

The Sweetheart Connection

A publication of the Society for the Second Self, Inc. 8880 Bellaire, B-2 #104, Houston, TX 77036

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Volume 6, Issue 2

*This is a Very
Powerful
Conference*

Al Laing

ATLANTA, GA

JULY 15-19, 1998

S.P.I.C.E. VI

Now We're Cooking With S.P.I.C.E.

**Peggy Rudd Ed.D.
Director, S.P.I.C.E.**

Frequently, in cooking, the flavor of a cherished recipe doesn't improve until you add the SPICE. This is analogous to life. Both happy, contented wives and those whose hearts are heavy with sadness need SPICE. This year, the full color and flavor of the old South will be offered at S.P.I.C.E. A few days in Atlanta this July have the potential of improving *your* life. We will gather at the Sheraton Inn, a quiet place, which stands on a green, rolling hill nestled among tall, whispering pines. You will feel securely separated from the hustle of the busy city. Our hospitality suite, room 634, will be staffed by the S.P.I.C.E. Planning Board and members of Sigma Epsilon who will make the meaning of Southern Comfort come alive. Reunite with old friends, make some new ones, then a guide will assist us to MARTA, the super train which will take us into Atlanta and the Westin Hotel, where you can "soak in" the panoramic view of the city from the 70th floor with a favorite beverage.

Across the street is "Aunt Pitty Pat's Porch" where we can relive the era of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With the Wind" as costumed waitresses serve you. Can Rhett and Scarlett be near? The

ambiance strongly resembles Tara. Look for super waiter Richard, the Ice Man; ask him to explain his name, for he has a warm welcoming personality.

Thursday morning John Crouse, of California, will lead enthusiasts in Tai Chi exercises. We will begin to turn our Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones with Dr. Alan Yorker, Emory College School of Medicine, who will welcome us and give us a road map for "loving others without losing yourself." After a mid-morning break, bonding circles will be formed: women's led by Evelyn Kirkland and Onnalee Graham; men's by Gary Helm.

Luncheon choices each day may be for women only or couples. Separate tracks will offer Sally Hunt, licensed therapist, who will deal with the sticky issues of depression and communication, while John Crouse will help you develop coping skills according to your analyzed personality type. The day will close with Dr. Yorker who will help you plan for the days to follow.

Help will be available everywhere: your new and old friends, small group activities and 'one on one' guidance. You need but ask. There will be a bookstore, information services and official SPICE

pins for sale in room 434, plus a video room (with Pop Corn!) to view gender related television show tapes or even "Gone With the Wind".

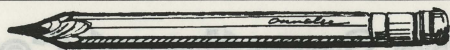
Dinner Thursday night features a jewelry fashion show and a speech by Suzanne Kilkus, of Minnesota. Friday and Saturday night after dinner speakers will be Richard Miller and Sally Hunt, respectively, each of whom spoke at S.P.I.C.E. 5 in California.

The following days will be filled with other good programs including a Live Talk with Marsha and Richard Miller (Editor's note: see their column, "Lets Talk" on pages 6 and 7), Denise O'Dohery, IMAGO relationship therapist and professor from Houston, Sally Hunt on bridging the gender gap with improved communication. You can even hear answers about children and crossdressers from experts...the children OF crossdressers.

Bring your prettiest summer dress for the closing banquet Saturday, otherwise it's casual and comfortable dress for our "working" days. Sunday morning offers an inter-faith service led by Gary Helm. The recipe is complete. Start with a commitment for growth. Add some friends who share your hopes, dreams and challenges. Blend in the leadership of trained professionals, a lot of fun, some tears, some laughs, good food, quiet tranquillity and this S.P.I.C.E. will have made *your* life better. Your stumbling blocks will become stepping stones to a better future.



Editor's Blue Pencil



Talking with S.P.I.C.E. Director Peggy Rudd on her return from Atlanta about the plans she was completing re-awakened my enthusiasm for this July's event. I "stopped the press run" and scrapped our original articles to focus more attention on S.P.I.C.E.

A watercolor workshop quarterly to which I subscribe, had a short article addressing exactly that which I had been considering for our readers relative to their crossdressing husbands and S.P.I.C.E. Fear and Courage are the emotions we seem to alternately suffer and enjoy as I work on my paintings and as we live and work at our marriages.

