

The Sweetheart Connection

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Volume 7, Issue 2

Myth:
**Loving
Couples
Never Ever
Fight**
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S.P.I.C.E.

VII

July 14-18,

1999

Minneapolis, MN

A

Wilderness Adventure

Adventure

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Should I go to S.P.I.C.E. ? or... "What's in it for me?"

"Could be the best S.P.I.C.E. ever ..." such are the enthusiastic responses from those planning this July's event in Minneapolis.

The Sheraton Airport Inn is small (123 rooms), gracious, friendly and warm; perfect for the relaxation of conference attendees after an intense day of personal problem solving. The cocktail lounge is ideal for nurturing small groups of new friends and acquaintances.

After Johns Hopkins closed their clinic, the University of Minnesota's Program in Human Sexuality took up the slack. That staff, which Walter Bockting has gathered for **SPICE**, is arguably one of the most uniquely qualified to work with you and your spouse's issues and concerns.

We'll start **Wednesday** with canoeing lessons and a beach/picnic party at nearby Fort Snelling State Park. Beta Gamma Chapter members will meet and transport you to the fun, then host a "Shore Dinner" under a big tent at the beach.

Charles Prince (co-founder of Tri-Ess) will open our conference **Thursday**. We'll form "Campfire" bonding circles, break for lunch, then get to work with Sara Mize and Walter, who will help us Launch our

Wilderness Adventure, Find our Compasses and Portages and help us Cross them (assess our feelings and how the activity of Cding impacts our relationships)

Friday morning will be devoted to "Steering our Canoes", sex and sexuality with Walter and Meg Striepe. That afternoon is "Free" time: shop the "Mall of America" (1 block away) Tour the city or the University Arboretum with Beta Gamma escorts. Return for dinner and the stories of Robert and Onnalee: "Whereda hegahwee?"

Saturday, we'll hear from the children and learn how to "Paddle our own Canoe" (take responsibility for our actions). After Lunch, working with Walter and Dianne Stellrecht, we'll read our Lake Maps (set some realistic goals) and get a fresh perspective, then close with "Making a Good Camp" — or — Where do we go from here?

"The Last Paddle" will finish with a Banquet. Awards, Dr. Peggy Rudd, followed by more humor and music as we bid adieu to old and new friends.

Rev. Gary Helms will consider "Return to Reality... or leaving it?" **Sunday morning** after our farewell breakfasts.

We give you the joy of it!

A Wilderness Adventure (?)

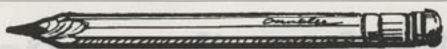
Feeling up the creek? Not even sure you have a canoe, much less a paddle? Come to **S.P.I.C.E. VII**, outfitters supreme for the Wilderness Adventure of your life. Learn how to: read the maps of transgenderism, plan a safe and even enjoyable trip through the wilderness; how to find and negotiate those difficult portages and rapids of life; develop good survival skills and learn what it takes to make a "happy camp".

Our experienced and professional "guides" will be lead by Walter Bockting, PhD., and his staff from PHS of the University of Minnesota.

Our leading keynote speaker will be **Charles Prince**, formally known as *Virginia*, the co-founder of Tri-Ess and a major promoter of the idea of **S.P.I.C.E.**

Men who are cross-dressers may attend, but — for the comfort of the women attending, **NO CROSSDRESSING IS ALLOWED.**

Editor's Blue Pencil



"Well, if I had a lot of money,
I'll tell you what I'd do:
Get you all up North;

Put you in a canoe...
'Cuz I'm crazy for canoe trips
And "reality breaks";

Yeah, I'm crazy 'bout canoe trips
And cruisin' up n' down the lakes!

This was sung to the tune of
Alan Jackson's Ford Truck TV
commercial at the Sixth SPICE in
Atlanta, '98, by yours truly and a
couple of cronies.

I admit it. I am hung up on
the North woods of Minnesota
and the Boundary Waters Canoe
Area in particular. AND I still
prefer those wonderful aluminum
canoes that Grumman used to
make.

A little "herstory" is in order:
I am of that "bridge" generation
of women, who certainly did
more than their mothers were
properly allowed to do; yet not
much was considered proper.
So I just sat there at lunch in
Shevlin Hall three days of the
week and listened to some class-
mate guys lay plans for a three
week canoe trip through the Bor-
der Lakes, (as they were called
before the Gummint took over).
Studying the rudimentary maps
they had, I found myself con-
sumed with envy.

One day, one of the guys
caught on and asked me to join
them. Oh, what torture! Such a
venture was highly improper for a
"good girl". So I just squirmed.

Just five years later, I spent
the better part of a year literally
"bumming" my way around Euro-
pe, with a childhood girlfriend;
her English Ford and a borrowed
two-man tent; following our nose
and whims; adventuring with
young adults from all over Eu-

rope. Never saw another Ameri-
can until on board the ship home.
What a rip!

Our own girls were getting
big enough to join my campaign
to get ol' Dad to take us canoe-
ing, something he was disin-
clined to do after years of bug-
less camping in Colorado moun-
tains. But such is the power of
women. We sneakily let some
other young friends know of his
skills and soon we had a crew
eager for the adventure.

