



THE GATHERING

JUNE 2006

A Celebration of Tao and defiant women everywhere

July 1, 2006 ;

The TaoGirl Gathering

Issue Number One



Welcome , Taogirls

Well, here we are at Issue Number Two and I am so pleased to say that I've gotten very positive feedback after you all received the first Taogirl Gathering last month.

I've heard from Taogirls who wanted to share their own stories, or have comments, questions and suggestions. My vision for this newsletter was to make it "interactive" so The Gathering became a collaborative effort; an open forum which allows everyone to contribute. I couldn't be more pleased that so many of you are ready and willing to participate.

One Connecticut Taogirl, Marci, contacted me and said that in her estimation what was missing from the first newsletter was a clarification of what a Taogirl Group is. She pointed out that I had highlighted "Tao Uno" but for those who have not yet formed a group of their own I should explain a bit about the groups.

Marci, you are quite right. And so, Taogirls, here's the scoop:

A Taogirl Group is a group of Taogirls. I'm not being silly here. If you are a Taogirl and have friends who are Taogirls and you all want to come together to experience life and its transitions and challenges together – well, you are a Taogirl Group!

A TaoGirl Group finds a regular meeting time – be it once a month or more frequently – when they can meet for the sole purpose of supporting each other. As you read in last month's TaoGirl Gathering, "Tao Uno" meets monthly in someone's living room where they share wine and cheese, dilemmas and laughter. One TaoGirl Group meets in the great outdoors and hike together while another is planning on turning their meetings into pajama parties!

The wonderful thing about TaoGirl Groups is that there are no rules, per se. Sure, there must be some order or each meeting might turn rather chaotic (especially if that wine is flowing freely). But most important is the fact that we women be there to nurture, role model and help ease the path we all must travel.

I'd love to discuss with any of you the formation of your own TaoGirl Group and I bet any of the ongoing groups would be happy to offer advice and suggestions.

Being part of a TaoGirl Group is an amazing experience – I know, because I belong to one of my own and have been fortunate enough to be a guest at many others around the country. Feel free to email and ask about forming a group and let me help you get started!

thepath@taogirl.com

CJ

This month's TaoGirl Gathering will feature:

- ✚ A very special TaoGirl from Florida
- ✚ Our question and answer section
- ✚ The TaoGirl Wisdom of the Month
- ✚ A listing of my July travels – I would so love to meet you when I'm in your part of the world

Sharing stories is what the TaoGirl Gathering and TaoGirl Groups are all about.

Within minutes after sending out last month's Newsletter

I received an email from Rhonda M., a TaoGirl in Florida who wrote:

"I lost my husband to colon cancer almost 4 years ago. I never thought that I would be single and dating again. It has taken some time to find that person that makes me feel ALIVE again, so, I wanted to let all the ladies know that when we have given up HOPE, a miracle comes along! He makes me want to LIVE AGAIN!

When I asked Rhonda if she would share her story with us her immediate response was:

I have so much to share with the death of my husband and how I have become a stronger and better

person. Single again and dating.....that is enough to write about! I think that sharing stories helps you cope with everyday life.

Introducing-----Rhonda



C J: I cannot imagine the emotional and physical toll your husband's illness and passing took upon you. How did you cope during that very difficult time?

Rhonda: Our son was the main reason why I had to cope with what I was about to face. I had to be strong for the whole family and I found an inner strength that I never knew existed.

C J: Was there any one particular belief system that kept you going?

Rhonda: At the time, I thought that my belief in GOD was non-existent. How could he take my husband of 17 years away from my son and me. However, as time passed, I realized that he had a plan and I had to accept what that was. To this day, I am still unsure of Why and What his plans are for me, but, I am looking forward to a promising future!

C J: Was there a support system of friends or family to whom you could turn?

Rhonda: My family, friends & co-workers were there whenever I needed them. I want to take this time out to thank my mother who was always there by my side. But most importantly, my son came home one day from school and decided to quit the football team so that he could help. My husband and I have been blessed with a wonderful son and in my heart I know that he watches over him.

