

**Dotsie Bregel,
Founder and CEO of
The National Association of Baby Boomer Women
(NABBW)**



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Presents

**Discovering How Relationships can Keep You from
Dreams: *The Truth about Important People in Your Life***

With

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis

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**Discovering How Relationships can Keep You from Dreams:
*The Truth about Important People in Your Life***

**With
Dr. Karen Gail Lewis**

Dotsie: Hello and welcome to the call. The format for the call is simply that I will interview our guest, **Dr. Karen Gail Lewis**. She is the third guest in our series of ***Finding Purpose at Midlife***; and her topic today is ***Discovering How Relationships can Keep You from Your Dreams***. And she's going to share "***The Truth about Important People in Your Life***."

For those of you who don't know me I am Dotsie Bregel, founder of the ***National Association of Baby Boomer Women*** which can be found at www.NABBW.com and www.boomerwomenspeak.com the number one sites on major search engines for baby boomer women. I'm passionate about educating and empowering boomer women which happen to be my generation. Since launching www.boomerwomenspeak.com over five years ago, I've been connecting, encouraging, and supporting boomer women on a daily basis. I feel that I have my finger on the pulse of this spirited generation, and I dedicate a great portion of my time to creating opportunities that inspire women to explore their passions and live life to the fullest.

And our sites are proudly sponsored by www.dolans.com. If you are interested in excellent financial information that will encourage you to live a more financially responsible midlife, we recommend that you visit their site which is www.dolans.com. We are also sponsored by **Elations** which is a daily drink supplement that offers relief for joint aches and pains. It is an alternative to taking large pills, and you can find them at www.elations.com.

If you are not a member of the [NABBW](http://www.NABBW.com), and you are a guest of Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, the fee to join is typically \$75.00; but if you are on the call, and a guest of any of our speakers this month, we'd like to extend to you the opportunity to join for \$60.00 and you can do that by simply emailing me at dots@nabbw.com. And then you can be in on all of our feature calls, and one of the benefits of the membership is the whole archives of all of the past teleseminars and there are quite a few on there about all topics concerning boomer women. You can either listen to them or read them because we transcribe all of our teleseminars. Okay, Dr. Lewis, are you there?

Dr. Lewis: Yes, I am here, Dotsie.

Dotsie: Okay, Dr. Karen Gail Lewis has more than thirty-eight years of experience as a family therapist with offices in Cincinnati, and Washington, DC.

She has a Masters degree in social work, and a Doctorate in Consulting Psychology. She's been on the faculty of many universities and the editorial board of three professional journals. She has spoken nationally and internationally, and has had hundreds of media interviews on marriage, gender differences and relationships, single women, women's friendships, and adult siblings. She has authored six books including, **With or Without a Man - Single Women Taking Control of Their Lives**," also three e-books including **The Secret to a Solid Marriage - Understanding Gender Differences**, and several CD's including **Removing Ghost from Your Past – Understanding Sibling Conflict**. And she actually going to touch on a lot of these topics today because what we've learned from her and what we're going to learn a little more about today is that in order for us to find our passion and really do what we are dreaming about, we have to make a lot of these relationships right, or we just don't move forward. We get stuck. So in 1996, she founded **The Unique Retreat for Women** and these are fun and personal growth weekends. She has them on several topics; Singles, Women Married to Highly Successful Men, Women Ready for Change, and also Adult Siblings. You can learn more about her retreats at www.uniqueretreatsforwomen.com. Karen, you also have another Web site which is the Karen Gail Lewis site, what exactly is that Web address?

Dr. Lewis: That is www.drkarengaillewis.com

Dotsie: So welcome to the call. I understand you have some kind of special for the women who are on the call, or listening or reading it at a later date.

Dr. Lewis: Yes, it is a special gift. The gift is the "Clues for Understanding Male-ese and Female-ese" and these are the gender differences. I have a list of the differences and then I have two articles. One article tells the story of a couple and how gender differences has made a problem and then how they resolve the problem in their marriage; and then another article for women who are single having to deal with gender differences.

Dotsie: Okay and you're going to tell us how to get those gifts sometime during the call.