For ten years, we led groups
of young adults through the
Boundary Waters, initiating them
to the mysteries of the canoe and
the "J" stroke. Teaching them
how to survive and thrive in the
wilderness. Having them learn
the reasons for "bear poles" [all
removed now...not "natural"], let-
ting them discover the exhilara-
tion of swimming in cold lakes of
water pure enough [back then] to
drink.

Many of our crew were "city
kids"; they had a tendency to
take their clothes off shortly after
launching. The first evening in
camp was spent doctoring sun-
burns, bug bites, scratched and
cut legs and feet.

It is amazing how alike all
those islands appear from just
two feet above the water as one
sits in a canoe. The gasp of fear
when, to settle disagreement, I
would stand on the gunnels for a
different, revealing perspective.

It was a very rudimentary,
basic kind of living. The reality
was...do it right or you won't sur-
vive. Funny. Those people were
always more in shape to go on a
canoe trip after it was over.
Some even got the point: life is
more real when it is kept simple.

Many years later, I learned
that lesson again about another
aspect of life after I had attended
my second SPICE in Chicago. I
could think of nothing more won-
drous than to have the whole
conference take place on the
lakes in canoes. Oh, the camp-
fire conversations I envisioned.
What startling realities could be
engaged and solved. Shed of all
the "wordly" distractions, might
not each person find new real
strengths within themselves.

Not really feasible. People
have so many other commit-
ments, not enough time, not
enough money. Whatever.

There are always more rea-
sons not to do a thing than there
are to do it. Yet, people can
always seem to find the where-
withal and energy to do that
which is important to them.

So — we're gonna have a go
at it. A "token" kind of canoe trip.
I re-found the courage to BE that
which is really me when I commit-
ted to SPICE. Now, I want to
bring that opportunity to as many
of you as possible.

Just as I found joy and
achievement on those long ago
canoe trips, and again at SPICE,
we hope to enable each of you to
that same exhilarating experi-
ence of self discovery.

We give you the joy of it.

"Huntin' for the portages;
Chasin' after loons;
Eatin' blue-berries,
Swimmin' after noons.
So come to Minneapolis,
Get Minnesota 'nice';
Let's go to Minneapolis
And do the 'magic' 7th SPICE!

Cannalie

The "ghosted" image under the text on page 1 is one of my watercolor/BWCA paintings: "BEACHED"

My story

by Teresa B
NV-9459-B

I want to tell a story about
how I met a crossdresser (and
then married him).

My mother (Lori) was living
with a crossdresser at the
time. Never in my life had I
heard of Heterosexual Cross-
dresser. To me it was almost
an oxymoron. It was hard
enough because my sisters
and I did not get along with
him personally, let alone want-
ing to find out more about his
Crossdressing.

I was visiting my mother in
Las Vegas in late October,
and she was going to a Theta
Upsilon Gamma meeting. It
happened to be a Halloween
party. I decided to go be-
cause I wanted to be with my
mother (and she gave me that
look that mothers are so good
at). Needless to say I was a
little nervous, I had no idea
what to expect. When we
walked in it looked like any
other Halloween party, except
for a lot of French maids. Ev-
eryone was really nice, some
seemed a little shy (I found out
later it was their first time out).
My mom introduced me to
some of the C.D.'s. Then the
wives and girlfriends sat to-
gether and started to talk
about their situation. Everyone
there seemed normal (what
ever normal is). I also met
Scott, he wasn't crossdressed
that evening. If someone had
told me that I would one day
marry him (a crossdresser of
all things) I would have said,

"Not in a million years!"

I moved to Las Vegas
about six months later. My
mother was on her own by
then but still a friend of Tri-
ess. Mom called Scott to help
me move my stuff into her
apartment. I think she felt we
both could use a friend. To tell
the truth, I forgot I had met
him at the meeting until, my
mother reminded me.

Scott and I became
friends, and he told me about
crossdressing. I started to at-
tend Theta Upsilon Gamma
(T.U.G.) meetings with mom
and Scott and got to know
everyone. When we started
dating Scott showed me

books and videos (he has a
big collection of crossdressing
information). I'll have to admit
the closer I got to Scott, the
harder some things were to
deal with. I'm lucky to have my
mother to talk to, but all the
members of T.U.G. and [the
S.O. group] were very helpful
and answered a lot of ques-
tions I had. I think sometimes
it's just nice to know there are
other people going through
the same thing as you are. It
made me feel better about
getting married, knowing that
so many couples survived and
it made their relationships
stronger. Some of them were
in the process of getting di-
vorces. But, they all told me it
had nothing to do with the
crossdressing.

I just want to thank every-
one at T.U.G., [the S.O.
group], and Tri-ess. If it wasn't
for you there would be a lot of
confused people searching for
help and not finding it. Every
person makes a difference, so
don't ever feel you don't mat-
ter. There are still C.D.'s and
their Significant Others who
need us all. Theresa B.

