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## C.J. Golden: A 'defiant' woman accepts life on her own terms

By Andrea Valluzzo

A coworker has an inspirational note by her computer that simply asks, "What would you do if you weren't afraid?"

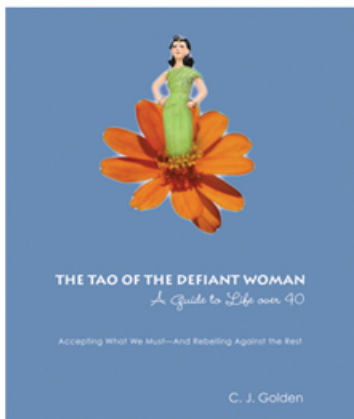
The defiant woman doesn't have to ponder that question; she's already living life on her own terms. In her first book, "The Tao of the Defiant Woman: A Guide to Life over 40: Accepting What We Must - And Rebelling Against the Rest," Caryn "C.J." Golden of Newtown writes of women who accept what they must and rebel against the rest. Every subject from relationships and love to body image and the changing world is carefully and cleverly explored here with relevant quotes sprinkled throughout from well-known pundits and famous women.

The 129-page book, released in March, is light and easy reading. It's not meant to be a primer in civil disobedience but offers guidance in how a woman can learn to go with the flow yet express a healthy dose of defiance to achieve peace and help her fulfill her life's goals as she ages.

The word "defiance" has a negative connotation. Children who are defiant are often seen as naughty but Golden says living defiantly is living boldly. "It means to live fully . . . and not to give up when adversity strikes," she said.

The ancient Chinese philosophy of Tao (pronounced dao) means "the way or the path" and can be loosely taken to mean "going with the flow." The two concepts of Tao and defiance may seem at odds on first inspection but they exist in close harmony, Golden says. Living defiantly according to Tao means that you realize that change is inevitable and you accept what comes and react to each situation as you can.

Golden, 60, began her book several years ago talking to women and hosting gatherings for "Tao girls" (which



she came to call herself and the defiant women she interviewed) as part of her research. In her book, she outlines five principles of the Tao of the defiant woman:

- The defiant woman recognizes that her body is changing and she is thankful that it continues to work as well as it does.
- The defiant woman understands that her relationships are ever evolving and she accepts that, for she knows she's a work in progress, too.
- The defiant woman treasures her friends and draws strength from the community of women.
- The defiant woman seeks positive role models to help guide her and strives to be a like example for her daughters.
- The defiant woman knows the world around her continues to develop and is content, because there is always something new and exciting to learn.

Golden, whose youthful face always has a smile at the ready, says women should not fear their wrinkles but embrace the smile lines as signs of a happy life well-lived. "What's wrong with looking 60?" she says. "This is who I am, this is how I'm looking."

She says she would never discourage anyone from cosmetic surgery but is concerned what message it sends to today's daughters when they see older

women getting face lifts and tummy tucks. "You have to feel good about yourself and no amount of cosmetic surgery is going to fix that," she says. In the book, she talks about being comfortable in one's own skin and weaves in stories from countless women she has met who serve as examples to others on how to lead a defiant life.

She has led a defiant life of her own, refusing to be pigeonholed into rigid expectations of how she should live her life. Married while she was in college, she graduated early and had her son in what would have been her senior year. Years later, she divorced and then pursued an acting career in New York and then Los Angeles. She spent about three years commuting back and forth for jobs and landed some role on soap operas and commercials before realizing it wasn't the life for her.

"I wasn't willing to live there (L.A.) full-time," she said. It was, however, a chance to experience her lost youth. "It was fabulous, I loved it." A native of Long Island, she lived in New Fairfield for 33 years while married and raising her two children. She worked for 15 years as a speech and hearing therapist and started the public schools' speech and language pro-

gram there. She began doing summer stock and regional theater work, which led to her bi-coastal acting jobs. She later worked as a group sales manager for the Candlewood Playhouse. She has lived in Newtown for the last six years.

In the last two decades, Golden has been married, divorced, remarried, seen her children grow up, lost her parents, and become a proud grandmother all while living a vibrant life. "I keep reinventing myself," she says. And in doing so, she is serving as an inspiration for many women, both young and old, to not be afraid of what life brings but to live defiantly and seize every moment.

C.J. Golden will give talks and sign copies of her book, "The Tao of the Defiant Woman: A Guide to Life over 40, Accepting What We Must - And Rebelling Against the Rest" (\$19.95, Eronel Publishing) at The Barn Gallery on Route 37 in New Fairfield on April 30 at 2 p.m. and at the Barnes & Noble on Backus Avenue in Danbury on May 6 at 7:30 p.m. The book is available in retail bookstores and online. Visit [www.taogirl.com](http://www.taogirl.com) for more information.