We enter our marriages/relationships with optimism, high hopes, even confidence. Then something new and different comes along and things seem to go wrong. We're fearful, discouraged and even dissatisfied. We fear we've done the wrong thing, made poor decisions or are somehow at fault. Even when things seem to be going well,

Bumper sticker seen on the back of a four-door Mercedes, Calif.

**BORN FREE
but I'm expensive now**

Bumper sticker seen on the back of a Lexus:

**I'm so broke
I can't even afford to
PAY ATTENTION!**

we're fearful the next thing we say or do will ruin the good work already accomplished. Fear is too much with us.

Living requires courage; so does continuing to work on a relationship or marriage. Not the kind of courage that rescues a child from being swept away by a raging flood [such an act is better termed 'bravery'] but the kind of courage it takes to risk embarrassment, appearing inept, or lacking in tact, even become the target for another's angry fear. We fear others may think us stupid, silly or shallow. If we think in those terms often enough, we can become paralyzed against action, our life's juices slowly drying up with atrophy.

However, despite what most of the men who crossdress profess to believe -- that only 12 to 15 percent of wives want to even try to understand -- we know that almost three-quarters of you who have learned of your husband's secret, DO want to understand and are willing to try. We find the resolve to go and learn. We give up "playing it safe", merely doing what seemed to work before, usually avoidance and denial. We'll even give up being careful, trying to make previous poor decisions better. We'll try something different, bold and new. We'll stop worrying about looking silly, shallow or vulnerable. We muster our courage and go to S.P.I.C.E.

I remember my own anxiety prior to the very first S.P.I.C.E. six years ago. I recall the white knuckles of driving to Chicago for

the second conference in 1994. My amazement at the camaraderie shown me as others arrived for S.P.I.C.E. 3 in Memphis. How far I have personally come thanks to the outstanding programs and guidance offered at my "meets-once-a-year" support group. It was in gratitude for that help I volunteered to take on the editorship of The Sweetheart Connection. I can't "pay back" those who helped me but I can, as Joe/Joann Roberts said in Memphis, "...pay forward by helping others." This year Robert will join me and share the exhaustion and exhilaration of the work done at S.P.I.C.E. He gives me the joy of his statement that he finds equal pleasure in dressing up as a Gentleman. He does that well, too. He also tells many: "S.P.I.C.E. is E.R. for CDSO's."

A lifetime friend, not an Atlanta native, told of ordering a Martini when newly arrived in that town 25 years ago and being asked if he wanted a "reg'lar or DEluxe Martini." "What's a DEluxe Martini, y'gits 'grits'." (That's what he told us!)
Editor



TO YOUR LIFE!

Ups and Downs

by Julie Freeman

The fourth and last of a series.

For most of us, when we are presented with something different or unusual, it takes a period of time to adjust. We may feel that the normal situation is for one to start out skeptical or even negative and then as time goes on to slowly adjust and then if all goes well become very positive. Sort of like a diet. We may start out with a goal of losing 25 pounds and according to the diet charts, we should see a steady decline of perhaps two pounds a week. Right? Wrong!!

We all know that in spite of good intentions and stringent dietary habits, those pounds do not disappear at a steady rate. Rather, we experience ups and downs. One week we may lose the two pounds if we are lucky. Then, the next week, instead of losing, we gain a pound. We become frustrated and depressed and may decide why bother. Perhaps if we were to recognize that human behaviors, whether physical or emotional, are like bicycling over hill and dale, rather than climbing steadily uphill or coasting downhill, we would be more successful.

And that is the way it is with accepting crossdressing. I thought when I was first exposed to the phenomenon that slowly over time I would become more and more tolerant and understanding, like cycling steadily uphill. Eventually I would reach the top and be the most understanding wife in the community!

It was to my chagrin to find that it did not work that way. Some weeks I found myself supportive and encouraging. Attending gender events were

not a problem. Shopping was fun. But then, surprisingly, a few weeks later I found myself angry and resentful. I felt if I had to discuss clothes and make-up one more time, I would scream.

It has helped me to realize that situations in our lives are a series of ups and downs -- that it is unrealistic to expect total support of any activity, not just crossdressing. It is all right and even normal to supportive one week and non-supportive another. We do not have to feel guilty if sometimes we get tired of the whole thing. Sometimes too much can be too much.

Perhaps if all of us, crossdressers and significant others, realize that it is okay to be negative at times, it would make life easier for all of us.



The Sweetheart Connection is published four times yearly. No boundary trashing. No bashing of any kind.