*We just got married in January. I also
just became Vice-President of our chap-
ter. Next month I'm starting up the SO
group again, which has been gone for
two years. I'm only 26, a little shy and
worried that crossdressing will become
our only activity together. And I'm not
100% accepting of all of it. Any advice
you have I would greatly appreciate.*

*There are many more people try-
ing to meet the right person than
to become the right person.*

GLORIA STEINEM
Feminist and Writer

The Sweetheart Connection is
published four times yearly. No bound-
ary trashing. No bashing of any kind.

Our guideline for every issue will
be that which shapes productive reso-
lution 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 \$15/yr for
four issues; a wife/partner may join
Tri-Ess separately from her partner for
a cost of \$12. She will receive member-
ship and the Sweetheart Connection. If
she chooses to receive The Femme
Mirror, her annual cost will be \$25.
Letters, comments and articles are en-
couraged and may be sent to the ed-
itor.

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Deadline; Summer issue: AUG. 10th

French SPICE

by Ashley
FR-9486-J

When I went to **S.P.I.C.E.** last July, I did not know what to expect. It was MY FIRST TRIP ALONE in 30 years. The beginning of freedom! I realize how wonderful it is to be alone with our self; in such time we are much more open to our own needs and also to what happens around us.

I had met already several people, ladies or cross-dressers, either in my chapter in Houston or on the cruise [Jan. 98], so as the old saying goes: "a known face in a crowd, is a bright sun for our soul". I was alone ... but *not* alone! What **S.P.I.C.E.** gave me was a gift: I was there just for me. (Honestly, I did not come to learn the acceptance of my cross-dresser; I came to learn the acceptance of myself... **and I did.** It works. I am much better now than I ever was.

What I did prefer: the Tai chi in the morning, the lesson about loving our self, of looking at our face in the mirror every morning and saying: "Ashley, I love you, I'll never leave you". The sad part is that I did not understand everything: :(we never escape our mother tongue, and so I know I missed a lot.

[To clarify some of Ashley's thinking, a second exchange yielded the following:]

...I learned about wives....[while] life is different

between countries, [it is] important to [recognize] the way to think is really different. I learned how Americans want to be "honest", to tell the "truth", to live a life without shadow, and how you apply those ideas to your life with a CDer. I have been...amazed at how friends are important to you. ...the culture shock was important to me, and since this conference, I always try to remember what is an American CDer's wife.



Ashley
7/17/98 - Atlanta

The main value of the program theme about changing stumbling blocks to stepping stones was the clue to change ourselves: in the way we think about us. I needed ... something which would

make ME special (and not only him): "YOU, Ashley, have to think of YOU". As women are trained to think of others first, we are NOT trained to accept and think of ourselves.

[Was the conference relevant for you?] YES, YES, I know that anywhere we go, anything we read, any effort we do, only a small piece is kept [in] our mind, and most of the time, nothing is kept. At SPICE 98, what I learn, was what I was probably looking for, and since now enlighten my life. ... openness of spirit is only possible

when we have made at least an armistice with our self (To make peace is really asking too much!)
I will do my *best* to come to Minnesota next July.

Ann Landers:

The More You Know About Transvestism The Less You'll Fear

Dear Ann Landers: My husband has been clinically depressed for most of his adult life. A while back, "Herman" began seeing a female therapist who focused on my husband's early years to see if something in his childhood might be the cause to his depression. His therapist discovered that during adolescence, Herman had been a cross-dresser. He apparently had worked with women's clothing in his early teens but repressed it as an adult. Now, Herman wants my permission to express this side of his personality around the house. He says he would not go out in public.

This disgusts me, Ann. The thought of my husband in make-up, wig, and high heels makes my skin crawl. His therapist told me I need to be more tolerant. She doesn't think his behavior is abnormal or sick.

Herman is artistic and sensitive, a gourmet cook and an avid sportsman. More importantly, he is a terrific father to our two sons. I used to think he was the most masculine man alive. Now, I don't see how I can ever look at him the same way or stop wondering if he is gay. I don't want to break up our marriage, but if anyone found out about the make-up, wigs and high heels, I would be devastated. I need your advice.

N. Carolina

Dear N. Carolina: You need to have a better understanding of your husband's crossdressing. Herman is a transvestite. Some transvestites are gay, but many

are not. They get their thrills from dressing up in women's clothing, but that's as far as it goes. Please go to the public library and read up on the subject. The more you know the less you will fear it.

Tennessean, 2-26-99

Chatsubo by JoAnn Roberts, PhD

Is your man **gay** if he makes out with a guy? Maybe, maybe not. Some sex researchers say that maybe 20% of young women experiment with same sex petting and kissing, while only three to four % are actually **lesbians**. Probably a similar but smaller percentage of young men experiment as well. For many TVs/CDs, the "ultimate" **feminine fantasy** would be to go out on a **date** with a guy. Does that fantasy make [him] a homosexual? Probably not. What if he engages in **kissing or petting**? Fantasizing about such activities doesn't mean he's gay. Acting out those fantasies doesn't prove anything about his sexual orientation either, but it does point out a relational problem. If he discovers that he likes dating guys, heavy petting and more. Then the [two of you] would have to take a serious look at what is turning [him] on. In any case, gay or not, there's no need to feel guilty about **exploring your sexuality**. I've often remarked that my crossdressing has nothing to do with my sexual orientation and everything to do with my sexuality.