C J: At what point in the years subsequent to your husband's passing did you begin to date again?

Rhonda: About a 1 ½ after his passing that I decided that I just couldn't sit home, lie in bed and feel like the world didn't exist or better yet, that I didn't exist!

C J: What is it that propelled you to do so?

Rhonda: My husband and I had a discussion one day. I can remember it so clearly, he told me that he wanted me to find happiness and that he knew that I would make another man proud to call me his wife again.

C J: Are there role models to whom you could look for encouragement?

Rhonda: There is only one person that comes to mind and that is best friend Maggie. Maggie and I have been friends now for 19 years. She was the one that I turned to when I thought that my life was not worth living. Maggie kept things in perspective for me and kept reminding me that I have a son that needs his mother and I had to be strong for him. The one thing that I learned is that you can think that you have friends, but, do you really know the meaning of TRUE FRIENDSHIP? For me, I have found that in her!



Rhonda and Maggie

C J: Now that you are back on the dating scene is it different than it was before you first had met your husband? And, if so, in what ways?

Rhonda: Yes. When I dated back in the 80's, we could go to a dance club and meet a decent person. From my experience today, the bar scene is a meat market! To be perfectly honest, I don't remember having to play games when I was dating back then. But, then again, I was young and hadn't had much experience to know the difference. This became apparent when I started online dating. Some men, not all, are only looking for a one night stand rather than being in a committed relationship. Also, keep in mind that in your 40's and dating, you are dealing with "baggage". Instead of moving forward, men continue living in the past rather than moving forward. When a good woman like me comes along, they have a hard time believing that there are still some of us left in this world that believe in the true sacrament of marriage.

C J: In what ways is the "dating scene" the same?

Rhonda: It still all about having fun whether it be going to dinner, movies and just getting to know

that person.

C J: You wrote that you have become a stronger and better person. How so?

Rhonda: When the doctor walked through the waiting room and sat down to tell me “I’m sorry to tell you that the cancer has spread to all his major organs and he only has six months to live”, at that very moment, I knew that I was about to take on a role that I was not prepared for. I spent everyday with my husband, Jimmy, watching a man that I have loved for more then 17 years fade away from me. I now took on the role as my husbands nurse. I dressed him, changed his diapers, administer drugs to take his pain away and that point, I then realize how STRONG I had become.

Each day that I wake up, I know in my heart that I made a difference in my husband’s life. But, how sad is that....that you lose the death of a loved one to become that better person?

C J: You wanted to share your story with others so you might be of help to them. Do you recognize what a strong and positive role model you are to others?

Rhonda: Funny you should ask that question.....! I remember one day, my friend at work received a phone call from her husband. I overheard the conversation and he called just to tell her how his day was and that he loved her. At that moment, she said goodbye and hung up the phone. I turned to her and said, “you need to call your husband back and tell him how much she loved him because there might not be a tomorrow”!

C J: What would you tell a woman who has recently become widowed or divorced about the future and the possibilities it holds?

Rhonda: I am not going to lie to you; it will be the most difficult time in your life! You need to keep yourself focused and don’t lose sight of who you were before a death or a divorce. Don’t allow your friends and family to tell you what to do; ONLY YOU will be able to make those decisions! Once time goes by, you will decide what changes you need to make to feel good about YOU! With all the changes that have taken place in American courtship, everyone agrees once you find it, nothing beats true love!

C J: Is there anything you’d like to share that I haven’t thought to ask within these questions?

Rhonda: The one lesson that took me awhile to learn was that I was now in control of my own destiny. Rhonda had to make decisions on her own without her spouse. Making my own decisions is another way of how I grew into becoming a stronger and better woman. I don’t know what my future holds, but, I am looking forward to it for the first time!

Remember, you are exceptional; you are distinctive; you are matchless; you are rare; you are brilliant; you are special; you are extraordinary; you are excellent; you are an individual you are UNIQUE!

My final thought....We as humans take life for granted, so why do we have to wait to change our lives?