Dr. Lewis: Yes, at the end I'll be glad to give you the link to get there.

Dotsie: Okay so is this similar information to Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus, is it that type of information when you talk about gender differences?

Dr. Lewis: It's a piece of that; a piece of it, although I go a lot further than he does or Debra Tannen, also, actually; they were both the early people in that field. But I come at it from a therapist perspective. I see it in my office and have expanded it a lot. In fact, I'm working no, and this is totally irrelevant but I'll just tell you since you mentioned it, that I am working on the world's first gender relationship dictionary.

Dotsie: Okay, that sounds interesting. Well, why don't we get started with some questions for you and we'll start with...well, you know, we're all boomer women, we're at midlife, we're wise, we're more mature than hopefully we've ever been, and there is talk that our parents influence, even if they are deceased, and the relationships we've had with them, can often block us from going forward. Can you tell us about that?

Dr. Lewis: Yes I can. And when we're going to talk about parents, we're going to talk about siblings; we're going to talk about the men in our lives, about bosses, and a couple things, different relationships that block people where these invisible strings block you from getting to your passions. This is a good one to start with because most people know this part. At least part of the influence of parents. That's where we get our self-esteem from, we're either encouraged, or we are criticized as little children. We have felt very loved or we felt a sense of failure and we incorporate those feelings. Most people at this point of their lives know this. But that's only one.

I have three other ways in which the parent/parental influence does interfere. There are these invisible strings we were talking about. The second one has to do with loyalty to mother. Now this is also gender related. For most of us, our mother's either didn't work, or if they worked outside the home they did it primarily to bring in an income. Some did actually work out of their passion, but most women of our parent's generation did not. So what happens is many women feel a sense of disloyalty if they go ahead and do something that they know their mother would have loved to have done but couldn't have.

Dotsie: Interesting, because actually—I don't know. That's an interesting one for me but I'll tell you a little bit more about it as we get into it, but go ahead.

Dr. Lewis: Okay, the flip side of that is that sometimes women are saying okay, I know what I want to do, I really want to, and the mother's jealousy interferes in some way. That the mother is jealous of the daughter. But more often than not, it's that the daughter feels, "It's not really okay for me to go and become a teacher because my mother always wanted to be a teacher." A woman said in my office the other day; she was a teacher, but she actually wanted to go on and get her doctorate and she wanted to do more with it, and she had grown up hearing her mother talk about how she'd always wish she'd been a teacher but she got married.

Dotsie: Oh that's very true. I also think that some of us are living the passions or maybe the desires that our mother's had but never experienced. That's the flip side.

Dr. Lewis: Yes, but those are the people who are not blocked by their parents, they are encouraged by their parents to go and do what I didn't do. That is

always the positive side. But also let me tell you something else about the parental influence that parents, and everyone who's listening who is a parent, or has a parent, at least one parent, knows that we have all been assigned roles. That's one of the things parents do when kids are little. She acts just like my mother; or she's the good girl and he's the funny—my son is the comic. My other daughter is the egghead and, you know, we have all of these labels that are put on us early on that define who we are. And many of the roles for women have to do with reinforcing being good. Boys often get roles that are assigned that allow them to be naughty and it's not bad. A tom-girl is not necessarily good, but a real boy is. And so some of the being successful, and being powerful, and owning your own power are roles that are assigned to males, not to females. And so we as girls grow up being reinforced to be good, being polite, or we're told that we are too noisy, we laugh too loudly, or we should laugh more.

We have these structures of how we should be that we then take into our adult life; and interfere with—all of these old rules interfere with just letting loose and find the passion we want. And then there's one other that I want to mention under the parental influence and that's cultural. Now this could be ethic culture, it could just be from a part of a country, it could also be your individual family's culture. But for many, many people, many women, we grow up hearing some message of hard work is what we're suppose to do, we're suppose to work. We don't play or we don't have fun, or that's frivolous, or if we are going to have fun and be frivolous, it's after all the work is done, but the work is never always done. So these are other messages that we get from parents that we absorb inside and whether the parent has been different for the last twenty years, or if the parent is deceased, the messages are still locked inside of us.

Dotsie: Okay and it is possible for children within the same family to get different messages. Is that right?