Reprinted by permission of the author from Transgender Community News, Apr 99, pg. 12

"You are what you do when it counts"

John Steakley "Armor"

Julie writes: Frustration and confusion

Before you or your friend decide that he is a transsexual, you should find a helping therapist (one who knows and understands gender dysphoria) who can determine that. Too many times I have seen crossdressers THINK they are transsexual when actually they are just experiencing that normal high that comes with crossdressing more freely - the "kid in the candy shop" or "out of the clothes closet at last" syndrome. They think somehow MORE is BETTER, which we know is not necessarily true (from eating too much chocolate to drinking too much, etc.). I have seen heartbreak where the husband, thinking he was transsexual, loses his family and then realizes later that is NOT what he wanted and it may be too late.

If it is determined that he truly is a "primary transsexual" and not just going through this "fantasy" stage, then you must determine if you want to stay with him or go your separate way. Only you can determine that. But for heavens sake, let a professional guide you - not your husband, not you, not his gender friends, not an Internet correspondent - a bona fide therapist!

If it IS determined that he is a crossdresser, then you need to discuss with him (if you love him and want the relationship to work out), how you are going to incorporate crossdressing into your relationship. You have every right to have your feelings, concerns, and needs met. You certainly do not have to agree with

everything he wants. And I think you are quite aware that crossdressing is not something that will go away; it is a part of him just as his height or eye color.

In my situation, my husband and I had many serious, frank discussions. He allowed me to set boundaries because he did not want to lose me. After learning much about crossdressing, I realized that I would have to compromise also - that this was not going to go away.

I should also mention that my husband has over the years and especially when he first came out (I think all crossdressers do at times) mention wisely how wonderful it would be to live full time. But I think they know that they are not being realistic, that they are just fantasizing. But I went through the "worry" stage; I think we all do, and this deeply upset my husband. He did not want me to worry; he knew I did not ask for this. So he understood the need for guidelines; he appreciated them and still does. It was his understanding and concern about me that allowed me to accept crossdressing and realize the different facets to my husband's personality.

I am hoping for the day when society gains a better understanding of crossdressing and does not ridicule or demean those who do crossdress. Only through education and understanding can we begin to erase the ignorance and fear surrounding the phenomenon. Julie

SOMETIMES I get the feeling the whole world is against me, but deep down I know that's not true; some of the smaller countries are neutral.

ROBERT ORBEN
Comedy Writer

Let's Talk About - Getting What You Want

by Marsha and Richard (Rachel) Miller

Marsha and I often talk about how Corporate America in the 90's is not a worker-friendly ecosystem. There is a singular, driving focus -- the short-term bottom line. In this environment business considers a profit shortfall the most serious possible problem. The usual thinking is that competition is keen so we can't raise prices, and increasing volume won't improve our profit margins; therefore, we must reduce costs. And, guess what is the largest single component of most companies' cost structure? Labor! An obvious and seemingly simple answer is to reduce head count. Bingo, immediate profit improvement. When another bump occurs, make another reduction in force. Hey, this is easy.

Then sales growth slows, productivity declines and profits drop. Improvement ideas dwindle to zero and several key people leave. Management decides that more belt tightening is needed. Again, a simple response is to drop a few production line maintenance people. Later, production problems reduce output and the plant fails to fill a large shipment. A major customer is lost and profits drop more steeply. What's going on here?

The manager tried to follow conventional business wisdom so he thinks he must have made a mistake. In reality, the problem wasn't the manager's ability to execute standard practices but the standard practices themselves. There is an insightful book that was popular in the business community called *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge. It describes our preoccupation with the kind of linear thinking pattern that says if I take a specific action to reduce labor costs, then profits will rise. Period. End of story.

But the story doesn't end there. The manager's actions don't occur in a vacuum. They impact other parts of the "system" chiefly the workers and, when jobs are lost, the remaining workers respond by acting differently than before. These responses vary with conditions but they always cause a change in the profit/labor equation. The manager didn't consider any other changes and assumed that one action was insulated from any others. That was his mistake.

Mr. Senge advises that we engage instead in systems thinking that recognizes the interconnectedness of things. "[business endeavors] are also systems. They, too, are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other....we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, and wonder why our deepest problems never seem to get solved."

=====

I finally had to ask, "Richard, what does this have to do with the ladies of *Sweetheart Connection*?" His response was thought provoking, "If the principles of systems thinking are true in business wouldn't they also be true in our interpersonal relationships? Yet we have a tendency to treat both situations with inappropriate linear thinking. That's a big problem."

It reminded me of some women's magazine articles that ask us to list what we want most out of our relationships. They give tips and tricks to get our man to give us what we want. We read the article, the technique sounds good so we decide to try it. We act a little bit, bend the truth a little bit, butter him up a little bit and pout and whine a little bit. Guess what? It works and we get exactly what we asked for. We're so inspired that we try it again and it works a second time.