Our guideline for every issue will be that which shapes productive resolution to many problems:

1. What is going on?
2. Who's in charge?
3. What do you want?
4. Where do we go from here?

Each quarterly issue will deal with all four questions but will focus on one question in turn.

Subscription costs are: \$12 yearly for four issues, or a wife/partner may join Tri-Ess separately from her partner for a cost of \$10. She will receive membership and the Sweetheart Connection. If she chooses to receive The Femme Mirror, her annual cost will be \$25. Letters, comments and articles are encouraged and may be sent to the editor:

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Emote-icons

as used on CDSO, etc...

For those of you who are just starting to 'play' with e-mail, one of the major problems with the venue is the inability to pick up on voice tone, facial expressions or body language, a major if subtle aspect of communication. Some clever people have developed "emoticons"; combinations of key strokes that create those little 'faces' that appear in text. They are meant to represent various humors, as:

:-) [smile]
;-) [wink]
:-([sadness]
~(:-o [surprise]
:-> [tongue in cheek]
/:-) [raised eyebrow]
>:-) [punk rocker];
\'-[[suspicion]
)-[[grimace]
]-[[as in YUCK!]
&))-->-- [a rose]
#)-->-- [a carnation]

then there's:

@@@(-:) [Marge Simpson]

And finally, one woman who signs herself:

~>^..^<~ CAT

Editor



How to Keep Your Marriage Happy and Stop Troubles Before They Start

John Gottman, Ph.D.
University of Washington
Bottom Line Personal
March 1, 1998 issue; Vol. 19, No. 5

Traditional marriage counseling focuses on repairing longstanding problems. Most troubled couples wait an average of six years before they seek help.

A new approach is to teach relationship skills early, before negative habits become entrenched and destructive.

At the Seattle Marital and Family Institute, we have studied hundreds of couples to see what leads some to happiness and others to break up. Based on our research, we have developed techniques to strengthen marriages and help spouses deal with conflict.

MARRIAGE EDUCATION

Balanced marital ecology. Critical to any marriage is a healthy relationship between positive and negative emotions toward each other. In case after case, we have found that the ideal ratio is five times as many positive feelings as negative ones.

This ratio of positive to negative feelings not nurtures your relationship but also builds up your emotional reserves when arguments and will feelings strike — as they do in any close relationship.

Important: Don't expect to eliminate all negative emotions toward your spouse. Couples need to air and resolve disagreements. Most stable couples see their conflicts not as divisive but as shared and

strengthening experiences.

Some negativity may also help keep sexual passion alive as couples first withdraw and then renew their affection.

Accentuate the positive. To keep your own positive ratio high, don't allow everyday tasks and commitments to crowd out thoughtfulness, affection and closeness. Give thoughtful compliments...call each other during the day just to check in...and share private time together.

Consciously appreciating your spouse's good qualities also helps you maintain the vital positive-negative ratio when negativity appears. Helpful...

List your partner's positive contributions to your life together. Reflect on how much harder life would be without those contributions.

When you find yourself mentally criticizing your mate, "interrupt" your thinking with those contributions.

Dispel negative feelings after a disagreement by looking through vacation picture albums or remembering your best times together...even reading old love letters.

See the relationship as half-full rather than as half-empty to defuse potentially irritating situations.

Example: If your partner leaves dirty dishes in the sink for several nights in a row, don't blow up. Think of all the other things he/she does to help the house run smoothly.

Complain without being critical. Voicing grievances is healthy and positive in a marriage. Attacking your spouse's character is not.

Important: Criticism often begins with the word you, as in, "You're too irresponsible to call when you're going to be late."

Blaming and accusing leads to anger and resentment.

Better: Complaints that begin with the word I and deal strictly with the specific behavior you would like

changed. Addressing an issue rather than a character flaw allows room for discussion.

Example: "I wish you had let me know you wouldn't be home on time."

Contempt, which goes beyond criticism to insults, name-calling, hostile humor and mockery, must be completely banned from marital discussions.

You can guard against the temptation to voice contempt by not seeing arguments as a way to retaliate or exhibit moral superiority.

Instead of criticism, contempt and kitchen sinking — dragging a multitude of grievances into an argument — I advocate gentle confrontation.

This involves emphasizing that you love your spouse and that your complaint concerns behavior he can, indeed, change. You can also say that you are bringing up the issue only to strengthen your relationship.

