

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2007

What's on women's minds?

Communication between women in any form, whether it's by speeches, books, poetry, movies, music, conversations over lunch and, yes, newspaper and magazine print, is our medium to teach, learn, embrace and then complete the cycle all over again so that the next generation is better prepared to live life to the fullest.

That's why I figured I'd call this column "Generations" with the hope that it will provide another vehicle to merge the older generation with the younger one to build an even better future for all of us.

Not an easy task, granted, but a starting point. So, to figure out where to start, I asked myself, "What topics are most important to young women today?" An unlikely answer came one morning a few weeks ago when digging



Generations

Peg DeMarco

in to the day's computer work and listening to the news on a nearby television, my ears perked up when I caught the tail end of the anchorman asking the same question. And not only did he have a surprising answer, but he had facts and figures to support it.

He proceeded to cite poll results taken from some think tank somewhere on the globe. He started at number 10, which I think was the Iraq war, and counted down to the final two responses. Yes, finding true love and Mr. Right were right up there, close to the top like I figured they would be, but surprisingly Mr. Right had slipped to the number two slot and losing weight had, for the first time in pollsters' history, nudged him off the throne he had occupied for generations.

Losing weight? Surely not more important than finding a significant other, a soul mate, the love of one's life ... or was it? Had handsome princes on white steeds, promising to rescue fair maidens, got sidetracked along the way? Had it become wiser to pursue something more tangible like losing weight than to search for something that some of us never had the opportunity to enjoy?

Perhaps this generation had figured out what mine spent years, lifetimes, trying to figure out: that Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White were wonderful stories but that we, as women, don't need to depend on a prince to rescue us from anything.

The smart women today are cautious to give their hearts away too easily and that's a good thing. They don't expect

PLEASE SEE GENERATIONS, C6

GENERATIONS: On the brain

FROM PAGE C1

perfection because they know how elusive it truly is, including what they expect from their soul mates. They've determined on their own that true love grows and is nurtured on a daily basis rather than something that hits you between the eyes and lasts for the amount of time that it takes to grab a snack during a commercial break.

So, if the new generation is so smart, what could someone from my generation offer? I thought about it a long time. As a writer of romance novels where the heroine struggles to get the guy of her dreams in 250-plus pages, I usually end the book with her and her true love galloping off into the sunset. But I'd like to think that my heroines have more than just amazing luck or an author that knows a book sells better with a happy ending. What may not be so apparent in the lines of print is that through trials, tribulations and self-examination, a true heroine knows that she can't fall in love with anyone else until she first learns to love herself.

Now I don't mean developing a narcissistic personality and hurting everyone in one's quest for happiness. Nor do I mean acting selfishly and stepping on someone else to get ahead, especially another woman who is struggling to find herself, too.

What I try to convey in my books is that my heroines learn how to love themselves by accepting who they are graciously and refusing to do something that could have chipped away at their integrity even if it seemed innocent or easy.

They realized, perhaps halfway through the book, that no one's perfect and that it was okay to make mistakes because that's how a person grows. And, in the final pages, they knew that even though they won the men of their dreams, no one was responsible for their happiness but themselves.

Even with all the pitfalls I put them in for interesting

www.morganton.com

PEG DEMARCO is the author of two novels and manages a marketing/editing business in Morganton. E-mail her at pegdemarco@earthlink.net.

reading, they never thought they were alone even if indeed they were. They were comfortable with solitude, not afraid of it. And, finally, they learned how to be content in their own skin and satisfied that they had done their best.

You don't have to be a heroine in a book to figure out that the most amazing thing you can do is to learn how to love yourself — it's within us all. It just seems to take longer for some of us to get to that stage, but it's not impossible.

The wonderful, knowledgeable British conducted a study in one of those tiny villages where its kinfolk were monitored and came up with ten steps to happiness. Add this to the above, and I can't leave you with anything more important:

1. plant something and nurture it
2. count your blessings — at least five — at the end of each day
3. take time to talk — have an hour-long conversation with a loved one each week
4. phone a friend whom you have not spoken to for a while and arrange to meet up
5. give yourself a treat every day and take the time to really enjoy it
6. have a good laugh at least once a day
7. get physical — exercise for half an hour three times a week
8. smile at and/or say hello to a stranger at least once each day
9. cut your TV viewing by half
10. spread some kindness — do a good turn for someone every day.

Now, I realize No. 9 is pretty difficult, but take comfort in No. 5. However, there is a caveat to indulging too much indulgence. It may result in supposedly the No. 1 topic on women's minds today — losing weight — but let's save that subject for another column.