

Women, Breast Cancer, Food And Men

By Louise LeBrun

The entangled threads of my own thoughts tug at notions of women and leadership; women and breast cancer; the need women seem to have to apologize when not agreeing or when finding something lacking; food and its stranglehold on women and their bodies; and last, but most definitely not least, women and men. Were these neatly laid out in some pattern or framework, it would be much easier for me to collect my thoughts, one leading nicely to the next, formed in reason and supported by an obvious logic... but such is not the case.

It is so much easier inside myself when that neat, logical pathway is there. I can feel confident and comfortable in the tidiness that logic seems to bring to a natural organization of information. However, what moves inside me does not feel like it will lead to answers. It feels much more like pieces of questions that, if asked, will somehow peel away to reveal the much larger, far more important question that is the underpinning of the chaos in my own mind – and THAT will bring some kind of relief by allowing a ‘truth’ to become identifiable so that I can say ‘Ah, yes! There it is! That’s what it’s about!’

Yet, while I ponder how best to proceed, it all just sits there like a large meal taking far too long to digest.

And so it begins with women.

Women. We are an interesting specimen, indeed. We know we are more...we know we want more...and yet we seem so unwilling to just take! We want, but even more we want to be invited to take. Permission given by other than self, that we may be our Self. Strange notion, indeed!

Add to that the need to include everybody. The need to make sure that others are ok with our desire/need/want to take...even when permission is granted... unable to be/have more than anyone else without ensuring that we have at least, invited and tended to.

Women and men. Our apparent need to find ways to ensure that we do not imply (how dare we!) that we must move forward on our own. That at this time in the world, the vast majority of men will not engage differently because they cannot engage differently! In this moment, far more than not have been taken hostage by their own history and their genetics and over time, they have

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created eyes that can no longer see. Even though women can see, it is as if we feel the need to apologize for that and be sure to hold tight to the arm of men and insist - despite evidence to the contrary - that so can they.

Breast cancer. It's not going away. Not only is it not going away, it's spreading around the world. Glancing through recent observations on screen and in print, it's clear that there is much more to say about it. However, MY body tells me that there is an urgent need to pay attention. I don't need anyone else to tell me that.

Women and their bodies. Food. Body. Connected and yet, one not really having much to do with the other. Body shape. Body size. Body mass - or lack thereof. Food as salve. Food as punishment. Food as temporary memory loss. Food as distraction. Food as a way of purging ourselves of the truth of our own lives. Food as the cork in the bottle of our own outpouring of rage. Just how much of it has nothing to do with staying alive...staying well....and has so much more to do with acting out what we dare not engage directly?

And how are they all connected? Because I know they are...

I know that women and our (un)willingness to lead has something to do with men.

I know that women and our need to apologize when we see what they do not, has something to do with men.

I know that women and breast cancer has something to do with men.

I know that women and food and our bodies has something to do with men.

Does that mean it's about men? It can be - and much more, it's about women. About how we abandon ourselves. How we pull in and make ourselves small. How we hold our breath so that we cannot be found. How we make ourselves crazy by knowing we are so much more and yet can't seem to bring ourselves up to our full measure in the event that we tower over another. How we shuffle along, stooped with head down, as we carry on our backs the myths of the obligations and responsibilities that have long defined our purpose in the culture, crippling ourselves in the process and exhausting ourselves on the journey when we have barely begun.

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Although it feels like a paradox, here's what I believe: men don't need me to take care of them or tend to them or make excuses for them. What men need from me is for me to be real; to claim what I see and engage; to move in the direction and with the speed that is who I am and not be less in my misguided need to coddle them. They don't need it! They are very much up to reclaiming their own lost territory of Self! And when I do make myself less from my desire to be 'caring' and 'compassionate' and 'considerate', I sabotage it all by losing momentum and focus, and getting stuck in the morass of 'what is' when all that 'could be' fades into my habits of being. Perhaps we need to redefine caring, compassionate and considerate so that we can give without being consumed.

Women are dying. And men are dying, too. In body and in spirit. Losing interest in living the lives that we have because we cannot give ourselves permission to create the lives that we want.

If women do not break free from the very habits of culture that have taught them to be grateful for their bondage, there is no hope for the men, either. Women MUST make this journey alone and in the company of each other. I walk my path alone - no one can walk it for me - and when I look right and left, I see other women walking their path, alone.

On this trek, there is neither time nor place to carry another. It is up to women to find a new place to stand and take on the shaping and the creating. We must leave base camp and head up the mountain, becoming willing to make the climb on our own, facing its treacherous terrain and inclement weather. Are we up to it?

This is not an easy thing to do since we know that men have been making this climb for generations. "They know so much more about it! They have maps and signposts and tools! Maybe we can bring them with us so that we don't get lost!" And in doing so, we will only go where they have already gone - and that will not serve any of us.

I have sons. I have a life partner. I have a brother. I have a father. I love them all - and I am responsible for none of them. My sons are their own unique presence and will shape their lives as they see fit. So will my partner and my brother and my father. Regardless of what I think they can be or should be, they define their lives. And the lives they define, I take no responsibility for. It is

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THIS approach that keeps us all vibrant and strong – and not necessarily in agreement! Individuals choosing to be in a collective, rather than a collective that demands surrender to its lowest common denominator.

The men in my life – the ones I live with and the ones that I have worked with – know that I do not look to them to save me, or carry me or fix it for me or guide me. What they do know is that I am both willing and able to stand alone; and I am also both willing and able to stand beside them and with them as they engage their own journey. I am formidable and do not apologize for it.

Sometimes, it is not about being equal. It is not about more or less. It is about emerging into the unique expression of who I am without self-imposed limitations. After all, if there are no ‘others’ handicapping my creations, my outcomes are truly my own. Lost to me is the possibility of making someone else responsible for what I create and in that, I am left to face myself.

Louise LeBrun has been changing lives - including her own - for more than 25 years. In times of uncertainty, agitation and fear, she believes that what is inside us will shape what unfolds outside of us, as evidenced by the choices we make. At this time, Louise is committed to working exclusively with women to redefine and reclaim leadership. Her original and extensive collection of books, CD's and guided experiences have been helping women to trust the truth of their own experience, redefining and reclaiming leadership for a new world. Her retreat intensives catapult participants beyond their history and into an *Emerging Future* of their own design.

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