

Sex and the single vendor — you had to ask

I think the most talked about subject on my corner has to do with ones relationship with their spouse. I talk to many people in the course of the day, and after we get to know each other, they will often talk about their relationship. It's not always a married relationship. Sometimes I talk to men about their girlfriend, or women about the man in their life. I also talk to gay and lesbian men and women about their partners. Basically, I listen to what they have to say, and if asked, I'll give them whatever wisdom that I have, and try to answer their questions.

In some cases, they are not seeking advice; they are looking for someone to listen to them. It gives them a chance to vent and have someone listen. After they have told me the situation, they seem to be able to come up with an answer or if not, they will ask me what I think. I will tell them that I will give them the advice that I would give to my brother or sister, and then explain what I would do in this situation.

After consulting with quite a few of my customers and friends, I think I have a clearer picture of how to address this issue. It seems to me that in any relationship, the most important issue is a commitment to each other. If you look at couples who have been together a long time, you usually find that they decided to commit their lives to each other. This means that they share equally in the relationship and all decisions that are made.

The divorce rate in the United States is 50 percent. There are reasons for this and I'll expand on them. For the most part,

MY CORNER

John Thompson



John Thompson sells Street Roots at the corner of 12th and Couch in Northwest Portland. He also volunteers at Julia West House, and enjoys helping folks with financial questions.

couples are not willing to make the commitment to each other, and this starts the problems. You would think that infidelity would be the biggest cause of divorce, however, that's not the case. The most common cause of divorce is money. Failure to agree on how it's made, and how it's spent. This causes a lot of arguments and eventually ends relationships.

Besides the problems couples have with the money issues, infidelity rears its ugly head in many relationships. The need to wander and look for something different has caused many relationships to go south. There are many reasons for this including raging male and female hormones, or one partner or the other not wanting to engage in sex, thereby leaving the other partner looking elsewhere. I learned in psychology 101 that the sex drive is the dominant drive of the brain and it seems to be true.

In my case, I was faithful to my wife for twenty five years. At that point in time she decided that she was no longer interested in sexual activity. However, I still wanted that as part of my life. We had many

discussions about it, but we could not resolve the issue. So, I found other outlets for my sexual desires. I discovered other people who were in somewhat the same situation and proceeded to engage in sexual activity with them. I was married a total of 32 years, the last seven never having sex with my wife.

It was amazing that it took her seven years to catch me. However, I kept letting my behavior become more risky and eventually she found out that I was having sex with others. We decided to divorce and for the most part, it was a peaceful separation. I have now been divorced for six years, and my life has changed quite a bit. I'm not complaining, I get to do what I want to do, go where I want to go, and even find companionship occasionally. After all, I'm old but not dead yet.

I'm the perfect example of what not to do if you want to sustain a relationship. I made my decision and I'm living with it. Some people have asked me why you didn't try marriage counseling. My answer is fairly simple. I did some research on it, even talked to my wife about it, but decided not to do it. The main reason I didn't is marriage counselors don't have to have any special training. Anyone can hang out a shingle that says marriage counselor. I also discovered that most marriage counselors are divorced. It makes as much sense to see them as it does a priest. If the marriage counselor is divorced, or a priest has never been married, my feeling is that the advice you get may not answer the issues that you have. I'm not saying that all marriage counselors are duds, but if

you're thinking about it, do some research before you outlay a bunch of cash and still end up in divorce court.

There are lots of other causes of couples ending relationships but it all starts with not committing to each other. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, anger issues, the list is endless and in some cases, separation is the best result that can be achieved. It saves lives, and allows both the abuser and the abused to get the help they need. States are getting tougher on deadbeat dads or in some cases deadbeat moms on child support and that's a plus. It doesn't guarantee that the children will be taken care of, but it's a lot better then it was 20 years ago before child-support laws were strengthened.

So there you have it. This was a very difficult subject for me to write about, but I promised you I would do it. I'm sure you have your own ideas of what makes a successful relationship and would like to hear your ideas. You can do this a couple of different ways. Stop by my corner at 12th Avenue and NW Couch and chat with me about it. I'm there usually seven days a week from 8 a.m. until noon. Or, you can email me at: mignonne_thompson_john@yahoo.com. I'd like to hear your comments. If you want to write a rebuttal, I'll include it in my next column.

Up next, I'll be ending my series on relationships with co-workers. I write the column for every other issue so this will appear in the second issue after this one. I hope you are enjoying my thoughts, and would like to hear from you.

THOMAS, from page 12

administration, and one of the biggest stories of the past year has been the politicizing of the Justice Department, which resulted ultimately in the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. President-elect Obama has now nominated former deputy attorney general Eric Holder to the position, but he comes with a familiar controversy in that in 1999, Holder is accused of pushing subordinates to drop their opposition to clemency to members of Puerto Rican terrorist organization. What's your assessment of this appointment?