Later our husband seems hesitant when we ask for something or make a suggestion. He seems suspicious of our

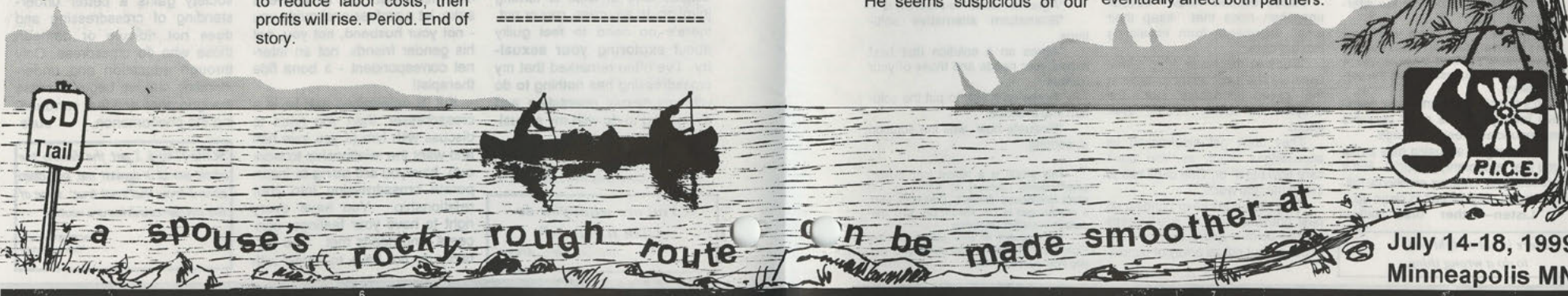
actions and motives and acts as though he doesn't trust us as much as before. We tried to do exactly what the article said so we think that we must have made a mistake. Again the mistake wasn't our ability to execute the technique but the technique itself. Does this remind you of the manager and his declining profit problem?

If we could look inside our husband's head we would see that he is feeling used and betrayed. Outmaneuvering someone can deliver the desired short term results, but it also delivers a different set of long term results. How would you feel if you discovered that your husband had used some new business negotiating technique to get you to do something that you didn't really agree with? He got the immediate results but he also got a wife who won't quickly forget how he tricked her.

Our marriages are an intimately connected system and any action by one party has a major impact on the other and causes behavior changes that eventually affect both partners.

This is particularly significant in a marriage with a cross-dresser. Often we think that what we want is for our husband to stop dressing or to severely control it so we feel more comfortable. If we do that, what happens to him? How does he feel? How does he respond? What impact will his response have on me and on our marriage?

Most likely, what you really want is a good marriage and a strong relationship. That isn't about getting what you want, but it is about both partners jointly balancing their wants, needs and desires. That balancing act is difficult, but we have a favorite technique that has withstood the test of time. It is a simple concept widely known as "The Golden Rule" and directs us to treat each other the way we want to be treated. It takes a lot of work and time but gives back a strong, long-lasting and rewarding relationship. We both agree that it is worth the investment.



July 14-18, 1999
Minneapolis MN

Myth: Loving Couples Never Ever Fight

by James L. Creighton, PhD

How to Use "Fights" to Strengthen Bonds and Disagree Without Being Disagreeable

It is a myth that happy couples never fight. In fact, they regularly disagree with each other.

What sets loving couples apart is that they disagree in loving ways. They don't let disagreements turn into nasty battles. Their "fights" strengthen, rather than hurt, their relationships.

Handling conflict in a healthy way is a skill that can be learned. **ACCEPT CONFLICT AS NORMAL.**

Trying to ignore disagreements or bury resentments doesn't get rid of them. It only allows them to grow beneath the surface. When we face conflict and deal with it openly, it's easier to let it go and move on. Steps to take...

"Express what you feel, not what you think. Couples who fight lovingly start by talking about how they feel, not about what they think is "wrong" with their partner.

They frame arguments by saying, "I'm hurt/angry/frustrated" rather than, "You're rude/sloppy/a jerk."

When one spouse does something that bothers the other, she/he says so immediately. But - describe the specific behavior, not the interpretation.

Example: "I was upset when you didn't return my call" expresses how the person feels. "I'm mad because you're inconsiderate" expresses what the person thinks.

It's tempting to blame your negative feelings on the other person's inadequacies. Resist this urge.

Attacking or accusing may amke you feel temporarily powerful. But it erodes trust, creating emotional fallout that is very difficult to clean up.

"Listen—rather than talk—

*There is not a right way
to do a wrong thing.*

your way out of conflict. When someone is upset, the natural reaction is to try to talk him out of it. We do this by making excuses for the person...or trying to come up with solutions to the problem...or pointing out all the reasons why there's no need to be upset. But this response implies that the other person doesn't have a right to her feelings. So talking often makes matters worse.

In reality, all it takes to stop the person from being angry is to acknowledge how she feels.