Structure your arguments. When arguments intensify, both spouses may experience emotional flooding — sharply elevated heart rate and blood pressure...and increased adrenaline secretion.

All stimulate a fight-or-flight reaction — an attack or a defensive withdrawal. That is always fatal to mutual understanding or problem solving.

Helpful: Put a 15-minute limit on arguments. If either of you feels flooded, call a 20-minute time-out.

Since continued negative thoughts and feelings of revenge will

From the Bard...

"You are much deceived; in nothing am I changed but my garments."

Edgar, "King Lear"

"Yea, verily, can this be soothe indeed?" L.

Gender Aware Alert

by Shannon

This may be a bit off the subject but then again, maybe not. It was an uplift for me and I thought I'd share it:

A gender-aware alert. This is just an extreme example of the negative repercussions of the social constructs of gender. (Shannon reports that most of her data came from the University of Washington, the rest were her own observations. Ed.)

Did You Know...

If shop mannequins were real women, they'd be too thin to menstruate.

There are three billion women who do not look like supermodels and only eight who do.

Marilyn Monroe wore a size 12.

If "Barbie" were a real woman, she'd have to walk on all fours due to her proportions.

The average American woman weighs 144 pounds and wears between a size 12 and 14.

One out of every four college aged women has an eating disorder.

The models in the magazines are airbrushed -- they are not perfect!

A psychological study in 1995 found that three minutes spent looking at models in a fashion magazine caused 70% of women to feel depressed, guilty and shameful.

only reinforce flooding, we stress self-soothing during the time out.

Example: Say to yourself, "We have a good marriage" or, "We still love each other."

When both of you are calm, continue the discussion for another 15 minutes.

Communicate nondefensively. When you react defensively, you unintentionally sidetrack arguments rather than resolve them. In addition, the stonewalling defense of silence and withdrawal usually leads the blocked spouse to attack harder in hopes of getting through.

Instead, use two strategies...conflictive speech and — what we call — validating.

Non-defensive speech cools down the argument and helps both parties feel more positive. Even if you can't give sincere praise and admiration, really listening signals that you understand your partners feelings, even if you don't share them. Example: "That's a good point."

Validating — or verbally empathizing with your spouse's emotions and viewpoint — encourages discussion, openness and sharing. The non-validating statement, "You always ignore me when you come home from work," separates you further. The validating approach, "I understand you're tired after work but I would still like feel you're happy to see me," helps bring you together.

Bottom Line/Personal interviewed John Gottman, Ph.D., professor of psychology at University of Washington in Seattle and codirector of the Seattle Marital and Family Institute, Box 15644, Seattle, 98115. He is author of *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail...and How You Can Make Yours Last* (Fireside \$12.)

Turn Stumbling

Blocks into

Stepping Stones

at S.P.I.C.E.

Models who twenty years ago weighed eight percent less than the average woman, today weigh twenty-three percent less.

There is no sense in our generation of women and future generations of women killing themselves to look thin. We're simply being lied to. Love yourself for who you are, not what you look like.

Slow Connection

Last quarter's Connection [Winter] was delayed somewhat as the United States Postal Service Bulk Mail Center played yet another game of "not good enough" with your editor. This did not make me a happy camper.

Determined NOT to return, I left all with the GMF clerk and arranged a personal appointment with the same people who had originally cleared, approved and issued our permit over a year ago. This time it turned into a full conference. All was in order. I asked for a letter to carry for the "next time", but was assured such would not be needed; they would prefer to take care of it "in house". We'll see.

Let's Talk... About Committed Relationships

Marsha and Richard Miller

Our early experiences in the gender community were designed to let Rachel spread her newly found wings. We discovered many ways to incorporate her "flying lessons" into our daily routine. These lessons helped to reduce the intense need to cross-dress that Richard had been experiencing before he told me about it. While the intensity has gradually subsided, I have come to realize that the desire to cross-dress would always be a part of Richard and hence of our lives together. Now that the issue is in the open, that can happen at a much more manageable level.

While helping Rachel to grow, we were unexpectedly drawn into sharing our experiences with other couples to help them work through similar cross-dressing issues. We felt reasonably well equipped to help because we have had many positive experiences in dealing with these issues in our own lives. As we talked with other couples, we

were surprised to discover that while cross-dressing is generally presented as THE PROBLEM, there are frequently much more fundamental issues at work. This situation was clearly demonstrated at a conference we attended a few years ago when a lovely couple, Barbara and George, sought advice on how to handle their situation.