Dr. Lewis: Absolutely.

Dotsie: And not just boy-girl, but maybe even oldest daughter-youngest daughter, or something like that.

Dr. Lewis: Absolutely. The specific gender has nothing to do with the roles that are assigned. If you are assigned a role, you live it out. Or you don't live it out and feel bad about it. There is much more I could say about the assigned roles by parents, but I'm doing that in a book on siblings, so...

Dotsie: Yeah, and we are going to talk about siblings a little, too. But also these messages from parents, for instance, maybe one of the girls in the family did better in school and so the expectation was for them to do better and greater things.

Dr. Lewis: Exactly, she's the smart one. By the way, families don't have two—two kids do not have the same roles. So there aren't two smart ones. If both are smart, they are given different kinds of roles so they're not exact same role.

Dotsie: Okay, so what do we do with these messages, how do we avoid these unwanted strings that hold us back?

Dr. Lewis: So important, so important. So let's talk about the voices we have inside. What we all know—you know, I said I would never do that because my parents always did that, and I said I would never do that, but there you are doing it? I like to think about this as parents are renting space inside our body. Any time we find ourselves saying things that, or doing things that are coming straight out of them, if they are things we don't like, I like to think that they are renting space inside our body, and therefore, if they are going to rent, don't give them free rent, charge them!

Dotsie: And how do you do that?

Dr. Lewis: One of the fun things that I do with clients is have them have a piggy bank and every time they catch themselves saying some that comes straight out of one of the messages from their parents that they don't like, not the positive ones, but the messages that are holding them back some way; they have to pay the bank. And they decide whether they want it to be a quarter, a dollar, or a ten-dollar bill, or whatever. And what that does, I mean obviously it makes fun of it, it makes it light. It also makes you more aware of this. The message that I was talking about the loyalty to mother, one of the best things to do with that if you have a sense that you're being stopped by your mother would feel bad, or if you worry that your mother would feel bad if you progressed into an area she didn't, talk to her about it. There are probably lots of mothers who are not very open to this or would say, "Good, you shouldn't move ahead," but probably most mothers are going to be very pleased that you cared enough to even think about it for them and will say, "Ah! That was a long time ago for me, you do what you want with your life," or some variation of that.

Dotsie: Because I think that, I'm not sure, but I know for myself and some of my friends, our mothers were stay-at-home moms, and they encouraged their daughters to do more, and be more because I think they sometimes felt trapped. That's—it's whether or not you were poisoned by the attitude or whether you were encouraged by it. See what I mean?

Dr. Lewis: Yes, and some mothers are—I don't imagine there are a lot of mothers who intentionally hold their daughter back. But sometimes it does happen because while they certainly want their daughters to move on and have more options and more opportunities than she ever did, sometimes it comes across in a way that really sends the message, "don't." And these are tricky messages that the daughter, now us adults, we know—those of you who are

listening will know whether you have the message that your mother said go ahead you are probably not been listening. You have not been blocked from your passion.

Dotsie: And then there are some who had that message in their head like oh mom and dad always said I would never amount to anything. And so you kind of stay stuck in that and then you don't move forward.

Dr. Lewis: Exactly.

Dotsie: Okay anything else? I mean the ideas you gave about addressing the issue if your mother is still living, and making yourself aware, and putting money in a little bank or whatever; any other things that can help us move forward?

Dr. Lewis: There is so much to say about this but the only other thing that I'm going to speak about at this point is that the cultural part I mentioned, that if that does fit for you, if you find that you have been raised and then have incorporated that I shouldn't—it's not okay to go for what I love I have to do what I need to do first; remember that the list is never done. No one has ever finished their list.

Dotsie: Right and you know I know having been raised by a mom who stayed home; I really wanted to stay home with my children. And that was only because I felt like my mother loved it and that the kids were better for it so I chose to do that. But once the kids were raised, I chose to do—you know, it's another season. It's time to do something else and I felt free to do that even though my mom did not. I mean once her kids were raised and she had an empty nest, she was pretty sad in her empty nest. It was like her purpose was over. And because of that, I was intentional about finding a new purpose, you know what I mean?