Key to effective listening: After your partner has finished speaking, summarize the feelings and ideas that were just expressed. Don't evaluate whether those words are right or wrong...and don't try to "fix" anything. Just repeat what you've heard.

When you're first learning this technique, it can feel artificial or even patronizing—but it works very effectively.

Many of the couples I work with get around this by using the **five-minute rule.** Either partner can invoke this rule at any time.

How it works: One person has five minutes to speak without interruption. Then the other person has five minutes. If you can't decide who should start, flip a coin. Sometimes you both may need another turn to speak.

By the end of the second round, both people have usually gotten most of the frustration out of the way and can start discussing the problem more constructively.

FIGHT FAIRLY

Happy couples follow several unspoken rules that keep their small arguments from escalating into big ones...

"Stick to the issue. If he's mad because she's not ready to leave at the agreed upon time, that's the subject the loving couple talks about.

They don't get sidetracked by accusations, such as, "You don't care how I feel" or, "One of us has to live in the real world."

They also don't keep bringing up past grievances. If an issue keeps coming up over and over, they'll talk about it—but not as a way of punish-

ing each other when they're arguing about something else.

"Don't hit below the belt. Loving couples don't try to hurt each other by attacking sensitive areas, such as weight, job status, etc.

"Don't drag other people into it. don't say such things as, "I'm not the only person who feels this way. Your sister and brother do, too."

Trying to bolster your side of the argument by bringing up someone else not only escalates the fight but also poisons your partner's relationship with that person.

Some couples find it helpful to make these rules explicit—and remind each other gently if one of them breaks a rule.

Don't turn these reminders into occasions to gloat. A simple reminder, such as "Remember, we agreed not to do that" is usually enough.

Important: the best time to agree upon rules is right after a fight, when you've cooled down enough to talk reasonably. The memory of the fight you just had—and how unpleasant it was not to be following the rules—will motivate you to do things differently.

HUDDLE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

Sometimes just hearing each other out helps partners understand one another's point of view—and resolves the conflict. When that's not enough, happy couples work together to find a better way of dealing with the issue. Problem-solving steps...

*Agree on what the problem is.
*Brainstorm alternative solutions.

*Agree on a solution that best meets your needs and those of your partner.

*Agree on a way to put the solution into practice.

*Evaluate how well the solution is working.

This article is a reprint from *Bottom Line/Personal* (January 1, 1995, pg. 11) which interviewed James L. Creighton, PhD, a psychologist in Los Gatos, CA who specializes in conflict resolution.

He is author of *How Loving Couples Fight* (Asian Publishing) and coauthor of *Getting Well Again* (Bantam).

Older and Happier

Don't let America's obsession with youth fool you. A new study of close to 3,000 people, ages 25 to 74, has found that as a rule, people get happier with age.

The men and women were asked, "During the past 30 days, how much of the time did you feel..." and given 12 answers to choose from, ranging from "so sad nothing could cheer you up" to "extremely happy." They were also asked about marital status, stress, health, education and other factors. After all these were accounted for, one thing stood out: The happiest people in the survey were older married men. And older women (married and single) were a

close second.

"This is probably the best example yet of 'The Paradox of Well-being' — the fact that people often feel better than ever at a time when it seems like they ought to feel worse," says Daniel Mroczek, PhD, assistant professor of psychology, Fordham University, NYC, who led the study. "In this case, the paradox is that we grow happier as we age, despite deaths of family and friends, declining health and other things that should make us sadder."

The most likely explanation? Perspective.

Experience teaches us that even the worst times get better, so we don't take things so much to heart as younger people do," says Mroczek. "Also, we're less focused on the future than

people in their 20s and 30s, which allows us to enjoy the present more. And we're more likely to spend time doing things that make us happy and avoiding the things that don't."

So even though age may bring bifocal and creaky knees, it also brings happiness and wisdom. "Revel in that," says Mroczek. "Growing older definitely has benefits."

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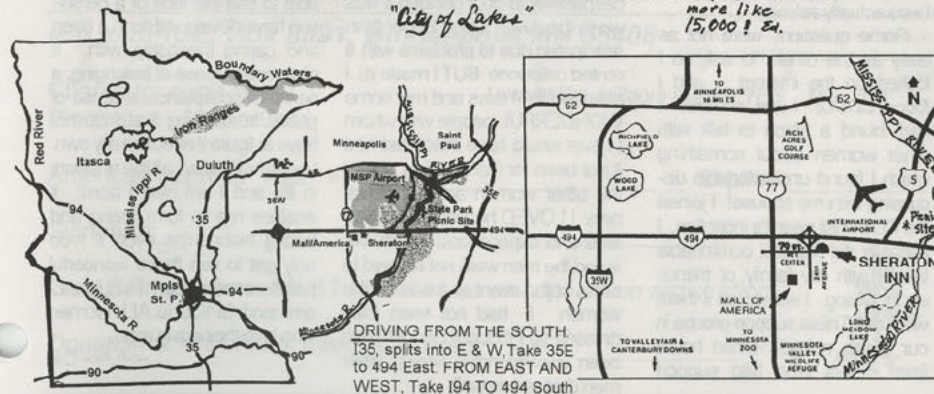
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I'm not a *has-been*. I'm a *will-be*. LAUREN BACALL, Actress

Where is S.P.I.C.E. happening? In Minneapolis, Minnesota, land of 10,000 lakes!