I was speaking with Barbara who was in a long term live-in relationship with George although they had no marriage plans. She said he was very comfortable with his feminine side and was extremely open about displaying it within their community where he was well known. He was so comfortable that he wanted to be "en femme" full time. She was having difficulty with the rapid growth of his coming out of the closet and wanted him to slow down. He refused to discuss the matter, and she didn't know how to get him to do so. She wanted them to get counseling from a local therapist who was experienced with gender questions.

Meanwhile, the two guys were having a similarly intense conversation. Richard was aware of Barbara's concerns and related them to George. He suggested talking with Barbara about the issues if George

wanted to salvage the relationship. George's response unveiled the underlying problem, "But I'm not sure if I want the relationship!"

No wonder they couldn't work things out. George knew he wanted to openly cross-dress. For reasons quite separate from that, he didn't know if he wanted to continue being with Barbara. In his mind the solution was a classic no-brainer -- pursue the cross-dressing full speed ahead, ignore the other issues and don't slow down to discuss any of it with anyone especially not Barbara.

Barbara knew she wanted the relationship. She knew cross-dressing was an integral part of George. She didn't want to stop it but did want a voice in its speed and direction. She thought this was their major problem and had assumed that he wanted the relationship. Richard and I had assumed that as well. We were all wrong.

There is an assumption in our community that cross-dressing is the only real issue and we seldom look beyond that seemingly obvious fact. In reality the true issues might extend much deeper. If a relationship is in trouble, cross-dressing is a great excuse to scuttle the sinking ship and it can go down as fast as the

Titanic.

While it is difficult, an important step is to take a critical view of the relationship itself. Try to set aside the cross-dressing issue for the moment and ask yourself if you have a solid foundation. Are there other important issues that haven't been resolved? Are you working on them together? Can you talk to each other about them? Do you need a professional therapist?

This is check point #1 on the long road towards mutual acceptance. How sound is the structure of your lives together? If you determine that the foundation is solid, you can move safely forward to deal with cross-dressing and know that you have something to build on. If the foundation shows cracks and fissures, you need to undertake structural repairs first. We all like to move on quickly and get to the bottom line but that isn't possible until the basics are addressed. Get whatever help you need to resolve the basic issues because any shortcuts here will undermine all your other efforts.

Richard and I were talkers and more importantly listeners from the very beginning. We were friends long before we became romantically involved. That willingness to discuss issues is one of the most enduring

and stabilizing parts of our marriage. It carries us through the difficult times that are part of everyone's life. We still talk regularly and schedule a breakfast out at a nice restaurant each month to discuss issues. Cross-dressing is only one of the many things discussed at these sessions. We also schedule a date each month without any friends or relatives so we can have time by ourselves. The need to talk about issues and work on our relationship never ends but the effort yields great rewards.

We can build upon foundations anywhere, if they are well and truly laid.

Ivy Compton-Burnett

It takes time and commitment but we all have the skills needed to create a strong foundation and then build upon it. It's our choice. It's your choice too.



"When we start with the conclusion and search backward for the evidence to support it, we cross from thought to dogma."

Greg Esterbrook
U.S. News & World Report
(Nov. 11, '97, pg. 11)

I don't ask for much in a man...

He only has to be tall, rich, funny, sexy,

single, strong,
good looking,
smart, romantic,
charming, warm,

sweet, sensitive, clever, athletic,
kind, generous, punctual, sincere,

and of course he has to be
willing to feed me ice cream in bed
every night for the rest of my life...



A spouse's rocky rough road can be made smoother at



JULY 15-19, 1998
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

History of Divorce

As wives and partners struggle to accommodate the needs and desires of families and husbands who also crossdress, the dis-satisfactions and frustrations can mount to a point of wondering about just "chucking it all" and "getting rid of the baggage"... or, divorce. The March '98, issue of *The Smithsonian* has a fascinating article on the history of divorce by Barbara Holland called "the Long Good-bye". The following excerpts may make you feel better about our "scandalous" ways.

It was not quite two years ago in July that a judge in London divorced HRH the Prince of Wales from HRH the Princess of Wales. But by then, divorcing royals were nothing new. In 1936, Prince Charles' great-uncle declared he could not rule as king of England without the thrice divorced "woman he loved" by his side. He had to leave England and live in exile for the rest of his life, for the British first family's main function was to set a good example for everybody else.