Dr. Lewis: And thank goodness you have because it has opened up an opportunity for all other women.

Dotsie: Yeah, but I do think a lot about my mom, and I did think a lot when I was launching this because it was following her death. It's just kind of interesting to hear you say these things.

Dr. Lewis: So what you did; you were not held back by these invisible strings of your mother who if she can't be happy, I can't be happy in this post-children life. You weren't held back by strings.

Dotsie: Right.

Dr. Lewis: And that's really fortunate, as I said, fortunate for all of us because what you have is very important for baby boomer women.

Dotsie: Well it is by the grace of God and those people who know me know that this is how I feel about it. Let's move on and anything else about parents relationships?

Dr. Lewis: No, but we can't talk about parents without getting to siblings.

Dotsie: Okay so let's talk about that a little bit.

Dr. Lewis: Okay. If you are within 3 to 5 years age difference with your siblings, what I am going to say applies. It may not apply if there is a larger age gap between you and your brother and/or sisters. Honoring what we do as little children, and then we bring into adulthood, is we honor the role of the parents of this has assigned for us. So I was the goody. I was such a good kid it made my older brother want to puke. It's not surprising then that my older brother was the ne'er do well. He was the trouble maker. He was the one who was always getting into trouble. Families often have diverse, really opposite roles. So what has happened then is that—the roles we have when we were little, when we get to be adults, we think we have gone beyond them, and maybe we have in relating to other people because I am certainly no longer a goody-goody to everybody else, but put me with my brother, or put him with me, and like most of us, we slip back into old roles.

Dotsie: Absolutely. I can see it in my family, and in my husband's family.

Dr. Lewis: Yes, so what happens, we're going to talk first about what these invisible strings are is they pull you back, so if I was the good one, I was not the smart one, so I was suppose to be just good, not smart. Come into adult life and it can, I mean this invisible string that keeps me back, I am not smart, I am not smart. It wasn't until I was in my forties before I discovered, I am smart! Boy, am I smart! But it took many decades to do that. Another way is if the sibling has no friends. If one of your siblings has no friends, he is not very well liked, and you are the kid that is so popular, when you become an adult, if your sibling now has friends and he is doing well, you may be released from these invisible strings. But if your sibling is not doing well, it may be hard for you to allow yourself to again be one up, if you will. If you like your sibling, it will—you'll want to hold yourself back because after all, you had all the good fortune when you were younger and you don't want to take the shine from your sibling now.

Now this is something that people are not necessarily aware of that, but it is very, very powerful. I see it a lot. When people start thinking about it, people who are holding back, or—my sister was the artist and now that I'm older, she may be doing art now, she may not, but she's the artist. The fact that I have a little interest well, it's not okay for me because she's the artist. So the "I," the woman, would not allow herself to go for her passion for taking art lessons, or painting lessons, or sculpture lessons, or something. So it is as if there are ghost from the past guiding us.

Dotsie: Right and how do we avoid them? How do we get help for that or change those things?

Dr. Lewis: Okay, first it is important to recognize them. Recognize the roles that you were assigned as a child and the roles that your siblings were. That is really important to do first. So let me tell you about my brother.

Dotsie: Okay.

Dr. Lewis: My brother was the genius in school. He skipped grades in school. And he did very, very well professionally; really well. But when I was in my early forties, he happened to go through a period where he was having some financial difficulty in his business. And there was no doubt it would pick up again, but he was having troubles. This was the time when I was writing my first book and I couldn't get myself to write it. I was having the darnest time. I would start writing and stop and start, start and stop; and I said what is going on? Where were the invisible strings that were preventing me from moving on with what I wanted to do? And suddenly, it became clear to me. He was the smart one and he was having trouble. It's that loyalty I mentioned before. That is I actually go ahead and I am successful, I would be more successful than him but that's his role, not mine. It might make him feel bad. There's also a gender issue; girls aren't suppose to be bigger, brighter, shinier than boys. That was in there also. So what I did was I wrote my brother a letter. And I love this; this is such a great thing. I wrote him, like we women do when we have something on our mind; we write reams of feelings, right? And I wrote him this wonderful letter of all of my concerns and bla, bla; and I got back from him, a copy of my letter where in the margins, he said "fine," over here he said, "okay, no problem." He wasn't worried about it at all.

