

CINDY LANGE-KUBICK

Self-help books get you down



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Never have I felt quite so inadequate as I did this weekend standing in front of the self-help section at the bookstore.

Twelve hundred titles — and that number more than triples when you include the thousands more in the psychology, sexuality, addiction, fitness and diet sections aimed at fixing, firming, reducing, relieving and revitalizing my hips, hormones, cognitive processes and self-esteem.

Oh, the scourge, the humiliation of never being enough, never being "whole."

It was a moment of truth. I could continue down the path of the self-help junkie, or I could accept my imperfections and get on with my life.

I decided to bail out. To revel in my defects, to celebrate my shortcomings. To say to myself, as Barbara Graham recommends in her book "Women Who Run With The Poodles," "It's OK to be partial. Say it loud, I'm partial and proud."

The last self-help book I purchased sits accusingly by my bedside, daring me to open it.

Last winter I had — or so I thought — the primal feminine urge to run with the pack. So I went out and purchased Clarissa Pinkola Estes' best-selling tome, "Women Who Run With The Wolves."

The book jacket told me that by reading the book, I would become enlightened and empowered, filled with insight, wisdom and love. Pinkola told me to get in touch with my instinctual self, to take risks, to be the wild and free woman I was meant to be. "The shadow of the wild woman is lurking behind us," she asserts.

If we call her, she will come. But where is she? The only wild women I ever see are rabidly pushing shopping carts through

Super Saver on Saturday mornings.

So I tried to align myself with my inner wolflike being.

After all, wimmin, wymmon and women alike were reading the book. Letting their hair down, howling their primal longings and reclaiming their instinctual selves. Trying to keep up with Iron John and Jack Nicholson.

I confess; I never made it past the introduction.

After all, my idea of risk-taking is eating at a restaurant with a low rating from the health department or walking across open metal gratings on downtown sidewalks.

And if I were truly an instinctual being, I would have won the lottery by now.

Besides, whenever I close my eyes and try to get in touch with my true nature, I either fall asleep or start fantasizing about Rice Krispie bars.

And the closest I come to running with my wolfish sisters are the four months every winter when I discard my Lady Gillette. Ahh, the freedom of leg hair.

Anyway, most of the women I see aren't running with wolves — they're running away from them.

Women who run with wolves? Women who run with poodles? What self-respecting, self-discovered, self-confident, self-satisfied woman would read this stuff?

The same ones who buy,

"Women and Self-Esteem," "Be Your Own Best Friend" (what, and take yourself out to lunch?), "Women and Fatigue: Life Changing Help for Your Personal Energy Crisis" (Please. Does this rate a book? Just tell Homer to get his fat behind off the couch and fix dinner) and "The Women's Comfort Book" (I expected that one to be filled with M&M's and coupons for Baskin Robbins ice cream).

I propose an alternative. My new book, "Woman Who Jogs With a Limp — Bad Knees From Too Much Time Spent Scrubbing Floors."

It would be filled with affirmations such as: "I thrive and prosper on five hours of sleep a night" and "I am a complete woman — I can pick up dirty laundry with my toes while carrying two bags of groceries, nursing a baby, reading to a preschooler and contracting gluteus maximus."

Women would be encouraged to express their rage (which they have just rediscovered in the above affirmations) by torching their kitchens and shredding photos of Dan Quayle, Pat Robertson and John Wayne Bobbitt.

No howling allowed. I think it could work.

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YOUSUF BASHIR

Pakistan's diversity lives on



America is a mother nation to a lot of countries and is a continent by itself. Everyone knows and dreams about coming here. The sad thing is, most Americans are unaware of the world outside their "global America."

I didn't pay any attention to it. Like most of us, I took my nationality for granted, not knowing it played an important role in my life.

It always did; I just never realized it. Not until I came to the United States did I understand the importance, integrity and actual connotation of "nationality."

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This column is not just basic information to the Americans about Pakistan but also an awakening to those Pakistanis who have forgotten their culture and identity while trying to blend into the Western fabric.

Ancient but modern. Pakistan, a young nation forged in the crucible of one of the world's oldest civilizations, lies east of Iran and Afghanistan and west of India. The mountain peak K-2 lies in the north, and the waves from the Arabian Sea crash on Pakistan's southern shores.

Although this newly born country emerged on Aug. 14, 1947, the Hindu Kush mountains funneled waves of colonizers from Central and Western Asia for thousands of years.

Vicissitudes of history and variations of geography on the Indian subcontinent have created an intricately patterned cultural fabric, woven but also rent along strands of language, religion and culture. Over the millennia, newcomers by land or sea have added to the fabric design: Aryans, Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Moguls and Britishers, among others. People of this distinctive world show and defy generalization.

"The Islamic Republic of Pakistan" is the official name of Pakistan, and the majority of the population is Muslim.

The national language is Urdu, which used to be called the language of a caravan, as this area was ruled by people from different origins. Urdu is a combination of many languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Hindi and even English.

Pakistan is divided into four different provinces: the Sindh, the Punjab, the Northwest Frontier Province and the Baluchistan. Amazingly, all four provinces differ from each other in all walks of life. Different languages are spoken in each of the provinces.

Even the foods, the clothing and the cultural settings in these regions are different. The differences stem from the early settlers, who all had different cultural origins.

The Sindh is the home of the great Sufis and Saints. It is located in southern Pakistan. The endless sands of the Thar desert line the east, the barren Kirthar Mountains lie to the west, and the Arabian Sea lies to the south. Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, which shelters about 7 million people, is in the Sindh.

The home of the farmers and the land of five rivers, the Punjab, lies above the Sindh. The five rivers are tributaries of the Indus and have played their part in converting Punjab into the richest and most fertile province of Pakistan. Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, is in this province.

Baluchistan is Pakistan's biggest province, yet it has the smallest population. The dry land comprises

plateaus and plains, and only the Baluchis people can stand the severe dry climate and the rocky barren mountains. To the west of Baluchistan lies Afghanistan; the sturdy Baluchis are the descendents of the Persian Afghans.

The Northwest Frontier Province, commonly called Sarhad, is made up of mountains and lush green valleys. The majority of the people who live in the frontier belong to the Pathan group of tribes — the world's largest tribal society. Pathans are known for their hospitality and are brave warriors.

As a tourist, one will find a mosaic of resolute and time-tested cultures woven together by the pure faith of Islam. These cultures are expressed in the beautiful mosques, sculptures, tapestries, literature and paintings. Likewise, the beautiful handicrafts of the people bear witness to their adroit skills garnered over the centuries.

Underlying all this are magnificent vistas of a land of mountains and plains, fields and orchards, farmlands and sweeping river valleys.

In the north lie the Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountain ranges and, of course, the well-known peak K-2. The mighty river Indus terminates in the south, in a delta that gave birth and vigor to what is perhaps the world's earliest civilization.

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Thursday Night Bar Exam

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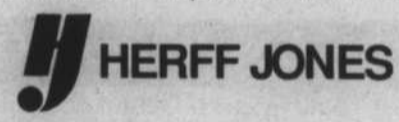


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