

Abstract

I feel bewildered about girls in my practice and society in general “falling off.” So many girls present with low self-image, low confidence, challenged by social acceptance and self acceptance. These girls become hampered by anxieties, often taking medications. I ask, “What is happening to girls today?” as I witness girls journeying from childhood to adolescence, transforming from happy, confident, audacious girls to girls with low confidence and fear. “Falling Off” is a metaphor based on girls riding their bikes full of freedom and voice, and then with what seems to be without cause losing balance and “falling off.” This book offers a poignant view of what it means to be a girl in our time while demonstrating how we as a society formulate and understand identity and agency contributes to girls “falling off.” Ultimately, given many girls face a relational crisis profoundly impacting the social construction of their identities “How do we as therapists/practitioners help girls thrive?” With these thoughts, I embark on the business of making sense of the struggle and ultimately adding to the conversation.

As the researcher, I use a particular theoretical lens, social/relational construction and my therapeutic experience, while highlighting the voices of four notable practitioner scholars¹ who offer their reflections on identity, agency, consciousness and therapeutic practice with girls. The result is an innovative and meaningful ways to support girls’ development as relational beings, a scrapbook of therapeutic practices that matter for therapists and practical wisdoms for girls. Ultimately, this work is about how therapists move in alongside girls supporting them to climb back on their bikes, find balance, and ride with confidence, direction, and purpose.

¹ Karen Young M.S.W., Dr. Christine Dennstedt, Dr. Harlene Anderson and Dr. Kenneth Gergen