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DRIVING FROM THE SOUTH.
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WEST. Take 194 TO 494 South



14 HOURS! AM I CRAZY??

Allow me to introduce myself! I am CAT. I have been married to my soulmate, Paul, for five and one half years. I have known about my husband's CDing since before we were married. I just assumed I already knew all about crossdressing because I lived in a big city 99% of my life. The way he explained it to me, I thought it was just panties and a bra... "No big deal!" The more Paul loosened up about dressing in front of me, the more he dressed. The more he dressed, the more unease I felt. I did *not* know all there was to know about crossdressers; all I knew was I loved him dearly and wanted to understand. I needed information. The more information I found, the more questions I had. He answered me as honestly as he could but as I am not him and he is not me; I was unsure if he understood what I was actually asking.

Some questions were not as easy as the others to ask so I looked on the internet ... and I found CDSO! I was ecstatic! I had found a place to talk with other women about something which I found uncomfortable discussing with my spouse! I joined the CDSO list near it's inception. I certainly did not feel comfortable talking with my family or friends about CDing. I wondered if there were any TriEss support groups in our area... no go. I had heard from others who had support

groups near them. They spoke about their experiences of actually seeing other couples face to face. I thought it would be nice if we had that benefit. THEN, in late 1997, something great happened.

I had been hearing about SPICE for a while and thought.. "hmmm, this is something I feel compelled to do!" I decided it would be nice for us to meet some of the lovely ladies with whom I had been corresponding. I talked it over with Paul but as July is the busiest time for his job, he could not go. I really wanted to go so I asked about possible scholarships. Our funds were limited so I saved my pennies while I waited for an answer; I could not get one. Paul thought it was important for me to attend anyhow. Luckily, there was a room with a lady in it willing to share. She was Bev, the moderator for the CDSO list. How great! I said if it meant that I could attend SPICE, I loved the idea of being a roomie with Bev!!

I planned my route from Illinois to Georgia: it would take nearly 14 hours for me to drive it. I wanted desperately to go, I decided it was worth the drive. It took longer than anticipated due to problems with a rented cellphone BUT I made it!! I attended for 4 days and met some WONDERFUL people with whom I never would have interacted had it not been for Paul's cding. I met the other women and their partners: I LOVED hearing about their lives and experiences! I was relieved the men were not allowed to dress at the event as it was for the women. I had not seen Paul dressed so I thought I would have been uncomfortable seeing other men dressed as well.

Several seminars I attended out of curiosity (I know, curiosity killed the cat but she has 8 other lives!!), I wanted to learn all there was to know. I thought, by attending SPICE, that I would be another step closer to acceptance. I learned that sometimes I MUST ask the hard questions, that there IS a difference between the way males and females think (even if the male has a strong feminine side!), that I am NOT alone in my discomfort and there IS hope of being able to embrace this facet of my husband's being! I can't say that I am at total acceptance, for I know that there are things about me Paul does not totally accept and that is OK! I think the more I learn about this wonderful man, the more I grow to love him every day.

I intend to go to this year's SPICE conference in July and I am so excited! It will be a long drive but only half the distance to Georgia. I've had longer to save those pennies too! I get to see friends I have not seen in a year. There is NOTHING like being able to see the face of a person you have developed such a deep and caring friendship with. It gives me a sense of belonging, a sense of acceptance, a sense of peace in knowing that I do not have to figure it all out on my own. I never said I had all the answers in life and I am glad I don't! It enables me to form loving and lasting friendships even if I do only get to see those wonderful people once a year! I would recommend SPICE to ALL women who love their cding men.

->^ ^<- Cat

It all began before that July in Dallas, 1993.

That hot week found many women at the first SPICE, raising questions and objections, voicing fears and concerns, forging new friendships and a network of capable, caring people who were dealing and working with the problems and issues of crossdressing.

The conference's first goal was and is to offer sympathetic comfort to women distressed by what they perceive as a threat to their marriage. It is true that many problems can be complicated still further when an unforeseen or unusual change occurs. S.P.I.C.E.'s major goal is to help people to reasonable solutions that will work by offering education. Asking focused questions can lead to productive answers.

1. What's going on here?

Much research has developed an impressive understanding of what crossdressing IS and is NOT.

2. Who's in charge, anyway?

Focusing on who is trying to control whom or what, getting this one sorted out is sometimes a nearly life long effort.

3. What do you want?

Many have trouble allowing themselves to want something of another to say nothing of articulating that want.

4. Where do we go from here?

When the first three questions are truly and honestly answered, the answer to this one becomes clear.

Each couple's circumstances are unique and deserving of the special attention S.P.I.C.E. attendees give and get; it is awesome what a group of women who have a mutual problem can accomplish when each learns that she is NOT alone; there are others who can and will help.

