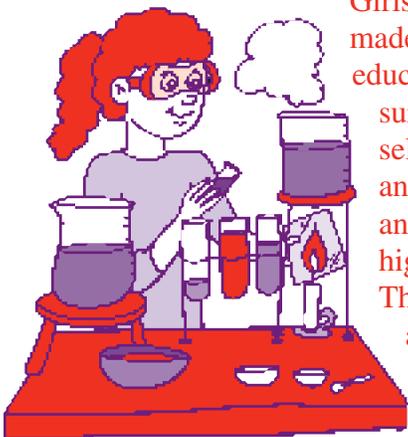




### Helping Girls Build Optimism and Resilience—The I CAN Girl



Girls and women have made great strides in education. Girls often surpass boys in grades, select advanced math and science classes, and are admitted to high-status colleges. They make up approximately half of the enrollment at medical and law schools. While all

that would lead us to believe that women should, by now, have equal representation in prestigious careers, there actually appears to be a “very leaky pipeline.” In most career areas, the higher the status, the less representation there is of women.

*“There appears to be a very leaky pipeline.”*

*The Leaky Pipeline.* Only 5% of the CEO’s of Fortune 500 companies are women. While the numbers of women who earn Ph.D’s have increased in almost all fields, at colleges and universities they are underrepresented among tenured faculty and department chairpersons and instead are more frequently found among non-tenured and part-time faculty. Despite the large number who successfully graduate law school, they comprise only 17% of law firm partners. Although women increasingly run for government office, they make up only 16% of Congress. At each higher level of the academic pipeline in physics and engineering there are fewer

women. Women make up only 10% of college faculties in physics. There are increasing numbers of women in medical practice, but more choose lower paying specialties like pediatrics and psychiatry, and there are very few women department chairpersons or deans at medical schools.

Symphony orchestras have made great strides in attracting women, and percentages of women have increased from 10% in the 1970’s to approximately 35% now. Much of that gain has been attributed to blind auditions so that selections are based on musical sound only, and not the gender of the musician. Ironically, even in education, a career field dominated by women, only 13% of the superintendents of school positions are held by women. To add insult to injury, overall salaries for college educated women after college graduation are 20% behind that of men, and that differential grows to 30% ten years after graduation.

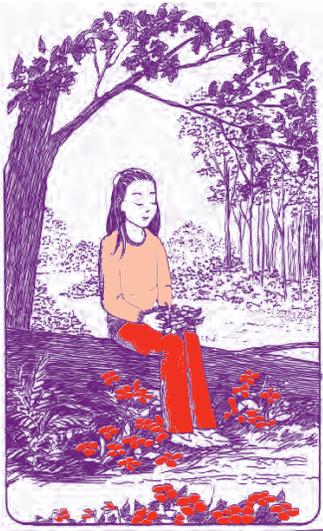
#### In This Issue

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[www.sylviarimm.com](http://www.sylviarimm.com)  
[www.seejanewin.com](http://www.seejanewin.com)

## About *See Jane Win for Girls*



Girls who set high expectations for their careers and would like to work to their potential will need to persevere with optimism and resiliency to surmount the many hurdles that are ahead. Women will continue to require a pioneering spirit. *See Jane Win™ for Girls* was written for girls to help them build optimism and resilience.

*See Jane Win™ for Girls* grew out of a study I did with over 1,000 successful women. I asked the women to describe how they felt and what they did when they were children and how those experiences helped them to become successful women. Using what we learned from this study, my daughters and I wrote two books for adults, *See Jane Win™* and *How Jane Won*. Today those books are helping many people raise their daughters to be the best they can be.

In my book *See Jane Win™ for Girls*, I bring some of these stories, lessons, and memories to girls directly. I've included some excerpts from *See Jane Win™ for Girls*, which you may want to share with your daughters or students. The book is intended for tween and young teen girls from about age nine.\*

Columns in this newsletter are from Sylvia Rimm On Raising Kids newspaper column. If the column is not in your local paper, suggest it to the editor.

You may send questions to Dr. Rimm at PO Box 32,  
Watertown, WI 53094 or  
[DrRimm@sylviarimm.com](mailto:DrRimm@sylviarimm.com)

Sylvia Rimm On Raising Kids Newspaper Column  
online at [www.creators.com/lifestylefeatures.html](http://www.creators.com/lifestylefeatures.html)  
(next, click Dr. Rimm's picture)

\* Excerpts from *See Jane Win™ for Girls*

## Dare to Dream

You can have a bright future, and daring to dream is part of creating it. But dreaming isn't enough. For dreams to come true, you have to take action too. That means becoming an I CAN girl.