Dotsie: So he kind of validated you.

Dr. Lewis: He validated me, and where the gender part comes in he did it male style. I could have been very hurt that here I put in so much time and effort and all he does is he gives me these four-letter words, you know, "fine," "okay, whatever." But gender style, he was being very short, to the point, and saying what he had to say and just leaving it. He didn't need to go through all of my words. And, I understood that part, and that he released me. What he did by doing that was to say, I'm now translating his "fine, okay," he released me and said, you can be smart, it's not going to affect my intelligence. So that was—it's one of the things that's very useful if you are finding that's there are strings from your siblings, call them, write them, talk about what your roles were, what you see your roles were, what their roles were; chances are, it will be very freeing for both of you.

Dotsie: Now, do many people get around to doing this? And I imagine if they do, it's probably at midlife.

Dr. Lewis: Yes, it is mostly at midlife and I can certainly tell you that the people who see me in my office do because I mention it. A lot of people don't think about it. And that is why we call them invisible strings. Most of the people think about, when they think about strings, they only think about the parents. They don't think about siblings because, well, you know, we get everything from our parents. But we don't. We don't. That's where to me it is so important to be thinking about the siblings. Parents are in a higher—you know they are in another generation from us. Siblings are our own generation. And if we are going to be held back by strings, very often it is the same generational strings, and as you are going to see soon, husbands and friends.

Dotsie: And it's interesting because I am from a family of five and you're making me think about things I haven't really thought about before. Very cool.

Dr. Lewis: One other thought which I may mention later, but let me keep saying it is we women are raised with we have to protect men's egos. And we think about that more when we think in terms of a man, or our husband or dating, or something. But it is so ingrained that we have to protect the male ego that it comes out sometimes in siblings, also. It happens to be totally untrue. Men's egos are not so fragile and that is another one of the—one of the messages we receive from parents that bind us with invisible strings that keeps us from moving ahead. I can't move ahead higher than my brother, go more than my brother because he's got a fragile ego and it would make him feel bad.

Dotsie: Wow, interesting stuff. Okay, so you've given us some ideas about how to cut those strings with our parents and siblings, and now, of course, there are other important relationships and one I would think that's the biggest for women who are married, is the husband's support or no support, which I have seen in certain relationships, and how they can figure that dangerous imbalance. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Dr. Lewis: More women are aware of the husband that does not support them so let me mention that briefly, first. That's not an invisible string, that's pretty visible. If your husband is not supporting you think oh I can't do this without his support. That goes back to your needing daddy to tell you it's okay, it could go back to parental influence, or it could be some invisible other string that you're just saying I can't do this because my husband doesn't support me. What I want to talk about, because that's clear—the woman who says I know why I can't move ahead. The more dangerous for me is the woman who doesn't know; the woman whose husband is supportive, at first.

And that's the important thing; at first. Men love to be helpful; men love to be mentors. To be with a woman, wife or life partner, or just dating, this is true for

women who are dating them; the man feels really good if he can see that the woman has low self-esteem, that she's afraid to go for a job interview, or ask for a promotion, or try something new. He's right there behind her, you know, behind her and in front of her, giving her all kinds of encouragement, giving her all kinds of ideas how to do this, being really supportive, being a great mentor. And he supports her personal growth; or professional growth. Now one of the things that happen is that if he is successful, he outgrows his role. She then grows, she's moving on, and she doesn't need him anymore.

Dotsie: Now wait a minute, does he outgrow his role, or she does?

Dr. Lewis: He outgrows the role he had as mentor. She doesn't need a mentor anymore. She has now gone for the job promotion; she now is head of the bank, or whatever.

Dotsie: Oh, gotcha, yeah...yeah.

Dr. Lewis: And he doesn't have a place anymore supporting her.

Dotsie: Right because she is doing it on her own.

Dr. Lewis: That's right, because he helped her, but now it's the Peter Principle, he has outgrown his role. Because she was so successful, she grew beyond him. And that really can distress marriages. That almost always put a marriage on the brink. Sometimes women don't know it because the strings are so invisible, and they don't understand why he was so supportive before, and now all he does is criticize me. No matter what I say I am going to do, he puts it down; he diminishes it somehow.

