

WHAT DOES EVERY WOMAN WANT?

By BERNIE SIEGEL, MD

Many years ago a childhood friend of mine, due to a gambling addiction, got into a difficult situation involving some very significant debts. One day he shared with me that the organized crime group involved had threatened to break every bone in his body or worse if he did not pay up. He said when he told them he had no funds available and asked if he could repay the debt in some other way he was told that if he married the crime lord's daughter they would let him off.

He said the offer was made because she was an ugly witch you could smell a mile away. The problem was that, unbeknownst to the underworld characters involved, my friend was already married. He said he felt there was no hope for him and his addiction would cost him his life. At this point I volunteered to marry the witch and save him. He argued but I persisted and to make a long story short the marriage was arranged and a few weeks later the witch and I were wed at a big blast in a well known New York Hotel.

I did the best I could to put on a pleasant face for the evening but as it grew late I told my bride I needed to go to our hotel room and get some rest and she agreed to come with me. When we got to the room I went into the bathroom to catch my breath and try to figure out how I was going to manage to just get through the night; let alone the years that lay ahead of us. After spending as much time as I could in hiding I stepped out of the bathroom to find a beautiful woman sitting on the edge of the bed.

“Where's my wife?”

“It's me. Now that you are my husband I can reveal to you that a spell was cast upon me. I am a beautiful woman for twelve hours and a witch for twelve hours. Now that you are my husband my schedule is your choice. I can be beautiful during the day and impress the neighbors or at night for your pleasure. Tell me what you would prefer.”

I knew from my mother's wisdom that there was only one correct answer and I shared it with her, “Do what will make you happy.”

She answered, “You have freed me from the spell. I can be beautiful twenty four hours a day now.” And she has for over fifty years.

What does every woman want? Yes, a life of her own! Several years ago my wife and I were speaking in a southern city and we interact as we would at home. My wife, Bobbie, is free to correct me and has her time on stage. I could feel the hostility in the audience towards my wife and me. Later when talking to one of the women I knew, she said the hostility had to do with the relationship they saw my wife and I display. They were confusing the place of politeness versus submissiveness. And because they had become submissive in their marriages they had internalized their anger and were expressing it towards me.

It is vital for women who want to remain healthy to do what feels right so that it is not an intellectual decision as to whether you have a career or become a housewife. I have a drawing by a woman entitled, "Will the real me please stand up." She drew a picture of herself split down the middle with half being the professional me holding a black purse and the other half the mommy me holding her daughter's hand. It doesn't take an art therapist to see who is smiling and who is frowning and which one her heart desires to be. So do not wait for a life threatening illness to give you permission to go home and be with your child. I will also add that if the desire of others imposes the life of a homemaker upon you and you want to be a lawyer or opera singer then again, do what makes you happy.

If you have twin sisters; one of whom always strives to please her parents, make everyone happy by doing whatever they want and be a good girl who internalizes anger while her sister is a little devil who drives everyone nuts and expresses her feelings guess who is more likely to develop breast cancer, autoimmune diseases and more. Of course everyone answers the good girl and studies show you are correct.

Relationships help women to live longer than men, and married men longer than single men, with the same cancers but relationships are not meant to make you submissive or lead to an attitude of, "I'll make this marriage or job work if it kills me." Think of a relationship as an ordeal or a struggle. My wife does because she knows $1+1=3$. That is when two people get together they create a third entity, the marriage or relationship of any type.

Relationships are work because they relate to creating a third entity and are not about personal benefits. How to decide what to do relates to your health. If the relationship is affecting your health then I would say to eliminate it and love from a distance. However, if your health is not at risk then ask yourself how could love resolve this dilemma? Love is a weapon I recommend. You can kill with kindness, torment with tenderness and become blind to faults, with love.

I learned the power of love years ago after an accident. I fell off our roof when a ladder broke and hit my head on the pavement. I developed amnesia due to the injury and it improved our marriage dramatically. When my memory returned I sought marriage counseling. The therapist handed me a piece of paper and said, "Read this and do what it says and save yourself a lot of time and money." What she handed me was Corinthians 1:13. I have been working at it ever since and it has provided me with thirty five wonderful years of married life and thirty five out of fifty two isn't too bad.

So construct your life out of the bricks of love but never forget to use humor as the cement which helps to hold the bricks together. I will also prescribe a dog or cat for you and do not ever let the child in you die. They will create healing relationships and teach you to live in the moment.