Since then, people -- particularly conservative moralists -- tend to think that people were more virtuous, chaste and dutiful before the scandalous ways of the late 20th century. These same idealists hope to "revive a past when people got married and stayed there, smilin' through, taking the rough with the smooth, till death did them part."

"Poke around in the past and

it turns out that divorce in one form or another is roughly the same age as marriage." About 1700 B.C., the Code of Hammurabi allowed a woman divorce if her husband 'degraded' her; she keep the dowry, personal property and kids too, which he had to pay to support. In most times and places, however, divorce was strictly a man's option.

With the spread of monotheism, it was understood that a man needed a variety of women for several reasons, for a woman one man per lifetime was enough. Besides, the wife was the man's personal property; she could no more divorce him than could his cow or his chair.

Fringe societies were a bit more lenient. Before Islam, a Bedouin woman could have more than one husband at a time and get rid of one by simply turning her tent doorway to face away from him. A Pueblo Indian wife could set her man's moccasins out on the doorstep, meaning "Begone!"

Roman women had two kinds of marriage -- manu, where full power over her was transferred from father to husband -- or with manu, meaning "she still belonged to Daddy". The husband could even sell the children, if he needed money. It wasn't until Constantine made it a crime in the fourth century, for a father to kill the kids without cause.

When the "barbarians" took over the crumbling empire, a lot of laws and customs crumbled with it. Baby girls might not survive beyond birth if there was a surplus. In a shortage, the "bride price" counted. While there were a few men who could afford to "buy" several wives or

concubines, female adultery could get her killed; at best, sent to live on her own in the wilderness.

As Christianity grew, so did the idea of monogamy applying to men as well as women. Radical! King Henry the Eighth was not the first to do battle with bishops about divorce, Lothair was hot for Waldrada and Pope Nicholas told him he couldn't marry Waldrada even if Lothair killed his current wife Theutberga. After eight years, both women entered convents, leaving Lothair to die without heirs and his kingdom to be carved up by his uncles and cousins. The archbishop of Reims, Hincmar, held the case up as a warning to all men: Marriage is forever.

This led, in the 18th century, to men either "vanishing" or unable to afford that, would sell his wife to another man. Read Thomas Hardy's "The Mayor of Casterbridge". Some wives were sold at auction. Usually it was some kind of pre-arrangement.

Here in this country, divorce was legal only in New England, a "shockingly immoral place." After the Revolutions, here and France, women had a brief respite of divorce by mutual consent. The Code of Napoleon returned wives to the state of chattel. If she was unfaithful, she got two years in prison; if he was, it was just his lifestyle.

Things got even stickier during Victoria's time. SHE was so happy with Albert, she assumed every body else should be as dedicated to the status quo of family life. It took years of hard "lobbying" and much writing on the part of Caroline Norton to get the law to allow a woman to keep

any future money she could earn after divorce.

It wasn't until 1931, when Nevada, smelling money, set up a residency requirement of just six weeks to allow a woman to get a divorce. A woman on alimony was the equivalent of a "welfare queen" in the popular mind. Statistics still affirm that a divorced man's standard of living improves by 42 percent, while a woman's tends to sink by 73 percent. Nowadays, the romantic notion of marital fidelity is supported by not enough time or money to really fool around. Divorce is cheap and quick almost everywhere, but half of the married people tend to stay together, "for richer, for poorer, till death do them part." Things may be better than ever.



(actual size)

This Antiqued Pewter lapel pin was designed and made exclusively for S.P.I.C.E. It will be available at the conference in room #434 and can be bought for just \$10.00.

Provided for sale by Beta Gamma Chapter, all profits will be donated to the S.P.I.C.E. Scholarship fund.

**put some SPICE
on your lapel !**

Society and Me

Bev Rencher

Blame [usually] gets us nowhere...but, I think it is a lot more than the "attitude and behavior of the woman with the CDer"...or society. It is more about our "expectations" of what marriage, men, husbands, etc. [are or could be]. Of course our needs were formed by society. Society is where we live. It gives us a lot of "beneficial" guidelines. Be polite, shake hands, tip the waitress... If we have been functional in society, there is really no reason to question it. If we are an "accepted" group in society, why would we rock the boat? Most of this is on an unconscious level anyway. I have always felt rather comfortable with "me". I raised my kids, had a good job, paid cash for my home...and NEVER ONCE did I question the validity of myself as a woman. I was. I am, and I intend to remain so.