H.T.: I think he'll be a good attorney general. I think he has a good sense of honor and law. Obviously everybody is going to be fought. The Republicans are gearing up to make trouble. They don't have the power, but they can do it. Gonzales was probably just awful. I mean, torture? Secret prisons? And all the justice department people, not all, but many approved of such a horror. They way he hung that albatross around the neck of every American - secret prisons, torture, water boarding.

J.Z.: With Holder's nomination, and the other appointments that President-elect Obama is making, what does that tell you, with all your years of experience, about what the tone is for this administration and what it is going to be doing?

H.T.: Not gonna be bold. He's going to walk down the middle line. He's going to be as careful and cautious as he was in the campaign. He's going to try to be all things to everyone, and he doesn't understand, he needs courage... The whole idea is that people want him, but they want him to do the right thing. And he has the possibility, he has so much power in this presidency to do the right thing. He should not compromise and he should not keep his

promises to his big donors.

J.Z.: You mentioned earlier about Gaza. Obama has said that there's only one president at a time...

H.T.: Oh bull. Why didn't he say that during the campaign? He sure has been silent. You're never silent when people are being slaughtered.

J.Z.: Looking forward, what's the first question you're going to ask President Obama?

H.T.: Well, I think he'll be asked many questions about the economy, and I would say how soon is he going to stop the killing across the world that we're involved in? I think that his answer will be very cautious, that we're trying and so forth. We plan to get out of Iraq in 16 months and I'll tell him why not now. If you know you're leaving, then get out.

J.Z.: What do you think are the major stories that the media needs to jump on in the coming years?

H.T.: I think they will jump on the economy, what's being done. So many people are suffering in this country. But I think we'll be able to test him in many ways in terms of what he does in foreign policy. If he's going to run scared, and follow Bush's model, we're in trouble.

J.Z.: The relationship between The Bush administration and the press corps has certainly been strained and in many ways been shut down. Is that the way business is going to be done from here on out. Are we every going to see it go back to the Fourth Estate that the media once was?

H.T.: I think so. It's possible. I think the press is going to very kind to him. So that's good. But I don't think they should be easy on him.

J.Z.: Is it good to be kind to the president?

H.T.: No. I mean, you can be civil and you should be polite. You have one chance in the barrel. It's a privilege to ask the president a question, and he should take the question. And the question should be important to everybody in the world.

J.Z.: You've been doing this for nearly 50 years now. Why is it important for you to continue working into what will be your 10th administration?

H.T.: For one thing, it's important for me to keep learning. There's nothing that can replace being there and asking the questions I know should be asked.

J.Z.: If you don't ask those questions, who will?

H.T.: There's nobody around now. I'm looking. When I was going back and forth with Dana Perino, and she said they killed people, they did this and that, and I said, 'so do we.' When it was over, I stood up and I said 'where is everybody?' And this was on an open mic. There was silence in the press room. And then when I went back to my office. I got many calls and they said, 'We're here. We're here.'

J.Z.: But you don't see, then, the people who are ready to step.

H.T.: They perhaps don't have my causes. And my causes are peace, helping people, help the poor, the sick, the maimed. What other purpose should we have? Why should we help bankers who are multi-millionaires, and not help people who are hungry and need shelter? I don't understand why this wouldn't be of interest to every one.

J.Z.: Do you have high hopes for the media or are you concerned for its well

being?

H.T.: I have very high hopes for them, but I know that everyone's under the gun, in the sense that they don't have a job. Lots of jobs have been lost and newspapers are folding, so I can't ask others to do what I might not do. The point is that a lot of the publishers are selling their papers because they're not making a 25 percent profit, and they have never made that kind of money. If you

were a publisher, newspapers used to be your contribution to the community. Usually you made your money in other fields. I think we've lost it because it got to Wall Street

and Wall Street doesn't know or care anything about our right to know. You can't have a democracy without an informed people and that's where it comes from — newspapers. But I don't think those who buy up newspapers care particularly anymore of keeping the people informed. They care about their pockets.

J.Z.: What do you think then about the internet media where you have a much more free and open source of information.

H.T.: I don't want everyone with a laptop thinking they're a journalist, when they don't have any of our standards or principles, or the sense that you give everyone a chance. And you can ruin lives, ruin reputations. You have a lot of freedom to say anything. At a newspaper at least, you have editors, you have people knowing you have to toe the line, you have to be honorable.

This interview was originally broadcast on "We The People" on KBOO FM, 90.7. To hear the complete interview, go to kboo.fm/WethePeople