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DO REAL TALK ABOUT VAGINAS (IN A CHARMING BRITISH ACCENT) WITH SUSI LENNOX OF YES

by ALDEN WICKER on SEP 12, 2013 • 8:00 am No Comments



Sarah Brooks and Susi Lennox of Yes

Yes has provided both a starter kit for the raffle and samples for the swag bags at EcoCult's Launch Party on September 26th. [Find out more about the party and how you can get an invite.](#)

I have never heard someone so comfortable talking about vaginas.

In my family, we called it our "Private Parts." Waspy much? But Susi Lennox, co-founder of the non-toxic lubricant company Yes, has developed a knack for making discussions of vaginas, their functions, their hang ups and their glories seem like dinner conversation. It probably helps that she has a lovely British accent that makes you feel like you are talking to a kindly aunt—an aunt you would have loved to have had around when you were thirteen and got your first period. It really would have made things so much easier.

Susi, together with her partner Sarah Brooks, founded Yes 10 years ago to fill a much needed niche of sex products that are made with women in mind, classily packaged and non-toxic. The only thing that has changed since Yes hit the market so many years ago is the packaging—they've improved it, adding bite-sized applicators for your purse—recently adding their first flavored lubricant, and expanding to be sold in about 60 countries. Like I said, it's a niche that needs to be filled.

I personally love it and find it much superior to other products I've used, and featured it in my Sustainable Sex roundup, and that's all I'm going to say in terms of a personal testimonial. But enough of me, read my interview with Susi (over the phone; she lives outside of London), which isn't so much entertaining as it is refreshing.

How did you get into the lube-making business?

A number of factors. The main one really was being in the pharmaceutical industry. Sarah was working for Pfizer when Viagra was developed. We had been working on drug safety, tracking side effects of drugs. The less well-known ones came from wives and partners, saying, "It's really hard for us. Our partner wants to make love all the time, and it's painful. He's gone off with a younger woman. It's destroyed our marriage."

That alerted us to something serious going on. When men's appetite was renewed, women didn't have a corresponding product to help them. We looked at the products out there and we were pretty scandalized. Most of the formations were chemically-based and quite a few of them contained mucosal irritants. The vagina absorbs things instantly and they go into the bloodstream much faster. All the artificial colors and smells and tastes in the market are damaging to women's health. They really have the capacity to break down the natural pH of the area. It becomes a vicious circle, because irritation happens, the product is used, and it exacerbates the situation. It ends up with her having a chronically unhealthy vagina.

We thought this was a big market opportunity. With our background as management consultants, we felt inspired to do something of our own.



How does Yes differ from what you would find in a regular drug store?

It's completely different. The conventional water-based lubricants are mostly based on glycerin, and the other kinds are silicon-based. The water-based lubricants are sticky, sweet, and it can feed thrush [that's British for yeast infection]. You have to wash it off afterwards because it leaves a stickiness. It's a cheap ingredient and widely used. There's nothing natural about it. Silicon lubricants behave in the same way as plastic wrap on the surface of the skin. It's technically an excellent lubricant because it's long lasting. It's very hard to wash off.

We made a Yes oil-based, which is beautifully natural and organic, made from oils and butters. It's got a huge following. There's not really anything else like it out there.

Do you think conventional products are made for men, or demean women?

I think that's perfectly fine for people who like suggestive products, But we deliberately set out to give dignity to the category. We didn't think women always wanted something sleazy, embarrassing or raunchy. They might just want something that works beautifully and looks quite elegant.

Is Yes for young women too?

Oh completely! They are a wonderful pleasure product. You don't need to have a problem to enjoy them. Many times during a woman's reproductive life, her own natural lubrication fails. Contraceptive pills, antihistamines, antidepressants, pregnancy, breast feeding, and stress. And cancer treatment causes early menopause. Because of the purity of our products, they are widely accepted in oncology clinics as the one safe product that women can use after cancer, without compromising their health again.

What kind of feedback do you get?

One of the loveliest things ... we have a product for couples who are trying to conceive. I often hear from them. We get the most moving feedback from customers about, "You saved my marriage, you saved my sex life." We get feedback from men, saying how it made their partners more comfortable, which the men are very pleased about!

How do people react when you tell them what you do for a living?

Actually, I don't know if it's because we speak about it with complete ease and confidence, but there aren't too many who get embarrassed. Usually, after the little bit of surprise, people are really interested and want to know a great deal about it.

What are your favorite nontoxic products that you use besides Yes?

Our values are terribly important to us. The things you eat, the things you put on your skin, the way you clean your house ... it's an integrated thing, or else it's hypocrisy, isn't it? *[Editor's note: Truth, sister.]*

I use the company called Essential Care. Natracare is good industry friend—they make panty liners and tampons with organic cotton. And a company called Great Elm Physick Garden. She grows all her own ingredients. Her products are exquisite.