In my experience with society, I quietly acquiesced to the rules. In fact, it was automatic! I had no homicidal urges, no fringe behaviors. Society served me well by teaching me how to live in the real world.

Along comes the man I married. He hesitantly tells me about this "little" habit he has. "Society" has taught me to be understanding, allow others to express themselves a "I" would like to express myself, etc. So, in all innocence and great sincerity, I tell him, "sure, not a problem." And I BELIEVE IT. I am a good person; I am most certainly a liberal. What I am not prepared for is the "reality" of it. To see my husband (of only one month by the way) in "sleeze drag" -- it had nothing to do with society -- it was gut level, intense, horrible white hot rage! How DARE you marry me, knowing this about yourself! How

DARE you try to imitate a woman! How dare you, how dare you, how dare you!

I remember it well. I never thought I would get over it. I never thought our marriage could be "saved". It totally exploded my expectations and the unwritten agenda that goes with marriage. HE is supposed to be the man. I am supposed to be the woman.

And then, I had to question my own "gender". Hmmm; what in the world; how could "I" have fallen in love with a man that does this? Is there something wrong with me? There must be "something" masculine about me that attracts a man like this. What am "I" doing wrong? I'm too old for this! I know how "I" am, I think, etc., etc. You get the idea.

The issue of crossdressing for the crossdresser and the issue of crossdressing for the partner is so complex and intense, that it is enough to say that no ONE answer can fit the circumstances. I don't think that society is to blame. I don't think that "boorish" behavior is to blame. It just "is". Our emotions that go along with it -- they just "are". They are as real and valid as the coffee table you crack your shin on in the meddle of the night, regardless of the source of them. Bev.

We are pleased to learn and happy to announce that Ms. Rencher will join us in Atlanta for S.P.I.C.E. VI and are excited about the opportunity to meet this remarkable lady in person!

Editor

"It's a shame," Julia [Child] once said, "to be caught up in something that doesn't absolutely make you tremble with joy."

The New Yorker
Oct. 13, '97; pg. 90

The Female Brain

From the May '98, issue of the
Ladies' Home Journal
Editor

Research has finally proved what we've suspected all along: women really do use more of their brains than men do. This article offers the latest scientific findings.

While women's brains tend to run 10 to 15 percent smaller than a man's, the regions dedicated to the higher cognitive functions are more densely packed with neurons. MRI's reveal that more areas of a woman's brain "light up" than a man's, even when the simplest of tasks are undertaken. It is thought that the bridge of fibers running down the center of the brain, the corpus callosum, is thicker in women than in men, allowing more crosstalk between the emotional intuitive right hemisphere and the rational, just-the-facts left.

With compartmentalized brains, men are better able to focus intensely. That which was needed to defend territory, find food, find a female. Women, as mothers, needed to be ready to go in all directions in order to protect her young.

Emotions

Women's brains respond to emotions, especially sadness, over an area eight times greater

than men's. This tends to confirm what psychologists have been telling us for years: relationships are more important to women, which in turn may make us more vulnerable to depression.

Women's brains can also detect others' emotions more accurately.

When fully relaxed [thinking of nothing] men's brains tend to "idle" in what is sometimes called the old or "reptilian" brain, which gives rise to active expressions of emotion; i.e. aggression and violence. Females tend to "idle" in the higher brain; the newer limbic system which relates to symbolic expression, as gestures and words.

Girls have a way with words and catch on to using them sooner, faster and in more circumstances, probably because they use both sides of their brain while boys tend to use only the left. This comes in handy when women are recovering from stroke or brain injury.

Speculation on incomplete data is that the pleasures of sex may originate in a different part of the brain for women than men.

This difference in brain "wiring" and use may be why women navigate differently than men, and are unafraid to ask directions if lost. Men may have an edge in spatial tasks over women. [He can park a mini-van in a space women would declare too small]

Even sight and sound are handled differently between men and women. Female hearing is more sensitive as is also her sight.

Males sight will not deteriorate as early as females as they age, but men's hearing does go before the women's.

A unique way of cross-filing images and information in memory banks give women the edge, and they keep it longer into age. Add to that the fact that female brains tend to age more slowly than the male's, who tend to steadily lose frontal lobe volume from age 18 to 45. This leads to not only poorer memory but less ability to pay attention – and greater irritability. [Grumpier old men.]

