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LIWomen.com - LI Businesswoman

*Making A Difference*

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By Lhea Scotta

FEATURING: Duffy Spencer, Ph.D



What a great time of year to interview Dr. Duffy Spencer, a bright, refreshing individual who exudes an aura of unconditional acceptance. With the metamorphosis of summer to fall, we recognize a woman who has positively changed herself and continues to be instrumental in constructively changing the lives of others. "Dr. Duffy" is a successful Gestalt therapist and corporate trainer who specializes in the human side of business. She hosts a radio talk show and is recognized for her public speaking.

*Tell me about your business.*

I actually have two businesses. One is Productive People. I conduct trainings for managers on the "human side of business," i.e., Team Building, Coaching, Leadership Development and Conflict Resolution.

My other business is WINGS™ (Women In Network Giving Support) in which I counsel, run support groups and retreats for women.

I help women with addictive behaviors learn to forgive themselves. I support them in refraining their self-destructive behavior, as it is the only way they know to take care of themselves.

*Do you live by a basic philosophy?*

I am an Ethical Humanist. This is a non-theistic religion. Our belief is that all life is sacred. We all have a divine spark and through this we bring out the best in others; in so doing we bring out the best in ourselves. We value deed before creed. Additionally, I live a Gestalt approach to life. This means living authentically, and creatively connecting with one's self and others. Interestingly enough, the philosophy of Gestalt dovetails with my Ethical Humanist philosophy.

*Are there people that were catalysts in your life?*

Yes, there are three people. Firstly, Miss Campa, a teacher in junior high school. I was growing up in an alcoholic family and I was flunking Algebra. She was a Social Studies teacher who reached out to me during my lunch period. She relearned Algebra to specifically

help me go from failing to an 82 on the final. Miss Campa was the first adult who spoke to me like I was a human being! She validated me as to my essential goodness and beauty. Secondly, my therapist Meda Steiner. I was married by the age of eighteen to an older, abusive man. As a result, I developed claustrophobia and agoraphobia. I never knew I didn't feel safe until I felt "emotionally safe" with Dr. Steiner. After three weeks, I was cured of all of my phobias. She helped me to see it was not elevators and subways I was afraid of being trapped in; it was in my life. I didn't know at the time how to get out of my abusive marriage. Dr. Steiner helped me to believe that I had the ability to do it. I realized that no man was going to rescue me; I had to rescue myself! Lastly, there is Lyn Dobrin. She helped me see what a healthy family lives like and she believed in me. She knew the proper combination of both supporting me and challenging me.

*Do you volunteer your time to worthy causes?*

The Ethical Humanist Society (former Youth Leader and Assistant for Special Services)  
The LI Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.(Leadership Council)  
Nassau County National Organization for Women – Radio Talk Show Host for their program, "Speaking NOW"

*What have you found rewarding in your career?*

Getting a Ph.D. in my thirties. This personally gave me confidence to professionalize key issues that I was passionate about. My career keeps me in a state of constant creativity and choice.

*Do you have advice for our women readers?*

Live authentically. It is difficult for people to play perfect roles with their perfect masks. Do not be in denial about your own strengths and weaknesses. Be willing to make the effort to forge your own path. Be clear about who you really are and what you are all about, so that you are not working hard to push a chest up a mountain only to find it filled with stones (like false goals such as status, prestige, material things). Recognize your true needs. Resist the temptation to buy into cultural messages of being compulsively self-reliant, as in the belief that "I have to do it myself or something is wrong with me." Part of being self-supporting is knowing when to reach out to others as resources for yourself. We confuse support as being negative, but there is negative and positive support. Look for all the sources of nourishment in your environment. Open your eyes to all the bounty of the universe that is there for you.

*What do you do for fun?*

I love dancing with my husband - ballroom, Latin, and rock and roll. Also, spending time with my friends.

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