

SUZANNE SOMERS

Reinvention & The Power of Positive Thinking

By Suzanne Takowsky

Over the years, Suzanne Somers has taught us the meaning of reinvention. An accomplished actress and comedienne, she is also a best-selling author, singer, and motivational speaker on everything from diet and health to coming to terms with the effects of alcoholism on families. Living in L.A., a town where a date lasts longer than some marriages, Somers has been married to husband Alan Hamel for 32 years. Between the two, they have one daughter, two sons and, incredibly, Somers, who doesn't look a day over 25, is a grandmother of four.

Who can forget Somers' character Crissy on "Three's Company?" Week after week, we saw Somers and that heavenly body strut across our television screens. Although good-hearted Crissy was no genius—Somers is. A savvy business woman, she oversees a multi-million-dollar empire that has taken her to the top of corporate America. Her autobiography, *KEEPING SECRETS*, was on The New York Times best Seller List for 21 weeks. and *EAT GREAT, LOSE WEIGHT*, has sold over a half million copies. Her book, *GET SKINNY*, proved to be another runaway hit among others she has written over the years. She tours extensively with her nightclub act and, in 1986, was named Las Vegas Entertainer of the Year. In 1997, Somers received the KNX "Woman of the Year" Award for her contribution to the research, education and prevention of alcoholism in families and her well documented battle with cancer has set aside old views of battling and beating the disease.

ST: You were once a single mother, raising a child, trying to make a living, while finding your way in life. What advice can you offer other women going through the same thing?

SS: I operated on instinct, with one goal in mind; I was going to make a good life for my child because I felt the odds were somewhat against him from the beginning [having no father and a teenaged mother.] When I look back, I realize there is a larger picture when you are a single mother. My child was teaching me how to grow up because I had to. I was trying to make a living, keep a roof over our heads and feed us. Overcoming those challenges made me the person I am today—someone I am proud of. I often wonder if I didn't have those challenges early in life, would I have had the drive, the character to do what I have done? We are sent only what we can handle in life. I find single mothers to be strong, and brave and courageous because they are responsible not only for taking care of their own lives, but they have the sole responsibility for raising, shaping and guid-

ing the life of another. That's the most important job any of us are ever given.

ST: Your life is about reinvention. What inspired you to keep changing, going, continue growing?

SS: When I was a child, I was filled with why me—poor me. I was a victim. I had a father who brought me a lot of unhappiness. I left my father's home to have my child. After a period of time, I realized I was doing a good job as a mother. It was then that I felt I could move forward and do something else. So, I tried the next thing and succeeded. Then fame came and along with it came some negatives. Still, I was filled with this overwhelming sense of... "The worst is over what is there to fear? The only thing that can happen to me in trying is failing. And I know I can survive failing. Whenever I've been given the big fist in life and get knocked down, I dust myself off and stand up again knowing, "Okay, I got knocked down, that isn't going to stop me. It just meant I was going in the wrong direction, so let's try another direction." Reinvention is looking at your circumstances and realizing it's either working or it's not. If it's not, you have to change it. The worst that will happen is you fail. So what? You keep trying, in another direction. This approach takes away the fear in life. I'm not afraid of failing and I think that's why I've succeeded.

ST: The biggest road block to change is fear. What can you share with women who want to make a change, but fear is holding them back?

SS: Fear is the only thing that will hold you back in life. There are so many people who are talented, gifted as human beings and have many opportunities, but never go anywhere with their lives because they are afraid to take the chance. Eliminate fear of failure from your life. Just proceed as though you will succeed. It's about self-esteem. Once you believe in yourself, then fear cannot permeate your being. I'm not afraid of risk. It's the risks I've taken that have moved me forward. You have to program yourself by reaffirming—emphasizing that you can do whatever you want. Finding answers to what sabotages our lives can be scary. It's important to pay attention to patterns of behavior. If you repeat the same mistakes over and over, you have to look at what you are doing and why. It all comes down to being truthful with yourself—facing yourself. You have to be able to admit your short-comings and failures. If you can't face these things, you will never be able to change the destructive patterns. We have to go back to where our patterns of behavior began and learn why. Only then can we understand how to change them and turn things around. Then we can start to



feel good about ourselves and begin to soar as a person and enjoy success in business. I believe we are sent things in life as a way for us to learn and grow. Instead, some people choose to stay a victim. When you stay a victim, the dysfunction, abuse and negativity win the power over your life and you become powerless as a person. When you choose to say, "How can I grow, what can I learn?" that's when you become empowered and you move forward as a person.

ST: What do you consider the building blocks for success?

SS: First, belief in yourself; use every obstacle as an opportunity to learn. Also, knowing what you want and then following through, and not letting other people along the way discourage you. Listen to the inner voice we all have that tells us "we can do it" and disregard all the people in our lives who along the way have told us "we can't do it."

ST: How do you handle disappointments and failures?

SS: I don't allow failure to defeat me any longer. You have to re-think it, shake it off and move on. Don't dwell on it. I fail all the time, but I also succeed. Failures are lessons on the way to success. ●