

Being a Woman in a MAN'S WORLD...

By Suzanne Takowsky

It's not easy being a woman in a man's world. Keep in mind I didn't say impossible — just not easy. I actually take votes (a show of hands) just to make sure I'm not the only female having difficulty with the do's and don'ts that a backward society continues to place on the tender gender even in the 21st century.

Here are examples I can't bear NOT to mention. In all my years of owning a car, I still cannot communicate with a mechanic. I suppose that's not hard to understand, considering every mechanic I've ever met is a man. This is not brain surgery. Do I have to hear sentences like "a battery of diagnostic tests to ascertain interference of precision and resolve complications?"

What I find hideous is that males do not experience similar problems when dishing nuts and bolts with their counterparts. They stand man to man, hands tucked neatly in their pants pockets, or folded in an appropriate manner of conclusion staring at each other like two menacing bulls. Their look is unmistakable: "Don't @%#& with me." It works! On the other hand, I have to wait until my dad comes to visit or scrounge up some male compadre to take with me when I do any business concerning an automobile. My dad doesn't get any sleep at night worrying about me having to take my car in for a tune-up. One time he actually had me put the mechanic on the phone with him (he lives in Utah) just to make sure I wouldn't get screwed with a leg-long list of over-charges I wouldn't understand.

Worse yet is the subject of trading my car in for a new one. My sons, Niko and Stephen become paralyzed with fear every time a car commercial comes on television and I look tempted. "Check the bluebook, check the dealer's invoice," my dad and sons chant like they are in a Saturday yoga class clearing negative vibes from their brains. Finally, I decided it was easier to just park my heap in my garage and take a cab or bum rides. Every car I wanted, they had to check how much gas it ate. Who cares when you are driving a convertible and feeling one with the universe cruising down Sunset Boulevard on a Sunday afternoon?

Unfortunately, the biggest slap in the face comes from the men who love me, want to protect me, and who insist on accompanying me on my excursions. "Don't go alone," they warn, as if I'm headed off to the dark side of the moon. "You know what happens when a woman goes to a mechanic," they chime in unison. "You need another set of eyes before you talk to a dealer about a trade." GEEZ LOUISE. Men DO NOT want the women they love in a room alone with a male mechanic or male car salesman. Why is that exactly? Does this suggest that males are untrustworthy? OMG. NEWS FLASH.

What else? Is every package containing electronic equipment I bring home contaminated with a virus ready to jumble the operating instructions the minute I break the seal? VCRs, cell phones, digital alarm clocks, need I say more? What am I supposed to do with eight pages of instructions transcribed in every language, except one I can understand? You just know a man is behind this sabotage. I guess it gives the male population reason to believe that women can't live without them. And guess what? We can't.

Is it a man's world? Well maybe, but, as James Brown so appropriately coos, "it wouldn't be nothing without a woman or a girl" to drive them crazy.

Seriously, I really don't care what makes a car run or how many miles I have to monitor before it needs a tune-up. Checking gas mileage at every stretch of the freeway, or counting the number of oil cans it takes to make my car purr is not high on my priority list. Certainly I would enjoy a car dealership whose department heads are female and speak my language. But if that's a stretch then, I think most women would agree that the ONLY thing important where our cars are concerned is that when we get in and turn the key—it goes. Seriously women just want point the arrow on "D" or "R" and enjoy the ride. ●

WOMEN make the WORLD go AROUND

By Suzanne Takowsky

Whoever said "You can't have it all," obviously wasn't aware of the mind-bending, willful determination, and non-wavering power behind a woman with conviction. A woman with purpose is a force to be reckoned with.

Knowing what you want out of life is wonderful. Making the decision to go after it is commendable. But hanging in there through failures, doubts, fears and anxieties, can be unbearable, but is essential.

Success is extremely hard to come by. Most of us look at women of achievement and credit their success to luck, or a divine intervention that put them in the right place at the right time. Actually it's quite the opposite. Women who have reached their goals and are basking in the glow of their accomplishments have one thing in common: An endless dedication and relentless perseverance.

Although it seems successful women have the world at their feet, believe me, it wasn't always so. In one way or another each has paid their dues. There is no free lunch for anyone. You pay now—you pay later, but the check always arrives.

The decision to take your rightful place in the world and claim power over your life is not an easy one. There are a million reasons not to go for it. That is of course, if you are willing to live a life full of excuses, compromises and regrets.

Whoever says success and triumph are easy to come by most probably has not yet reached a level of enviable success. It isn't easy to endure a daily mix of ongoing sacrifices, while making friends of failure and summoning the will to stay on a chosen path. But these are challenges that women meet head-on every day of their lives on their way to greatness.

Struggle has a way of making us face our fears. Not all of our challenges will end in triumph. Personal satisfaction and individual growth comes from knowing we had the guts to plan a strategy, put on our armor and ride into battle. We can't lose. Regardless of the outcome we have faced the enemy and he is us.

And a woman on a mission quickly learns these rules: Whatever it takes to get to the finish line, you do. The struggle, heartbreak and fear we go through to make it, doesn't count; they do not deserve a second thought.

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Overcoming our fears on the way to greatness is our biggest challenge. Each time we face what we dread the most, we get stronger and become less afraid of what's next. It is the old "sticks and stones can break my bones but names will never hurt me" routine, over and over again throughout our lives.

We can't own our power and take charge of our lives until we're willing to step up to the line and go to bat for ourselves. Whatever you want in this world is yours for the asking. Just be prepared to work for it. The question is not, "How do I get what I want out of life?" The question is, "How badly do I want it?" ●