Rhonda

Thank you, Rhonda, for your open, honest, compassionate and encouraging words. Thank you for being a Tao girl! - CJ

I'd love to hear from all of you Tao girls out there. Please email and let me share your story with our readers. www.taogirl.com

TAOGIRL WISDOM OF THE MONTH

"The only way out is through"



Carl Jung

It's often difficult to find one's way "through." What situation have you found yourself in the midst of, knowing that you had to forge ahead? Think about this, send me an email and let me share your story with our Tao girl readers.

It's ? time

Taogirl loves hearing from you – if you have a question or comment send it in.

Today I'm on my own with a response, but if you want to add your own thoughts to my answer, or discuss the question, please send in your comments and I'll post them in the next newsletter.

Is there a way to unite the yin and yang?...I see so much literature and general attention paid to women and women's issues in media as well as new women's movements popping up all the time but I rarely see groups that arise that bring women and men together -- yin and yang -- non-exclusive groups for all to enjoy.

My confession is that I have never been much of a "sisterhood" kind of gal, and have always gravitated toward more genetically diverse groupings -- males and females, hanging out in harmony. My husband is by far my closest and best friend. My women friends, who have been wonderful, disperse when they hear my husband is on his way home.

What I'm getting at is that with all of these gatherings and groups tailored specifically to women and their needs, isn't there anyone clamoring for groups that bring everyone together and bridge that gap between sisterhood and peoplehood? Do you feel the divide? Am I missing a salient and obvious ingredient that tells us that women need more sisterhood? And am I the only one who notices that as women strive for empowerment more and more, these new movements appear to divide the sexes even more strongly? Is there a solution -- a way to unite the yin and yang, enabling everyone to contribute to the wellness and empowerment to each other?

All the Best,
Cara

*MY RESPONSE TO CARA...*I agree with you that there is room in our society for more open communication between the sexes. You are fortunate that your husband is your best friend. My husband, Joe, is certainly my best friend, too. That being said, I still feel the need for female support and encouragement. It is only my Taogirlfriends who truly understand my emotional life. And I believe that is true for most, if not all, women out there. We women have the ability to communicate on a personal and different level – understanding each other's sensitivities and needs. After all, so many of our experiences are not exclusive to each of us – we have all shared many of the same transitions and challenges. True, the men in our lives also face the joys and frustrations that we find on our paths, but not necessarily in quite the same manner as we do. We are made of different “stuff”, we men and women, and our thoughts and emotions reflect that. Yes, your husband can sympathize with your burdens and share in your joys, but he can't emphasize – he hasn't “been there, done that” quite like your girlfriends have.

That, dear Taogirl, is why I encourage women to gather in Taogirl Groups. It is not meant to exclude the wonderful men in our lives but rather to enhance our experiences with another (and I believe very important) route to guide us along our paths.

Dear Taogirls,

Cara has said to me that she is eager to hear not only my response to her question, but that of other Taogirls, as well.

Please help me honor her request and send me an email with your thoughts on this topic so I can post it in The Taogirl Gathering in August.

thepath@taogirl.com

Thank you,

CJ

On the road again.....

Here's where I plan to be in July

HOME!

I intend to spend time writing, being with my kids (especially my daughter who is coming in all the way from Tucson just to see me!), babysitting and, in general, hanging out.

But I never know when a last minute booking – either in person, radio or t.v. – will appear. So please check the travels page of the website for updates.

This is also the perfect time for me to plan late summer and fall workshops and speaking events – if any of you Taogirls know of a group that would like to have me come visit – please let me know!

Some final words:

I love being able to send you THE TAOGIRL GATHERING and look forward to hearing from

you and having you participate every month. The success of the GATHERING and the success of TAOGIRL depends on all of us working together to spread the word. Please help me by becoming an active contributor with your questions, comments, TaoGirl Group news and ideas on how to expand the scope of the publication.

My gratitude goes to Rhonda and Cara for so openly sharing their stories, comments and questions with us this month. Your words bring support and encouragement to all of us and I am proud to know you. Thank you for being such remarkable TaoGirl role models!

For information, or to share your thoughts and wisdom with us: thepath@taogirl.com