to avoid making a scene at the cost of sacrificing their safety.
- What do we replace rape culture with? Intimate justice.
- It doesn't have to be rape to be sexual assault. It doesn't have to be suicide to be depression.
- Your vulnerabilities are gems or jewels for building connection but you have to know when and how to use them properly.
- You're not going to lose your identity if you're honest about your struggles.



WHAT CARALENA CAN SPEAK TO:

- Mental Health, Hook-up Culture and Disordered Eating: The Key Challenges College Women Are Facing and the Support They Need
 - What the Effortless Perfection Myth Is and How It's Hurting Girls and Women
 - Just Abolishing Rape Culture Isn't Enough—We Need Intimate Justice
 - Mental Health Is Not a Competition (How to Stop Treating it Like One)
 - The Key Messages Every Undergrad Daughter Needs to Hear from Her Parents
 - How to Respond When Your College Daughter Says She's Struggling
 - The Effortless Perfection Myth Transcends Race and Class—Here's How It's Impacting All College Women
 - How Playing the Nice Girl Backfires in School, Relationships, Jobs and More
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ABOUT THE BOOK

The Effortless Perfection Myth

Debunking The Myth and Revealing the Path to Empowerment for Today's College Women

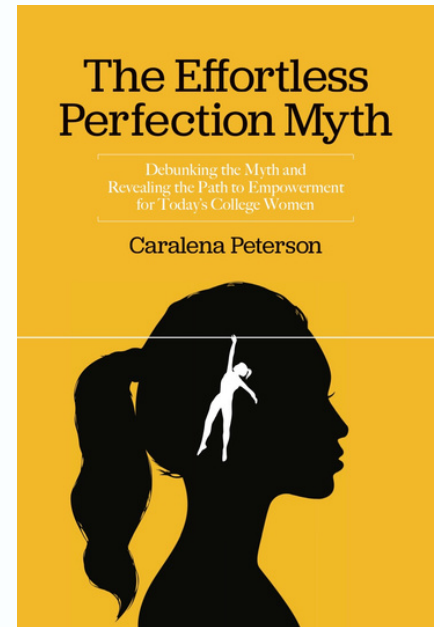
Are we really living in a “post-feminist” age? Many young women on today’s college campuses appear to have it all—and have it all together. They earn high grades, they’re invited to all the right parties, they’re sexually active, they look fit and on-trend. But they’re hiding a secret. Inside, these smart, liberated, high-functioning women are hurting. They feel immense pressure from peers, male classmates, and the college culture to be perfect. And they are expected to make their pursuit of that perfection look effortless.

If this feels familiar, you aren’t alone. Emerging data reveals that meeting an expectation of Effortless Perfection is taking its toll on millions of young women across the country. They are struggling to develop their identity and achieve their goals during the years they’ve been promised will be the best of their lives. Instead, they’re dealing with stress, loneliness, binge drinking, eating disorders, unhealthy sexual expression, and depression. It’s time to stop this trend: *The Effortless Perfection Myth* shines a light on what’s really happening using research, historical context, and moving stories of more than a dozen young women—including the author—who have fought through this experience and don’t want you or anyone else to succumb.

This groundbreaking book reveals:

- Why self-esteem and confidence often falter as you adapt to college life
- How the Effortless Perfection Myth leads to eating disorders and mental illness (and how to fight back)
- The twisted effect that hook-up culture has on your relationships
- What it means to form a sense of self apart from anyone else’s expectations
- Why it’s crucial to be assertive when pushing back against expectations

The Effortless Perfection Myth exposes the challenging reality of today’s female undergrad. And with increased awareness of Effortless Perfection, together you, your peers, your parents, and college administrators and faculty can combat this silent but pervasive affliction. It’s time to stand confident in your perfection... as defined by you, and you alone.



AUTHOR: Caralena Peterson

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caralenapeterson.com



PRAISE FOR

CARA AND "THE EFFORTLESS PERFECTION MYTH"

"A much-needed roadmap to challenging the damaging and insidious power of the Effortless Perfection ideal. A phenomenal resource for girls, parents, and schools grappling with problems they haven't had a language to describe until now."

— **SORAYA CHEMALY,**
Acclaimed Author of *Rage Becomes Her*, a *Washington Post* and NPR "Best Book" Selection

"Anyone hoping to understand the lived experiences of young women today, whether you are a parent, educator, or mental health clinician, should read *The Effortless Perfection Myth*. Peterson weaves in powerful narratives from women from a range of backgrounds, emphasizing intersectionality and stressors especially relevant to women in college today. This text should be required reading."

— **SARAH E. DOMOFF, PhD,**
Clinical Child Psychologist and Associate Professor of Psychology at Central Michigan University

"A raw and realistic portrayal of the challenges facing the next generation of women in the digital era of social media pressures; this book is the ultimate survival guide for any young woman entering high school or college struggling or seeking self-empowerment. Cara is a brilliant storyteller and captures the truth and raw struggles of what it means to be a woman in the modern age—complex, inspiring, and full of hope."

— **LARISSA MAY,**
Founder of #HalfTheStory

"Our foundation does a great deal of work focused on perfectionism, social media, and the myth we portray for others in our online lives and even our day-to-day lives. Caralena describes these different lives we portray as perfect, and gives us a clear and empathetic way of how to leave those toxic tendencies behind and pave a way for a more authentic way of life. I highly recommend this book for all young adults and especially for anyone struggling with perfectionism, mental illness, and even those who just feel lost on their current path."