Many of the women you'll read about in *See Jane Win™ for Girls* were I CAN girls when they were growing up. That means that they loved to take on new challenges and become actively involved in things that interested them. They brought a positive attitude to much of what they did.

In your grandmother's day, girls were often laughed at if they dreamed of becoming anything other than a mother, nurse, or teacher. Luckily, those days are gone. Today, you can do the kinds of things that women have traditionally done, or you can do things that have traditionally been done by men. You may want to do something ordinary or extraordinary. Either way, you can begin thinking and preparing now.



*I grew up very poor in a rural town in Puerto Rico. My father worked in the sugarcane fields. Neither of my parents was formally educated, but they instilled in me the value of learning. Every morning my father reminded us that education was the only way out of the cycle of poverty. Poverty challenged me to excel, to go to college, to become a professional, and to be able to provide for my family.*

Nydia Velázquez  
U.S. Congresswoman  
from New York

*The advice I give all kids, especially young black women, is to always be your best. It's not just because you think someone is watching, but be your best, keep yourself sharp, so no one can ever pass you over and say you're not qualified.*

Deborah Roberts,  
Correspondent  
ABC's 20/20  
Newsmagazine

## Exercising Your Self-Esteem Muscles

Odd as it may sound, your self-esteem—how you feel about yourself—can help shape your future. When you respect yourself and your values, feel good about what you've achieved, and have confidence in your abilities, your self-esteem is healthy.

*Remember:* You can feel smart without having to be the smartest. You can have friends without having to be most popular. And you can be athletic, musical, or artistic without having to be the best. If you'd like, tape a note to your mirror that says, "I don't have to be perfect or be liked by everyone to feel good about myself. I am an I CAN girl."

## When Your Self-Esteem Depends on Boyfriends



In general, girls mature earlier than boys do. That means their bodies and emotions may tell them to become interested in romance before boys' bodies and emotions send out a similar signal to them. So if your self-esteem is

dependent on how many boys like you, you could have a problem. Some of the nicest guys you know may not even have noticed that girls exist. Some won't be interested in having a girlfriend until high school or college. And some may never be interested in girls as girlfriends, just as some girls may never be interested in boys as boyfriends. Other boys may only like girls who they think aren't as smart as they are. Others may only like girls who are very thin, or have a certain color hair, or are a certain height. Boys who judge you by superficial traits like these can hurt you and your self-esteem if you let them. That's because they're only focusing on a small part of who you are.

### NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Sylvia Rimm On Raising Kids* is published quarterly. The introductory price is \$16/year; \$20 thereafter. A special school district rate to copy for all the parents is available.

For more information, or to order:  
1-800-795-7466 • [www.sylviarimm.com](http://www.sylviarimm.com)

If you do feel ready (or almost ready) for boyfriends, look for someone who shares your interests and who truly wants to get to know you. If it seems that in order to attract someone you have to...

Appear less smart or talented than you are

Lose weight and wear makeup or sexy clothes

Try cigarettes, marijuana, or drink alcohol

Let someone kiss or touch you when this doesn't feel right to you

...then it's not the right relationship.

*I remember girls in fifth grade being boy-crazy, chasing guys and going to their houses. I didn't understand why they were crazed. I felt different because I was painfully skinny, tiny, and under-developed. I never could eat enough and was trying to gain weight. I was almost a full year behind everyone else. They were in bras and using deodorant, and I was flat as a board and wore an undershirt. My dad even took me to the doctor and had my bones x-rayed because he was so worried. I didn't grow until the end of high school.*

Lesley Seymour,  
former Editor-in-Chief  
Redbook Magazine

Boyfriends can be exciting, which makes it hard to act sensibly. But play it smart and be an I CAN girl: put your self-respect, confidence, and interests first. If you want others to value you, first and foremost you have to value yourself!

Another thing you can do when you're critical of yourself is take a reality check. Are you comparing yourself with others? If you are, remind yourself that you're not the only one with flaws. *Everyone* has them. Instead of feeling bad about what you *don't* have or *can't* do, focus on your strengths. What can you do that other people value? What can you do that *you* value?

