

Woman's World

Judith Viorst helps us cope

By SHIRLEE IDEN

• How can I call myself intelligent when I don't know what the prime interest rate is and I can't read road maps?
 • How can I call myself mature when I'm afraid of worms and still love Hostess Twinkies?
 • How can I call myself well-bred after what I called that driver who cut me off?

The questioner is Judith Viorst, author and poet, winner of writing awards, an Emmy and much acclaim. Ms. Viorst was addressing the topic "How to Survive Love, Guilt, Life and Other Dilemmas" for the Sisterhood of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield.

Some 700 strong, they came to browse, shop, lunch and listen at the sisterhood's annual "It's a Woman's World 1980."
 Chairwoman Doreen Hermelin introduced Ms. Viorst by contending "She's our friend because through all our life situations, she's been with us through her writing."
 She said Ms. Viorst has a husband, Milton, three sons, and "no surviving gerbils or hamsters," adding the poet is a Radcliff graduate and member of Phi Beta Kappa, is contributing editor of Redbook Magazine and has published 15 books.

"ALL THOSE books are the work of 20 years," Ms. Viorst said in an interview following her talk.

"I write every day, sometime for many hours. I'm disciplined."

She said her sons — 16, 18, and 13 — are "annoying unimpressed" with her celebrity and that she herself regressed to the age of 9 for her next book of poems, aimed at children.

Slender with long dark hair and flowing dark dress, Ms. Viorst told her large audience that no one is immune to feelings of inadequacy, the first dilemma examined.

"We feel inadequate as mothers, lovers, workers and wives," she said. "There's a special inadequacy currently among women who don't have a job and whose children have gone."

"There was a myth of the '60s that we were nothing without a husband and kids, and now there's that other myth that unless we're involved in paying work as a doctor, lawyer or something — we're nothing."

She rates both myths as "sad," adding that one woman answered the question of what she did with: "I'm a free

lance person," showing great self-understanding.

"I'm struck by the fact that some may feel guiltier about food than sex," she said. "A woman can eat lasagna at lunch with a man, not her husband, and goes to bed with him. Then she feels guilty about the lasagna."

She added that guilt to her means the diet she's been on for 30 years and by which she has lost the same eight pounds about 1,000 times.

"I take the old-fashioned position that guilt helps protect our society," she said. "There is healthy, appropriate guilt such as when we betray someone."

To avoid guilt, she counseled, deny it or blame the other person.
 "But if you accept it, guilt keeps you from hurting others, and it might keep you from doing things that might hurt your character."

Concerning loss, another dilemma, she said she survives less by complaining a lot.

"TAKE LOSS of youthful dreams," she said. "I try to meet my 40s with aplomb."

"I say I'm as young as I feel, but it doesn't work when I eat pizza at 11 p.m. and am up until 2 a.m. with indigestion."

"I say I'm sexier than ever. But out there in the world, I'm attracting much less lust and much more respect."

She said by age 40 people know that everyone is not meant to always be happy.

"But I ask when I encounter this pain and sorrow: Couldn't I, in my agony, lose weight?"

Humor is her greatest ally in dealing with loss and other dilemmas as well.

And speaking not as an expert or specialist, she suggested:

- We should find satisfaction through inner strengths and not titles.
- After guilt comes forgiveness.
- Acknowledge and mourn, then move on.
- Face up to the mixed emotions we all feel.
- Build human connections with the maid, husband, children, parents and friends.
- Heed the lessons of life and learn how to change.

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-B. Braley

'English Patchwork' next in Update series

"English Patchwork" is the title of the next Update seminar which is offered from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 14 in Northwest Branch YWCA, 25940 Grand River.

Nancy Pryor, YWCA staff member who specializes in quilting and needlework, will lead the workshop. The English method of patchwork involves the basting of fabric hexagons over paper patterns and then whip stitching the pieces together.

The best known example of this method of piecework construction is the quilt pattern known as "Grandmother's Flower Garden."

Workshop participants will be making a single flower with three rings and applying it to a circular background fabric mounted on a hoop. When completed, it will make an interesting wall decoration.

There will be a slide show of quilts during the noon lunch hour. Participants may purchased salad from the Y's salad bar, or may bring their own lunch.

The cost of the seminar is \$8 for Y members or \$10 for non-members. Supplies are extra and a list of what will be needed will be given when persons call in their registrations at 537-8500.

The Update series, which runs weekly in the Y, is designed for the busy woman who wants to explore new interests and improve skills in a limited amount of time.

Child care is available for infants and preschoolers for 50 cents an hour, with a \$1 minimum per child.

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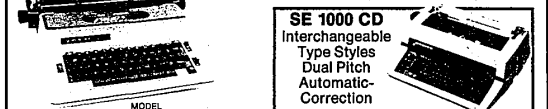
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