— **CARLI BUSHOVEN,**
Executive Director of the Madison Holleran Foundation and Active Minds mental health speaker

"Caralena Peterson is like an older sister who's been in the trenches at college and has returned to report what you need to hear. With compelling personal, frank anecdotes and tremendous compassion and empathy, she demonstrates the many ways that an idealization of effortless perfection can damage good people—and offers a roadmap for a way out."

— **LEORA TANENBAUM,**
Author of *I Am Not a Slut: Slut-Shaming in the Age of the Internet*



PRAISE FOR

CARA AND "THE EFFORTLESS PERFECTION MYTH"

"Forget dorm decor: *The Effortless Perfection Myth* provides the tools and insights young women actually need to combat a daily deluge of toxic messages that make the already difficult process of growing up even harder. With heartfelt candor (and loads of research), Peterson helps readers discover why striving for 'perfection' is a waste of time and helps them learn to look inward-instead of outward-to discover the power of rejecting The Myth."

— **JULIE SCELFO,**
Journalist, Former *New York Times* Staff Writer and
Author of *The Women Who Made New York*

"While women have grown stronger, as *The Effortless Perfection Myth* so well documents through stories and statistics, internally they are struggling. Today's young women are caught between a generation of women who measured their value on being a societally sanctioned 'good' woman and a generation of feminists who upped the ante on what was possible. As Peterson shares her personal truths, she inspires each reader to find her own."

— **AMY RICHARDS,**
Co-author of *Manifesta* and *Grassroots*, Producer of Emmy-nominated
series *WOMAN* for *Viceland*, and Co-founder of Third Wave Fund

"This volume is a rare gift. Demystifying the Myth of Effortless Perfection is the first offering. Analyzing its impact and cultural origins is a priceless second. The third and rarest gift structures the book's five sections: concrete tools for young women and their allies to control their identities. Bravo!"

— **JEAN O'BARR, PhD,**
Founding Director of the Duke Women's Studies Program (1983-2000)

"Caralena Peterson's book is a must-read for young women who want to do big things. Her book helps untangle the societal forces that hold young women back and burn them out as they try to be everything they think is expected of them. She offers a new path that is healthier and more fulfilling, and that ultimately will allow women to rise to power and influence-not as who they think society wants them to be, but as their true, authentic selves. And while the book is written from the young woman's perspective, it resonates deeply for women of all ages."

— **SUSANNAH WELLFORD,**
CEO and Founder of Running Start



SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. You first encountered Effortless Perfection as a college student yourself. How did the Myth present itself to you?
2. As you navigated your own experience with the Effortless Perfection Myth, what was helpful and what wasn't?
3. You've been teaching, writing and speaking about the Effortless Perfection Myth for more than five years now—what are some of the key trends that stand out to you? What keeps you going in doing this work?
4. Where does Effortless Perfection come from? Who is putting all of this pressure on our college women and why?
5. What would you say to the college women who are caught in the Effortless Perfection Myth and can't see a way out or don't even know they're tangled up in it?
6. What's at stake for college women who are living the Effortless Perfection Myth and either not seeking or receiving help?
7. What are some signs that parents, friends, teachers or others in a college woman's support system can look for as warnings that something is wrong?
8. How can parents better support their daughters in college who are falling victim to the Effortless Perfection Myth? What are some of the things that parents should never do?
9. Hook-up culture and mental health struggles play key roles in *The Effortless Perfection Myth*. Can you tell us more about what college women are actually dealing with on a daily basis?
10. You're known for saying that it's not just enough to get rid of rape culture but that we also have to embrace intimate justice. What exactly is intimate justice?
11. As with almost anything, college women are even comparing their sexual assault and mental health experiences – often feeling shame about their struggle because they don't feel they have it as “bad” as some others, and thus do not feel like they “deserve” to feel the way they do or like they have not “earned” a diagnosis in the way others have. Why is this mindset so harmful? What's the alternative?
12. You've written extensively about the Effortless Perfection Myth and even have a book coming out about it later in 2022. Who is your book for and what can readers expect?
13. If readers walk away from your book only having learned one thing—what do you hope that is?
14. What's next for you and where can people learn more and follow along?



RAPID FIRE WITH CARALENA PETERSON

1. What book is on your nightstand right now?

Sarah McBride's Tomorrow Will be Different.

2. Favorite way to unwind after a long day of writing, teaching or speaking?

A glass of wine and a good art project – I love big canvases full of potential and mixed medium materials like antique buttons and magazine scraps.

3. Most underrated part of college?

Having four years dedicated to learning and figuring yourself out.

4. Go-to way to combat the pressure of effortless perfection?

Remembering to share enough of my own vulnerabilities that others do not feel the need to hide their own. And reminding myself love is not something you earn by being pretty enough, smart enough, perfect enough.

5. Who are some of the feminist thought leaders you couldn't live without (and think everyone should be reading or following)?

Roxane Gay, Rebecca Traister, Rebecca Solnit, Jacob Tobia, Liz Plank, Mikki Kendall, Soraya Chemaly, Brittany Cooper, Ariel Levy, Lindy West. I could go on – these individuals are my superheroes.

6. One thing you wish you could say to your college self?

In all your relationships, remember this if nothing else: you accept the love you think you deserve.



MEDIA CONTACTS

KRISTIN CARVER SMITH

FOUNDER & CEO, THE NEW FASHIONED CO.
kristin@thenewfashioned.co

ANGELINA BURKHOLDER

PRESIDENT, THE NEW FASHIONED CO.
angelina@thenewfashioned.co