

CHAT ROOM



Kathie O'Donohue

For 18 years, my one true Valentine

In the dizzying, swirling dance my mind performs before it achieves the comfort of revelation, it recognizes an epiphany: that I now possess what I forever sought more earnestly than anything else: true love.

It should have been simple enough to see: I married you 18 years ago; we've had five children together. I have known you, now, more than my life. Still, I didn't appreciate until recently the settled feeling in this arena of life; that I deeply love you and will, always.

Reflecting on the evolution of love, I decide young love is an altogether different species. Young love is truly blind; it doesn't regard other than what it imagines to be, other than what it selfishly wants to see. It is all-consuming, entwining – and often confusing – the physical, spiritual, and emotional realms. Young love is reality-challenged, frequently based on outward appearances and fleeting, sometimes erroneous, hormone-induced emotions. It is frankly impatient and starkly lacking in substance.

In retrospect, it seems frivolous and even a gamble that upon which we base the choice of our life partner. And our rituals of dress, dress, dress, after a few ardent vows, take a quick vacation together and are then considered a couple. Fortunately for many, it works. Yet the naïveté of that notion is that true coupling takes years.

Love grows over time

Mature love contrasts sharply. Over time love takes on new dimensions; it stretches to accommodate, bends to allow. It takes hurt in stride and roots for its other half. Two who have weathered many years of marriage are really no longer two at all, but a dissolving together, a symbiosis, a single emotional unit. Characteristics that initially were attractive or fascinating frequently become thorns in the side of a couple's relationship. But love bears with patience the things that could so readily incite havoc or create painful discord.

Young love may have that spark of passion, but mature love wraps its captives in a warm, enduring hug. Young love is flashy, in-style clothes; seasoned love is a cozy pair of comfortable slippers.

When I think of you, I realize I have a man who loves me, who is here for me whether I am benevolent or nasty. You come home to my hectic, frantic life and provide stability and direction. You often deflect the pain of life's tragedies merely by sharing them. You immerse yourself in who I am now, not the skinny kid from the past with the flaming red hair and plucky attitude. Just your presence redeems me, and there is an added dimension, now, to holding hands that was not present 20 years ago, a deeper sense of truly knowing.

An ever-changing process

You are not the same young man I wed on that sunny August day. More grounded, now, and perhaps a tad too serious at times, simultaneously you have developed a lightning-quick, insatiable wit. I cherish our rare quiet times of discussion and conversation and remain amazed and indebted at the depth of your insight – on occasion – when you are able to step outside the confines of the left-brain-male mode. Just when I think I know you, however, you change. And that is something I've discovered: that love is a process, something not static, something that profoundly changes with time. For me to see you, I no longer look most at your outward appearance, instead I look to see that within. We are not the same, you and I. And as corny as it sounds, I love you more as time moves past. There is something so special between us it cannot be described. I pray in thanksgiving that I married you. You are both the love of my life and a deep, personal blessing.

Forever never felt so good.
Kathie O'Donohue lives in Farmington Hills.

Stress therapy

Massage relieves tension buildup for harried fast-trackers

■ With a proliferation of spas now offering massage, industry veteran Tamara Friedman offers tips to consumers.

BY MARY RODRIGUE
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Even those who work in a health spa get stressed out to the point where a tension-busting body massage beckons like an oasis.

Such was the case recently for Natasha Nair, receptionist and spa director at Tamara's Institut de Beaute in Farmington Hills.

"She schedules appointments, checks everyone in and out. She's our problem solver," said spa owner Tamara Friedman.

Lying face down on the massage table in a dimly lit room on her day off work, Nair was fully relaxed in the experienced hands of massage therapist Angelica Fayzakova.

Friedman is quick to point out that massage is not for just the rich and famous anymore.

"The focus now is on wellness health," she said. "We always worry about our cars, our computers. But we overload our body and our brain constantly. Only now we are starting to listen to the little noises our bodies make – the anxiety, the backaches. We used to not listen."

With a proliferation of spas and increase in the popularity of massage, Friedman, an industry veteran, offers some advice to consumers.

"Do research, be careful," she warned. "You can have a very unpleasant experience. (Massage therapists) are not licensed, only certified which means they took a course. There is no state board exam. Someone might open a hair salon and decide to offer massage. So you have to look for a reputable place."

Screening process



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEKLER

Tension busting: Angelica Fayzakova works her magic on Natasha Nair at Tamara's Institut de Beaute in Farmington Hills.

Tamara said her 10-massage therapists on staff were each interviewed several times before they were hired. Angelica Fayzakova worked as a massage therapist in her native Russia for

eight years where her clients included Russian Olympic athletes before coming to Tamara's spa two years ago.

"A good therapist will educate the customer, know all the treatments,

pros and cons," Friedman said.

