



Women's Health

WHAT REALLY MATTERS ?

Being a woman is not what it used to be. At one time all you had to do was be a good cook, smile prettily, and be happy to produce chubby babies. All that changed with the sexual revolution of the 1960's. What women really wanted was a choice to stay at home or go to work as they saw fit. Women wanted more power over their reproductive options. They wanted a new measure of freedom from the prescribed roles society had given them.

It is forty years later, so let's take a look at what is going on in our society. Things have changed for women. There are more choices as to what careers a woman can pursue. There are also plenty of lifestyle options including having babies, not having babies, being with a man, or being with a woman.

What is truly amazing is that we are busier than ever. In the sixties, one salary was enough for a family to live on. Now for most couples, both people have to work to make a living. Many are just getting by. So what started out as an attempt at more freedom and choice has not worked out that way. It is almost as though not only are the women less free but men are less free also.

How has this situation affected women's health and psyches? A major change is pressure, stress, and trying to be all things to all people. More than ever many women are striving for perfection in all aspects of their life. The level of dissatisfaction on a personal level is very high. I am too fat, too thin (not a common complaint these days), too old, too poor. My job sucks. I should get more education. My relationship has problems. The kids are always fighting. I am too busy. There is no time to just relax.

The list could go on and on. Many women get caught on this roller coaster of seeking perfection, not reaching it, and then feeling something is missing. A big factor in all of this is that we are busier. People do expect more from us. We are supposed to be super mom, a star at work, an amazing housekeeper, cook, and lover. When do we get a break?

Now I know there are similar situations for men, but they do have an advantage. When they come home from work they usually sit down and relax. Women usually buy groceries on their way home from work, and then pick up the kids from day care. When we finally get home there is dinner to prepare while hubby reads the paper or watches the news on T.V. It is like we are programmed to take care of the family. We do this in addition to whatever other work we do. So where is the choice in any of that?

On T.V. we are always presented with images of the perfect woman. She is thin and beautiful with sparkly teeth. She is perfectly dressed in the latest fashion and is usually portrayed as sexy and efficient in whatever else she does, whether it is housework (more common) or being a doctor. This version of a woman is more like a cartoon character.

Who makes up these fairy tales? It doesn't really matter. All we need to do is see through these cultural myths. Although women cannot live up to these stereotypes, maybe subconsciously they do affect us. After all, most of us have been watching this kind of stuff since we were kids. Even so you can choose to see it for what it is: a myth. It is not reality. It never was.

How do you free yourself? Simple. Start now by appreciating yourself and everything else in your life. Do this every day no matter how busy you think you are. Take time to rest, meditate, and contemplate the beauty around you. Look at the humour in life. There is such richness if you let yourself become aware of it. Enjoy your loved ones and friends. They are a wonderful source of love and support. Be aware of your body sensations and feelings. This can lead you to what is really important. Our bodies are like big divining rods. They always reflect what is going on at a deeper level. Also, as far as obligations go, you

may have to accept them totally, give some responsibilities up, or walk away from a situation completely. You get to choose because it is your life.

We may never be able to live up to society's image of a woman. So what? Do you know anyone else who can? Even if one could they would probably become unbalanced by the stress of trying to keep up that pace. Ask yourself what is life really about? What really matters? Is it having a tidy house and strong abs, or feeling deep peace and a sense that all is right in your world?

We will not be able to instantly shift the ideals of society, but in time they may change. Take charge of your life now. Look within and see the truth. See that it has always been there patiently waiting for you. Waiting to discover that in all of this, "you" is what really matters. It has nothing to do with the outer trappings of life or even who we think we are. The scenarios of our lives are constantly changing. Look for what doesn't change. It is presence. What is looking out of those eyes reading this article? That is the real you, that awareness behind your eyes.

If you look deeply and ask, you may discover that you have always known the truth. Perhaps somehow it just got lost along the way or covered up by your "to do" list. You may actually change what you do or accept it totally. That is up to you. We are incredible beings of infinite creativity. We can create having the experience of "too much to do", or we can create deep peace, oneness and love. It is truly up to you. No one else could ever do it for you. In the end, perhaps, we might realize that we are freedom itself. In this moment we get to choose what really matters. Find yourself, the rest will follow.