Dotsie: And do they feel threatened, is that what it is?

Dr. Lewis: Yes.

Dotsie: They feel threatened and they can see what the women can do on their own without them.

Dr. Lewis: Right because now he doesn't have the one-up position. Mentors are one-up.

Dotsie: Okay, got it.

Dr. Lewis: That's really important. And for gender, I'm going to come back to gender again; it is absolutely crucial. Men are raised from the time they are—they are nursed on, what I call the winner mandate. They have to be "one up." And if not, then they feel like a loser. And so when they are a winner, they can be real

generous. When the woman has grown so much and doesn't need him, then they feel like a loser. That causes real stress in marriage.

Dotsie: Because the woman then no longer feels encouraged by him. He feels threatened by her and I guess there is just a lot of tension. So what can you do to protect that relationship?

Dr. Lewis: Okay, we will have to talk about that fast because I don't want to leave any woman left hanging. I like to think about this—you can't see my hands—but I like to think about this in height. The man is taller, I have one hand higher than the other; the man is taller and the woman is shorter. He helps her grow and so now I have two hands, side by side because she has grown as tall as he. She may even keep growing. She may grow taller than he. At that point, there are several options that can happen. She can suddenly say, "Oops, I am taller than he," I'm going to use that metaphor now, "I am taller than he; I don't want to make him feel bad," and she shrinks down to a height lower than he. So she pulls her confidence, her passion, whatever her accomplishments, she pulls it down so she's not as accomplished as she was so that he still looks taller. That's one possibility. That's not a healthy one but that's one possibility that too many women do.

Okay, but here's another one. She grows taller than he—I still have two hands now. She grows taller than he, and he looks up and he says, "Oh my goodness; she's taller than I. She's really moved ahead in life. That motivates me now," says the husband, "I need to—I've been sliding for a while. I need to get on my horse and start growing also. There are some things I want to do that I haven't taken on that I really need to because I would like to." And so her growing taller encourages and motivates him to grow taller also. That's the best of all worlds.

Another possibility is that she grows and he looks up and says, "Oh my goodness, you've grown taller," and he tries to get her down with criticism, with knocking her down. She has two choices. She can leave. A lot of marriages fail at this point. For any women listening, for yourself or any women you know that when a woman has become successful, the marriage often fails. That's one possibility. Another possibility is the woman says, "I'm not going to leave but I'm going to ignore him." They sort of lead separate lives. So that she is saying that's his problem, I'm not going to deal with his problem, I'm still going to be successful and I'm going to ignore all of his criticisms to me. I just got a call the other day from a woman who started an incredible business. Her husband was very supportive. She's been getting all kinds of kudos, great kudos for what she is doing and her husband cannot stop complaining, putting down, criticisms constantly; and she's saying to me, "I don't want to leave, I have young kids." And so we had to talk about how she could continue but not take it personally.

Dotsie: Right and it's almost like they don't want anyone to be bigger or more important. It just needs to be all about them.

Dr. Lewis: That's right. That's the winner mandate. If you are more important; if you are more successful, that makes me look like a loser.

Dotsie: Right. So we really need a lot of men with great self-esteem because there are a lot of women who are doing—again, I guess it depends on how you measure success, also, but in the mind of the man, they are being more successful.

Dr. Lewis: Exactly. Now what I did say applies for women who are not married to their partners as well as women that are dating. I can't tell you the number of women that tell me that they were out with this man, and they told him that they own their own business, the woman says I own my own business, or I just published this book, or I just got back from a trip to Europe and three different countries, and was talking all over the place, and the man feels very threatened, acts in a way that says he is not interested; and the woman blames herself and says, "What wrong with me that he left?" So self-blame is—there's a phrase I heard years ago called *Q-TIP. Quit Taking It Personally.*

Dotsie: Ah yea, good one.

Dr. Lewis: Q-TIP women! Q-TIP!

