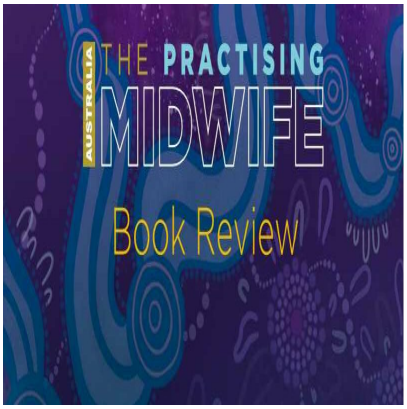

Description

Book Review: The Power of No in a World that Demands Yes by Dr Sunita Sah

Review By: Clare O'Brien – Consultant Midwife, The Motherhood Midwife

Blink

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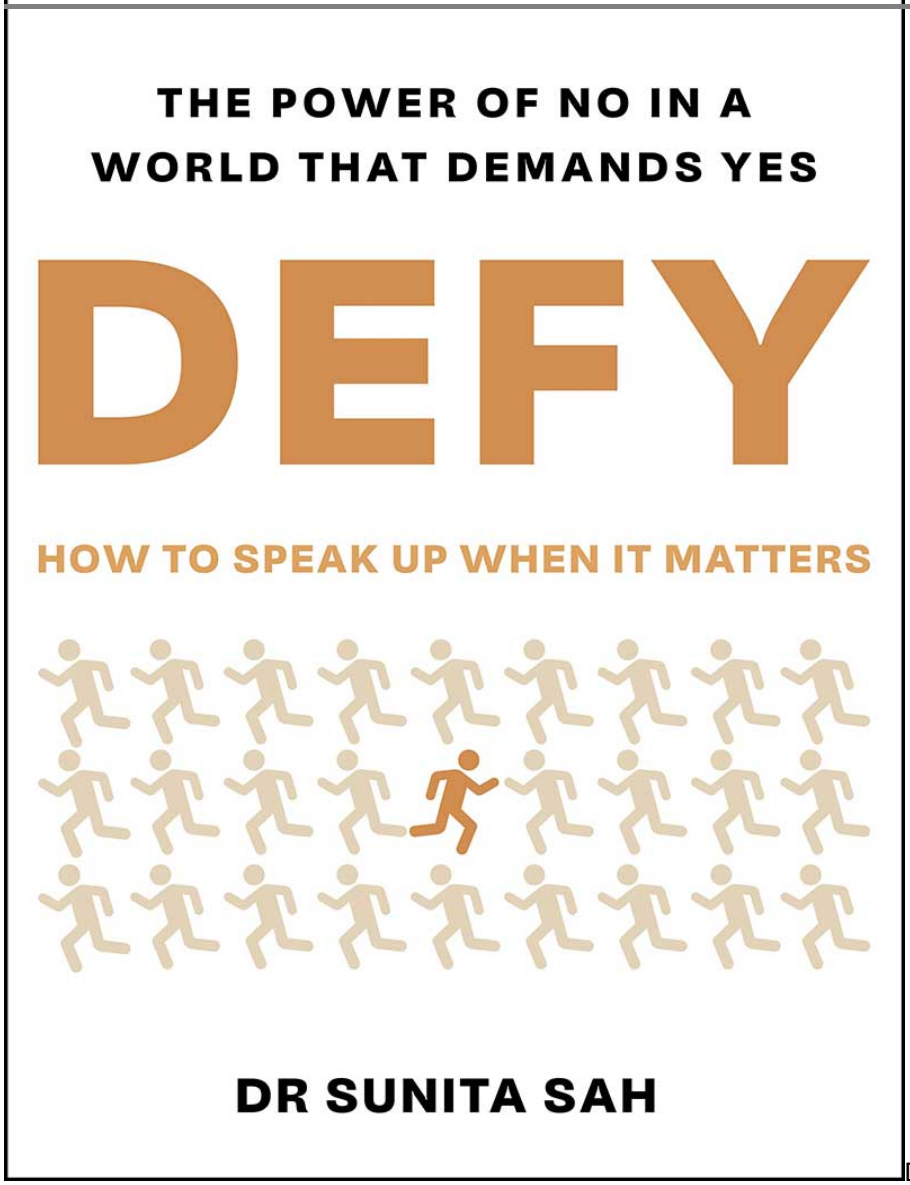

Defy is a powerful exploration of our ability to live by our values, and to stand up and speak out for what we believe in, in a world that often expects us simply to fall in line. Dr Sunita Sah skilfully blends scientific research with well-known examples of defiance and compliance, alongside personal reflections from her own life. This combination keeps the book engaging and relatable, while grounding its message in robust evidence. Importantly, Sah reframes defiance not only as bold acts of protest, but also as the quieter, everyday moments in which we choose to act in accordance with our principles. Her aim is clear: to equip readers with the tools to live in alignment with their values.

For midwives, this book offers two particularly relevant messages: our duty to challenge authority when necessary, and our responsibility to ensure genuine consent from those in our care. The opening discussion of the murder of George Floyd illustrates the dangers of compliance. Two junior police officers followed the orders of a senior colleague despite recognising harm was being caused. Their failure to challenge authority had devastating consequences. In maternity care, the stakes may be different, but the principle is the same.

Midwives must be able to question unsafe practice, challenge poor behaviour and advocate for women and babies when

it matters most. The ability to defy, when justified, is as vital a professional skill as any clinical competency.

Sah also shares a personal story of agreeing to an unnecessary MRI scan requested by a doctor, despite knowing it was not needed. This example highlights how easily people can acquiesce to professionals, particularly those perceived as authority figures. For midwives, this is a timely reminder that consent must be more than a signature or verbal agreement. It requires listening, clear communication and genuine collaboration in decision-making.

Defy is a thought-provoking and highly relevant read for midwives, challenging us to reflect on how we practise, advocate and uphold the values at the heart of compassionate, woman-centred care. **TPM**

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