She characterizes regular Swedish massage as "lighter to the touch, more relaxing," than, say, "a deep tissue massage. You can get sore if someone is pulling too deep into the muscle. With Shiatsu, certain breathing techniques are important. So communication with the therapist is really the key."

A deep tissue massage can cause a little bruising on someone who bruises easily, she added.

"So it is not something a girl wants the day before her wedding. A massage is not just a one-hour gratification. It's powerful for weeks to come; it relieves tension in the body."

"Don't assume one massage will get rid of all your aches and pains. It has built up for years. If you get serious about treatment, don't just go one day. The benefits are cumulative. And little by little, you will get the idea of how your body will handle (massage). It's like going on a diet. You don't just lose weight. You have to maintain it."

An hour is the minimum amount of time Friedman suggests per session.

"A half hour would be time only for a partial massage. It takes 15 minutes to relax the client. It is also good to take heat and water treatment before massage. Spend 20 minutes in a sauna, or in a Jacuzzi."

Other tips: massage oil with lavender is relaxing; oils with eucalyptus are more invigorating.

Well-known clients

Tamara's client list has included Donny Osmond while he was in town starring in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," music composer Marvin Hamlisch, and attorney/candidate for governor Geoff Frey Fieger.

"I have been recommended by the concierge at the Dearborn Ritz Carlton and other hotels," she said. "It's flattering, especially when these are people I don't personally know. They've heard of us, our reputation."

Please see MASSAGE, B2

Mature drivers hone road skills



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEKLER

Behind the wheel: Betty Weber took the 55 Alive driving class to pick up a few safe driving tips.

BY MARY RODRIGUE
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Washed-out lane markers, other drivers passing on the shoulder of a two-lane highway, motorists honking at them to get going.

Those are some of the frustrations mature drivers brought to the 55 Alive driving course sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons at the Farmington Hills Senior Center. About 25 senior drivers took part in the eight-hour course recently, spread over two days.

"My husband and I took this course about 10 years ago," said Betty Weber, who works in the Senex adult respite care program at the center. She was attending the driving class on her day off. "I thought there might be some new things I could learn, new ideas."

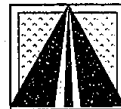
Gerald Haran of Novi was there for a more practical reason.

"My insurance agent said I can get 10 percent off my auto insurance if I take this course," he said. "My wife will take it another time; she couldn't make it today."

Bob Smith, an AARP volunteer from Franklin Village, has been teaching the course for a few months now.

"These drivers didn't have a driver's education course in high school," he said. "They didn't offer it then. Many learned how to drive on a tractor on a farm."

"The idea here is to refresh you with rules and regulations. As people age, they lose some vision, some hearing. Reaction time is not as quick. This



course offers tips on how to cope with those changes."

Some insurance companies give customers a discount for completing the

course – in fact that is the law in more than 30 states, but not Michigan. Participants were advised to check with their insurance company.

Rate break or not, most students seemed satisfied with the course materials, which included a short film narrated by hero pilot Chuck Yeager and a student workbook which covered everything from defensive driving tips to awareness of the effects of medications for older drivers.

Collectively, drivers over 55 have the most accidents and receive more traffic tickets than any other age group, except motorists under age 25. Results of a yearlong California study showed that course participants in that state had 16 percent fewer accidents and 15 percent fewer traffic citations than older drivers who did not take the course.

"It's a commitment to greater safety," said Smith.

The Farmington Hills senior department will host another 55 Alive class in the spring or summer, according to program director Nora Dolan.

Or call the AARP hotline at (800) 227-7669 for class offerings. Smith is teaching upcoming sessions at Botford Hospital March 16-17 and at the Novi Senior Center April 29-30.

Search begins for artist in residence / service to arts candidates

Since 1976, the Farmington Area Arts Commission has recognized the achievements of individuals and groups in the arts by naming the Farmington Area Artist in Residence and the Distinguished Service to the Arts honorees. Candidates are selected from the fields of art, drama, dance, literature



and music.

The Artist in Residence award recognizes the talent and accomplishments of an individual who lives in the cities of Farmington or Farmington Hills with a cash award, plaque and reception in his or her honor.

The Distinguished Service to the Arts award recognizes outstanding service to the community in the creative arts. Groups and individuals may receive this award for support, promo-

tion, management or teaching of the arts and are honored with a cash award and plaque at the reception.

Individual or group assistance is sought in the nomination of candidates. Previously nominated candidates are encouraged for re-examination.

All application material must be received by Monday, March 22. Selections will be made prior to March 29. Send materials to Farmington Area Arts Commission, Artist in Residence

■ Candidates are selected from the fields of art, music, dance, drama or literature.

committee, c/o City Manager's office, 31655 W. 11 Mile, Farmington Hills, 48336.

Last year's Artist in Residence winner was painter Danguole Jurgitis.