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FOREWORD



There are only a few guarantees in this life, and one of them is change! Change is happening right now all over the world, and it's happening right now in our bodies.

Sonya Renee Taylor has written a book for young girls who are experiencing the changes in their body that happen during puberty. Often these conversations are stale and clinical, but not here.

In *Celebrate Your Body (and Its Changes, Too!)* you will find all the important, practical medical information about puberty—but here it is combined with a new understanding of the fantastic shift that your body experiences during this time. Sonya answers questions you may not realize you have, or questions you have but don't know how to ask. You'll read about what to do when you're the one growing faster than everyone else, who you go to when you feel afraid of these changes, and how to prepare for your next (or 10th) period. Sonya does this using language we can all understand, and without judgment or self-doubt.

Sonya has created a movement, not just for any body, but for every body! She's dreaming bigger and doing the work to make sure each one of us understands there is no wrong way to be our full selves in our full bodies. And she has created this book to help you understand the changes in your body and to offer strategies for coping with and loving them. Parents, caretakers, and girls alike will all recognize Sonya's affirming voice as she reminds us that this sometimes confusing—but always exciting—time is yours to enjoy.

—Bianca I. Laureano, MA, CSE
Award-winning reproductive health educator



INTRODUCTION



GUESS WHAT? I AM GOING TO SHARE SOME TOP-SECRET information with you. Are you ready? Okay here it is . . . You have a body! And it isn't just any kind of body—it's an *awesome* body. How do I know this? Because *all* bodies are awesome and that should never be a secret. Every girl should shout it from the highest mountaintop: "Hey world, *my body is awesome!*"

And as the proud owner of an awesome body you might notice that it is also a changing body. Change can be wonderful, but it can also be a little confusing at times. As we get older not only do our bodies change, but so do our feelings and relationships. With all of these changes going on, it is only natural to have some questions. This book is all about helping you get answers to some of the uncertainties you may have about wonderfully changing *you!*

If you haven't noticed, I am super excited to be talking about your body. That might seem a little

weird, but it's because I love helping people understand why they should love their bodies. It started when I was 15 years old and became a peer educator, helping my classmates and other teens learn about how to make good decisions about their bodies. For many years I worked at jobs that were focused on helping people lead healthier lives. A few years ago, I started a company called *The Body Is Not An Apology*, which is all about how to love our bodies and make a world where everybody has what they need to live their best life. Every day I work to remind people all over the world that every body is magic!

In the years since I started my company, people with all kinds of bodies—from 8 years old to 88 years old—have been part of the workshops I lead about self-love. People with tall bodies, short bodies, wide bodies, slim bodies, bodies with disabilities, bodies of different races—so many cool bodies. Not one of them was the same but each was beautiful and powerful in its own unique way. Today, millions of people have visited the website *The Body Is Not An Apology* and decided to practice loving their bodies unapologetically. I hope after reading this book you feel ready to do the exact same thing.

Do you know why people are afraid of the dark? Because they can't see what's going on. You should not be in the dark about puberty or the ways your body will change in the coming weeks, months, and years. Knowledge is power and knowing all about the changes in your body will make you an expert on your body. I know

you picked up this book to learn about puberty for yourself. But if you read something you don't understand or want to know more about, I strongly encourage you to share those questions with a trusted adult. You are a beautiful, powerful, smart girl who feels confident about her body and her life. Puberty doesn't change that. If anything, puberty is an opportunity to feel even more confident and powerful in your body. Why? Because you are becoming an expert on its awesomeness!

Throughout this book we will discuss some key questions you might have about puberty and body changes. We'll start by discussing what puberty is (the normal body changes that signal your transition into adulthood). Next, we'll talk about some of the body changes you might expect during this time, starting with the small changes (Hey, how did that hair get there?) and then we will move on to discuss the bigger ones like breast development and menstruation. We'll even talk about how you can navigate issues like health, well-being, emotions, and privacy. In each section we'll highlight what physical changes you may notice, as well as share tips about how to care for your body as these changes happen. A glossary in the back of the book will help you understand words that may be new to you.

Puberty is a thrilling time filled with new opportunities to understand your body even better. When we are equipped with correct information, we have everything we need to move into adulthood, certain that our incredible bodies have all they need to help us live an amazing life!