Dotsie: Right because really, it's them, in that regard. Okay we have about twenty more minutes. I want to talk about relationships with friends and even best friends that you would think would be some of your best encouragers, but sometimes hold us back with language and attitudes, those types of things. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Dr. Lewis: Yes. Years ago, I did a study on women's friendships. This was back in the nineties; and it blew me away with what I found. I found that women either can be a great support to other women, to their friends—this was a best friend study. That they can be a great support to their best friend and motivating each other to move ahead or, and this was what was so upsetting to me, they can be a real hindrance; they hold each other back. Now I'll tell you a little bit more about that in a minute, but in the last four months, there was a study by the New England Journal, reprinted in the New York Times which some of you may have read, that talked about best friends and weight. And that the most influential person to help women lose weight was not the husband, was not the siblings, was best friends. Influential in losing weight or not losing weight, it was best friends. So that reinforced exactly what I had found.

With women; now this is not true for men, with women, we don't live in a one-up mandate of being a winner versus a loser. We live in a world that we have been geared for from infancy, of not shining above somebody else, taking somebody along with us, not standing out; our games are going along playing together,

when we were little, not trying to beat the other one. Even if we played sports we wanted to win, but it wasn't to beat the other, it was having fun and we won. So there's something very important for women about taking our friends along with us. So what happens is that if I'm in a really good place in my life—actually, let's turn this around, Dotsie. If you're in a really good place in your life and I'm not, I'm having trouble with my husband or the kids are having trouble and I'm feeling depressed and my parents are sick, you know; I'm running around taking care of parents, whatever—you're in a really good place, I'm not—what often happens is you then, the woman in the good place, feels less comfortable sharing her happiness.

Dotsie: Her happiness or something?

Dr. Lewis: Yes. You just got a promotion; well you might downplay it. You just got written up in the New York Times and you might not even mention it because you don't want to make me feel bad.

Dotsie: I believe that.

Dr. Lewis: That is one of the things that is so—one of other—it's very, very invisible strings that women need to pay attention to. I have a story in my book, "***With or Without a Man***," about a woman who was talking about she did not take a promotion. She worked in a company with her best friend, and she was promoted and her friend was not. And she chose not to take the promotion because she didn't want her friend to feel bad. It obviously ruined her self-esteem for having done that, and eventually, it ruined the friendship.

Dotsie: Well, that's one side of it. I would think there is another side of it. Is there another side to the friend thing where women are jealous? Because I know there is a lot about mean girls right now with the younger generation, but there have also been books written about our generation and climbing the corporate ladder, and how women do things to hurt one another's success.

Dr. Lewis: Right. I talk about these as toxic friends. ***Florence Isaacs*** wrote a book called, "***Toxic Friends, True Friends***" and I think it is really important for women to take a look at your friends. One of the things that you are going to ask me probably you know is what can you do about this. One of the things is to take a look at your friends. Are they supportive of you? If they are trying to cut you off at the knees wherever they can, are they really friends? Why are they your good friends? Maybe you want to have them as an acquaintance. Move them from close friend to acquaintance, you know, move them down the line.

Dotsie: Yes, and I think that is something that is empowering about being at midlife; that we are wise enough to look at our relationships and just know that we don't have to nurture all of them if it is not a two-way street. When we were younger, we may have thought we were being selfish or, not thinking of the other

person, but I think the older you get, it's almost healthy because you realize what is good and what isn't good for you.

Dr. Lewis: Exactly. And as you are removing your invisible strings and as you want to move ahead and you have your passion, true friends are going to support you. Even if I was depressed right now, you would support me. Even if I was depressed, I would support you, is what I meant to be saying. That is what a true friend would do and that is how you can tell. But it is important for a woman to assess it; take a look at your friends. Are they pushing you ahead, are they willing to be encouraging you, are you encouraging them? And those that aren't, exactly what you said a minute ago, this is the time in our lives when we do have the opportunity to assess our friends differently.

Dotsie: Okay, I know you have lots more to say about all of these topics and you address a lot of them in your book, CD's, and E-book, and I would just recommend that everybody visit www.drkarengaillewis.com to see what she has to offer—lots more on these topics. But before we open for questions, I just wanted to ask about the relationship with a boss because that is another big relationship for women. And so what about bosses who interfere with our success?