## A Better You = A Better World



Here's one other thing you can do to stay positive about yourself, and it may surprise you: Spend some time helping somebody else! Many successful *See Jane Win* women say that

they feel most fulfilled and happiest with themselves when they're helping others or doing something to make the world a better place. Public radio host Kathleen Dunn, for example, is proud that, as a former VISTA volunteer, she spent two years helping low-income families. And Congresswoman Shelley Berkley is such a strong believer in the importance of volunteering that she sponsored legislation aimed at encouraging people to do it even more. Kids are capable of making a big difference in the world. There are many good causes in the world for you to get involved in if you'd like. They help you to become an I CAN girl.

## Feel Smart by Releasing Your Brainpower

It's one thing to *be* smart. It's another to *use* your intelligence. One of the most important parts of being smart has to do with I CAN attitudes like enthusiasm, optimism, and a willingness to learn. The successful women in *See Jane Win* discovered they could use their brainpower to keep getting smarter.

*I believe one person can make a difference, and public service gives me the opportunity to give back something to this country that has given my family so much. That is the very essence and core of what I do and why I do it. I'm extraordinarily patriotic because I know what this country has done for my family, and I know we are just one of millions of families who would agree.*

Shelley Berkley,  
U.S. Congresswoman  
from Nevada

If you believe in your teachers, there's a good chance that they'll believe in you. All you have to do is respect them and show them how much you want to learn. Most teachers want very much to inspire their students. And you have the power to help them do that. If you need help, ask for it. If you have special interests or needs, let them know that, too. A teacher's encouragement can have a huge influence in helping you to be your best.

Using your creativity and doing well on tests are only two ways to show your intelligence. Traits like kindness, sensitivity, good social skills, independence, strong leadership abilities, and showing what a trusted friend you can be may not show up on your report card. But they have led to success in life for many I CAN girls.



*My seventh-grade teacher was Mrs. Hardy. Her expectations were very high. Everyone was terrified of her, but I always wanted to please her. She introduced me to poetry, to speaking grammatically, and to striving to do more. She was hard but fair, and it meant so much to me to do well in her class. She was responsible for my yearning to want to be the best.*

Deborah Roberts, Correspondent  
ABC's 20/20, Newsmagazine

## Why Kids Can Be Mean

It's sad, but some people feel important when they pick on others. Although kids shouldn't treat other kids this way, it helps to understand why it happens, and to know what you can do about it. If a mean person becomes a leader, that person may use the nasty things she or he says to control others. Kids who aren't in that group may feel pressure to be cruel so that they'll feel included, too. Or, they may be afraid that, if they don't join in, the leader will soon start picking on them.

If you ever find yourself accepted by kids who treat others badly, you may be tempted to act this way too—even to kids who once were your friends. But do you really want to hang out with mean and disrespectful people—even if, at your school, they are considered the “in” crowd? After all, true friends would never push you to be mean to anyone else just so you could stay friends with them. So “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Never treat anyone like an outcast!

***“...some people feel important when they pick on others.”***



Remember how important it is to be independent. If the kids in a particular group won't accept you, try to ignore their meanness. Once they realize that they're not getting you down, they're likely to lose interest in being mean to you. That's what happened to flutist

Martha Aarons when she was in middle school. She was teased for being an excellent student and liking classical music. For a while she tried to learn more about popular music, but she still wasn't accepted. It wasn't until she attended a music camp the summer she was in eighth grade that she found a place where people had similar interests and she could be accepted for who she was. The name-calling stopped after that, or at least it didn't bother her as much anymore.



Rather than worry about the people who don't accept you, look for new friends who will. Get busy with things that interest you, like music, sports, or volunteer work. If you feel sad because you don't have friends, talk to a school counselor about it. Maybe she can organize a friendship session to help the kids talk out their differences. You can also turn to an adult you feel close to—someone whose understanding can help get you through these difficult times.

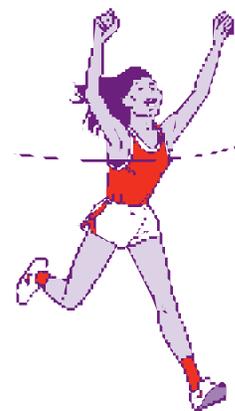
## How Kind Is Too Kind?

Kindness can be a wonderful quality. It suggests that you're sensitive, understanding, empathetic, and good to others. People who are kind as children often grow into adults who continue to do good things. But it's also possible to be too kind. For example, say a friend of yours is struggling in school and asks you to give her answers to a homework assignment. The kind part of you may be tempted—especially if you see that she doesn't learn things as easily as you do. But if you give her your answers, she won't learn, and her schoolwork will suffer. This would hurt her confidence and self-esteem. Besides, the teacher could accuse you of cheating—which, of course, you are. The truly kind thing to do is to tell your friend, “No, I can't give you the answers. But if you'd like, I'd be happy to help you figure it out.”