A partial explanation may be that women tend to gear down the metabolic rate of use of brain glucose, while men keep revving the engine – possibly because of testosterone's influence. Trade out – females are three times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. [Estrogen replacement therapy may reduce the risk and delay the symptoms.]

Then there is "women's intuition", the skill acquired probably because of all that "crosstalk" between left brain rationality and right brain emotionality. With less lateralized brains, better access to both hemispheres enable them to perceive quickly what's happening and ask themselves: What should I say now?

Current geological giggle:

STOP
Plate Tectonics

Is Your Computer Male or Female?

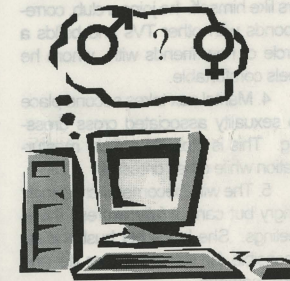
From the CDSO

Is your computer male or female? As you are aware, ships have long been characterized as being female (e.g., "Steady as she goes," or "She's listing to starboard, Captain!")

Recently, a group of computer scientists (all males) announced that computers should also be referred to as being female. Their reasons for drawing this conclusion follow:

Five reasons to believe computers are female

- ☒ No one but the Creator understands their internal logic
- ☒ The native language they use to communicate with



other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else

- ☒ The message "Bad command or file name" is about as informative as "If you don't know why I'm mad at you, then I'm certainly not going to tell you."
- ☒ Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval
- ☒ As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

However, another group of computer scientists (all female) think that computers should be referred to as if they were male. Their reasons follow:

Five reasons to believe computers are male

- ☒ They have a lot of data, but are still clueless
- ☒ They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they are the problem
- ☒ As soon as you commit to one you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have obtained a better model
- ☒ In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on
- ☒ Big power surges knock them out for the rest of the night



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From Richard Docter's 1988 book "Transvestites and Transsexuals, 'Jackie' offers a digest of PATTERNS OF MARITAL ADJUSTMENT. First of four in a series. Editor

Wives of Transvestites

Let us consider how some of the tactics we have observed TV couples attempting to use in their efforts to live with actively practiced transvestism by the husband. We shall do this by describing several patterns of adaptation or interactive "games" enduring over an extended period. Two important preliminary points are these: First most couples employ a combination of games. Second, marital success is obviously not dependent merely upon how the cross dressing is managed. Most important is the basic character of the marital relationship and the quality of personal adjustment seen in the partners as well as their commitment to each other.

The Isolation Game

The tactics of the isolation game call for each partner to withdraw and seek satisfaction elsewhere. It involves much denial of real problems

and feeling. There is much cover-up, lying, and deception on the part of the husband. Intimacy is lost. Mutual commitments are diminished. The partners attempt to isolate transvestism by pretending that it does not exist. Here are the main elements of this game:

1. Each partner attempts to deny the reality of cross dressing and this behavior is separated and isolated from the wife through secret sessions of transvestism. The husband fabricates reasons for absences from home and for money spent on cross dressing.
2. there is little meaningful communication about feelings, frustrations, sexuality or cross dressing.
3. the husband searches for others like himself. he joins a club, corresponds with other TVs and builds a circle of new friends with whom he feels comfortable.
4. Marital sex takes second place to sexuality associated cross dressing. This is typically solitary masturbation while cross dressed.
5. The wife becomes increasingly angry but cannot fully express these feelings. She holds her husband responsible for damaging her life and their marriage.

6. The husband is less angry and frustrated as he finds new ways to express his transvestism. His new interests, new friends, and new ways to spend time and money take priority over investments in his wife. He cannot understand why she has become so resentful and angry.

7. Often the couple remained married, especially when there are children involved, but the relationship is not very rewarding to either partner.

8. Each may look toward a long term goal of divorce, for example, when the children are out of the family, following retirement, or at some other time of major life reorganization.

9. When there is a divorce and remarriage by the husband, it is usually to a woman far more informed and able to tolerate transvestism than was the earlier wife. Not infrequently, a new wife is selected who is to some extent sexually aroused by cross dressing. Little is known about the success of second marriages by TVs.

10. In rare cases, when the partners are strongly committed to each other and share many common interests, the isolation game can help mask the problems of cross dressing. The irritation of transvestism is avoided by pretending it does not exist.



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