The conference is open to all women who are partners and/or wives of heterosexual gender-gifted men, and to those men, as well. The programs are designed specifically to help build self-esteem and self-respect to help you deal with the many issues inherent in a gender-influenced relationship. Well known, skilled and compassionate professional counselors will present programs and "hands on" workshops as well as leading wives and partners from local and national support groups.

At recent conferences, couples have increased in numbers; programs have been developed to meet those joint concerns. Lately, some men have attended alone to carry the SPICE messages home.

S.P.I.C.E. has literally changed the lives of many attendees as we are dedicated to providing a wide array of topics with a highly qualified faculty and abundant amounts of peer support.

As all work and NO fun makes for a dull conference, opportunities have been planned to participate in small groups to tour, shop, [at *Mail of America*, one block away] or play in addition to the conference.

Each year, more have come early to join in the distinct pleasure of meeting socially with old and new friends before getting down to serious work. This year, you have the option to include a casual, relaxed afternoon into evening of swimming, hiking and canoeing which will culminate with a Shore Dinner at the historical site of Fort Snelling State Park, where the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers join and the state began. Transportation to and from the park is included.

"Chief guide" is **Walter Bocking**, PhD, whom many met at S.P.I.C.E. V in California. **Diane Steilrecht**, PhD, **Meg Striabe**, PhD, **Bean Robinson** and **Sara Nitze** will be joined by **Peggy Rudd**, Ed.D, **Desiree**, **Onnalee Graham**, **Evelyn Kirkland**, **Mary Frances Fairfax** and **Bev**. . . all of whom are married to crossdressing men, been through the emotional "whitewater" and not only survived, but *thrived!*

Special SPICE room rate: \$82/night, single or double. Free airport shuttle for registered guests. You must make your own room reservations directly with the **Sheraton**. (612) 854-1771

To get our special rate, be sure to state that you are attending S.P.I.C.E. If you would like to share a room, indicate this on the registration form. Our block of rooms will be guaranteed 'til July 1. After that date, rooms may not be available and our special rate may not apply.

COSTS: Registration for the full four day conference is \$172.00 per person. This includes all programs and entertainment, as well as the beach-picnic reception, six meals (lunch and dinner each day). See Registration form for other options. Complete that form, clip and mail with check or money order payable to S.P.I.C.E., mail to:

S.P.I.C.E. Registrar
Box 8591,
Minneapolis MN 55408

Mail to **SPICE, Box 8591, Minneapolis MN 55408**

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Couples forum announced

*outgrowth of successful
book club . . .*

Dear Tri-Ess Friends,

Over the last year, Tri-Ess leaders have been discussing an online forum for couples. While we saw many advantages, we had some questions. Would crossdressers and wives be able to relate on the same forum? Would the crossdressers dominate the discussion, causing the wives to be silent, as has happened in some settings? Was a couples' forum really needed?

For this reason, Tri-Ess inaugurated a forum where crossdressers and wives could relate in a safe, intellectual setting of an online book club. The pilot program was to terminate April 1, after which we would evaluate the need and desirability of another, permanent forum for couples.

We are happy to report that the book club was a success beyond our fondest dreams! Cross dressers and wives on the forum enjoyed many deep discussions. Wives and crossdressers participated freely in an

atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy. In short, it worked!!!

Toward the end of the forum, there seemed to be an evolution away from strict adherence to discussion of a given book and toward topics of mutual interest. While crossdressers and wives have some differing issues, it seemed that everyone really listened to and accepted one another. When some started to designate themselves as a "crossdresser" or a "genetic woman," we learned that it is helpful to know whether one was coming from the viewpoint of a crossdresser or a wife. The spontaneous trend of the CDbookclub forum toward a couples' forum indicates a clear need for such a forum.

Therefore, as of 12AM April 18, Tri-Ess began a new forum online. TRIESS42 is a forum for Tri-Ess couples. The rules are approximately the same as those for our other forums. Participants on both the CDSO and CDTRIESS forums have a long record of mutual respect and positive discussion, and this will be the standard for TRIESS42 as well.

The forum will be moderated by Cat, who has been a member of the CDSO forum almost since its formation. Her kind, empathic spirit, dedication and gentle sense of humor will make her an outstanding Moderator. She will be the

Mama Kitty of the forum, and everyone will become familiar with those perky, uptumed cat ears ~>^..^<~ that are the hallmark of her postings.

To subscribe to the TRIESS42 forum, e-mail Bev at Bev@hotmail.com

You will need to supply the Tri-Ess membership number for both partners, read the protocols and e-mail Bev your intention of abiding by them. Then we'll be off and running!

Finally, we would like to thank all of you who participated on the CDbookclub and made it such a success. TRIESS42 will be a new, permanent support program. It is your love, caring and willingness to positively reinforce one another that has made the new forum possible. We really appreciate all of you so much, and look forward to yet another successful online program.

Love to all of you,
The TRIESS42 Supervisory Board

DEFINITION

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waking up people
who don't have
small children.



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