Be prepared—your friend may get so annoyed, she may even want to stop being friends with you. But do you really want to hang onto a friend who not only wants you to cheat but who cuts you out of her life if you won't? Sometimes you have to say no to be true to yourself. Stay strong. Be clear about your values, and make sure you take care of yourself.



## And Lastly...Go for the Goal!



Many people (including psychologists) used to believe that all women should do in life is get married and have children. They believed that women didn't need careers outside the home or beliefs of their own. But that was then. This is now. Today, girls are expected to set goals for themselves and move out into the world. They're expected to decide for themselves who they want to be and what they want to do. This is a wonderful thing—but it isn't easy. Having goals can raise your self-esteem.

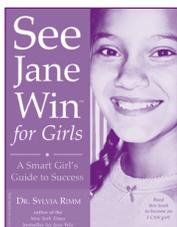
***“Together or alone, you’re always a winner when you set out to achieve your dreams.”***

Throughout your life, you’ll find that setting goals can be exciting and fulfilling, and that sharing them with other people can be incredibly rewarding. Together or alone, you’re always a winner when you set out to achieve your dreams.

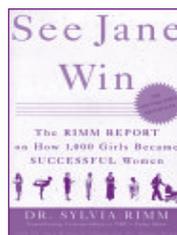
Although you won’t be able to control everything in your future (no one can), an I CAN girl is more likely to have a fulfilled, happy, and successful life.

## BOOKS FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE

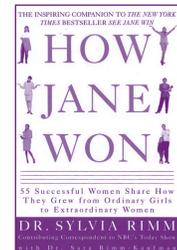
***See Jane Win for Girls***  
**A Smart Girl’s Guide to Success**  
**\$13.95 softcover, ages 9 and up, 128 pages**



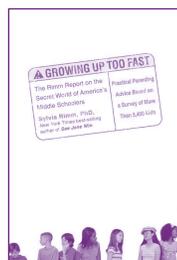
***See Jane Win***  
**The Rimm Report on How 1,000 Girls Became Successful Women**



***How Jane Won***  
**55 Successful Women Share How They Grew from Ordinary Girls to Extraordinary Women**



***Growing Up Too Fast: The Rimm Report on the Secret World of America’s Middle Schoolers***  
**Practical Parenting Advice on a Survey of More Than 5,400 Kids**



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## PARENT POINTERS

### *Raising Resilient Daughters<sup>1</sup>*

Our research on the childhoods of more than a thousand successful women for our “Jane” books concluded that optimism and resilience were critical keys to their success. Your daughters will require both of these qualities if they seek to fulfill themselves in a society where gates are only slightly ajar for women who have high expectations of themselves. Whether your daughters are headed for science, the arts, business, medicine, law, or any of a long list of careers considered non-traditional for women, bias against women continue to provide an unfair struggle. Practicing the optimism needed for long-term resilience begins in childhood, and parents can surely foster those positive attitudes.

Middle school students who met in focus groups with me for my recent book, *Growing Up Too Fast*, reminded me frequently that peer pressure to fit in with whatever was defined as popularity was incredibly severe. Worries were rampant among this age group about popularity, overweight, the right clothes, self-confidence, being pretty or smart enough, parents and teachers understanding them, alcohol, drugs, and sex. Furthermore, the media has literally stolen middle childhood from our children and initiated adolescence for children before their minds and bodies are prepared for the pressures that used to start only during the teen years. For example, by third grade 15% of the children already expressed many worries about being popular with the opposite sex and a similar percentage believed their parents didn’t understand them. Good family relationships mediated the worries for those children and tweens, so you can teach your children optimism and resilience right now.



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Raising an Optimistic, Resilient Daughter* by Sylvia Rimm, *Daughters Magazine*, March/April, 2007, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 11. Reprinted, with permission, from *Daughters: For Parents of Girls*; Copyright Dads and Daughters, Duluth, MN. \$27.99/year. 888-849-8476. [www.daughters.com](http://www.daughters.com)

Here are some suggestions for parenting your daughters for resilience:

**1. *Encourage your daughters to enter competitions.***

Whether they're involved in sports, writing, debate, music, art or drama, science, math, or the many additional competitions available, they can learn the exhilaration of winning, the advantages of collaborating with a team, and most of all, that no one wins all the time.

**2. *Cheer for them when they win, but especially cheer them on when they lose.***

Don't make the mistake of too much commiseration over losses, and be sure not to make excuses for them. They must learn how to bounce back.

