

An Interview with Shira Nayman

By Karen Karbo, *MORE Magazine*

A new author talks about family, fiction, and finding time for it all.

Shira Nayman's *Awake in the Dark* (Scribner's) has received an unusual amount of praise prepublication for a debut collection of short stories. And rightly so. Soulful and deftly plotted, these stories about the children of Holocaust survivors remind us that we're each the sum of personal histories, known and unknown. MORE checked in with Nayman, 46, a clinical psychologist, marketing consultant, wife, and mother of school-age children in New York City, to see how she is handling the sweet smell of literary success.

MORE: *Awake in the Dark* deals with deeply held parental secrets.

NAYMAN: The effect of our parents' secrets can be amazing. As a psychologist, I've found people living in reaction to secrets they aren't aware of. And not just the children of Holocaust survivors. When I was meeting with my editors and the book's sales force, they responded strongly to this notion of parents' hidden pasts.

MORE: Many in our generation would prefer to hide their wild pasts from their children. Is disclosure a better choice?

NAYMAN: It's not necessarily best. While it's difficult to live with a sense that your parents are hiding something, knowing the truth carries its own difficulties.

MORE: Why do you think your stories are grabbing people?

NAYMAN: I wish I knew. I wrote the book very quickly, and when my husband read it he said that while it was lovely, he didn't think anyone would be interested in it because the subject matter is so difficult.

MORE: What are you working on now?

NAYMAN: In my office I have piles of other pieces of fiction — a novel that's almost complete and several collections of stories. Like many women our age, I had other careers and a family before I was able to devote myself to writing full time, which I'm trying to do now.

MORE: You're going on a book tour, you still work as a marketing consultant, you've got a husband, two children, and your writing. How do you find the energy?

NAYMAN: I overextend myself. I want everything, which forces me to live at a hectic pace. I don't get enough sleep. Sometimes I wind up sick. Once, when I was in the hospital with meningitis and a very high fever, I started ordering things advertised on television. I wound up with a Turbo Jam exercise CD. You know, it's an exercise program out of California. Now, I absolutely swear by it!