**3. *Gentle criticism teaches resilience.***

Criticism and suggestions aren't heard well in the joy of victory or the misery of defeat, but at a later time, reviewing performance with a coach (that may be you) permits girls to understand how to improve without feeling as if they're failures.

**4. *Perfect performances don't happen.***

Perfectionism traps girls into never feeling good enough and preventing their taking risks for fear of making mistakes. Be clear that you expect the best they can do, but that may not be the best performance in the group or contest.

**5. *Perseverance and flexibility help.***

While girls should learn to work hard and persist, flexibility and changing direction are reasonable and shouldn't be described as quitting.

**6. *Be a role model for optimism.***

Girls observe parental self-criticism and how parents cope with their own failures. If you use failures to learn from and move forward to try new experiences with realistic optimism, you set good examples for your daughters.

**7. *Humor relieves tension.***

Laughing at yourself and even gentle teasing by loving family members can dissolve tensions and put mistakes and failures into perspective. Girls who can poke fun at themselves are more likely to bounce back from losses.

**8. *Your daughters are listening.*** Whether you talk directly to them or you talk about them to your partner, parent, teacher, or your friends, they hear what you say and are likely to believe you. Describing their performances as extraordinary, best, or brilliant puts extreme pressure on them. Discussing their sadness or disappointment within their hearing causes them to feel sorry for themselves and think they have serious problems or are even depressed. If your chit chat with reference to your daughters sounds positive and more moderate, they'll be unlikely to feel over-pressured and will feel more positive about their futures.

No matter how talented your daughters are, it's important for them to experience both successes and failures. While successes can build their confidence, that confidence will not be sufficient to lead them to a successful adulthood unless they have practiced coping with obstacles in the safety of their family environment.



**' IF THE DOOR CLOSSES USE THE WINDOW '**

**Family Achievement Clinic  
Sylvia B. Rimm, Ph.D., Director**

Family Achievement Clinic specializes in working with capable children who are not performing to their abilities in school. Gifted children are the clinic's specialty. The clinic also offers a comprehensive range of psychological services centered on children, adolescents, and their families. Services include therapy for underachievement syndrome, attention deficit disorders, anxieties, and oppositional problems; as well as parenting and marriage therapy, divorce counseling, and career planning.

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## TEACHER TIPS

### “C” Jane Win

While good grades in school were the forerunners of success for over a thousand successful women who were studied for my books *See Jane Win* and *How Jane Won*, report cards covered with A's are not sufficient in themselves. Paradoxically, many of the characteristics that are crucial to success begin with C, and these C's also need to be taught in our families and classrooms:

#### Competitiveness balanced with Collaboration

The exhilaration of winning is motivating, but recognizing when competitiveness is appropriate is crucial. As in sports, collaborating as a team member is pivotal for success in life.

#### Competence, Confidence, and Courage

A variety of new skills and competencies must be learned for every career. Girls who have confidence in themselves can have the courage to admit to knowledge they don't have and can risk making efforts to learn more.

#### Caring, Character, and Communication Skills

Kindness, honesty, and careful communication are characteristics women have long claimed as feminine. When women take on challenges that were earlier reserved for men, they should not discard these traditional marks of integrity.

#### Commitment and Coping Skills

Many high-level careers require extensive education. Even after that education is completed, time and effort demands can be extraordinary. Women often need to simultaneously cope with stresses of work and family. If we are to expect equal opportunities for women, we must also expect to promise equal engagement and perseverance.

### Factoid—Why Girls Need Resilience

When information is attributed to a male or female, whether it is college essays, job applications, portfolios, or tenure reviews, documents associated with a male consistently receive higher ratings than the very same information with a female name attached.

Research from book *Women in Science—Can Evidence Inform the Debate?*, Science, Vol. 317, p.200, July 13, 2007.

#### Challenge, Creativity, and Contribution

Successful women indicated they valued their careers most when those careers offered challenge, creativity, and opportunities to make contributions to society.

#### Choices

Jane now has many career and life choices. As teachers guide young women toward their dreams, it's important to encourage passions and interests while helping them balance those choices with the realities of life and the availability of opportunities in our society.

### B for Balance

Our final teacher tip begins with neither A nor C. Helping girls and women learn to find balance in their lives is perhaps the greatest challenge. This calls to mind my discussion with my daughter Sara when we were writing our book together. “Remember,” Sara cautioned, “No one should expect to have life totally balanced all the time. But if we can seek balance over our lifetime, we will have achieved the goal of a reasonable equilibrium.”