Dr. Lewis: Okay, remember *Q-TIPS. Quit Taking It Personally*. In the back of your mind, hold on to that. And now think about your siblings because your boss may have had siblings; or may HAVE siblings and your boss may be dealing with his or with her own ghosts. So your boss may be reacting to you in a way that really are issues he or she has, I'll say "she" for the moment; that she has with her siblings. So she may have felt put down by an older, a sibling, and so now she's taking it out on you. Or she may have been liked by her—well, let me not give too many details about this—but thinking about the reaction you're getting from your boss, may be that the boss is dealing with his or her own sibling ghosts and it may have nothing to do with you.

Dotsie: So it is the old Q-TIP thing; just stick to that.

Dr. Lewis: That's right and holding that in mind, thinking about the bosses' ghost and thinking about Q-TIPS; that alone can release you from taking it so personally when your boss is yelling at you or puts you down, or discounts you or whatever.

Dotsie: How can you separate what he's going through from what you're going through and the feelings that are coming from him or her?

Dr. Lewis: Well most of the time when you and your boss get into a "to do," both of you are hooked into old ghosts. So you can't take care of your bosses' ghosts, but you certainly can take care of yours. And let me tell you of a way you can do it for yourself. I'll tell you about Joyce.

Joyce's brother just scared her when she was growing up. Her brother's name was Stanley. I'm making up these names, by the way. Her brother was very mean to her and scared her a lot when they were little. Now three decades later, he use to yell at her, and three decades later at work, her bosses name is Lorraine. But it could be Larry, it could be male or female, it doesn't make a difference. And what Joyce finds is that she is scared of Lorraine. And why is she scared of Lorraine? On one hand when I asked, "Do you think Lorraine is going to hurt you?" No, but Lorraine yells at her and Lorraine puts her down. And Lorraine makes her feel bad about herself. And when Joyce was able to say wait a minute, Lorraine just reminds me of Stanley; this has nothing to do with me. Lorraine's issues are with her own siblings that she is taking out on me. Lorraine is not going to hurt me, she is not my brother; I can separate from this. Now that takes a lot of self talk, but it is almost always problems that show up between boss and—between you and your boss—it's almost always, not always, but almost always, a sibling, invisible strings from the sibling ghost from childhood.

Dotsie: Wow, I've never heard that before. All of this sibling information is really new to me, and I'm going to have to look into it a little more because I'm curious having been from a family of five kids. That's neat. Okay, any other advice for us before we see if anyone has any questions and also do you want to tell us about the gifts, the link for the gifts, but anything else you want to add before we see if anyone has any questions?

Dr. Lewis: The one thing I would say as an overview is that most people when they are stuck, they go back and say, "Oh I can't do this because of my parents," or "My mother use to treat me badly," or, "My father didn't think I was very smart so I can't," and they only go back there, and it doesn't save them. So knowing that there are these five possible areas where these strings can come from, it can come from parents; but if that isn't working in terms of *I now know that and now I feel better, now I can move ahead*, if not, then take a look at the siblings strings, take a look at your best friends strings, take a look at the invisible strings coming from your husband, or your partner, take a look at the strings that may be coming from your boss. As I say, most people only think about parents and they miss the—that doesn't free them to move ahead.

Dotsie: So, if you are looking for a passionate midlife, and you have something that you want to do or be when you grow up, and you are not living that life at the moment, then you recommend reviewing your relationships. That's kind of it in a nutshell. And then going through and seeing what, if anything, or who, if anyone, is holding your back.

Dr. Lewis: Yes. Lots of people settle for, "I'm just afraid—I'm afraid of failure." I don't buy that. Because the people who say that are really afraid of success and the reason they are afraid of success is often someone's invisible strings.

Dotsie: Okay, let's see if anyone has a question. Sometimes it takes nerve for people to ask questions when they are on these calls. Okay, it doesn't sound as though anyone has any questions but we'll see; maybe in a couple of minutes somebody might go ahead and ask. Do you want to go ahead and give the link for that gift?

Dr. Lewis: Yes. Let me tell you; the gift as I mentioned before, it's the "***Clues to Understanding Male-ese and Female-ese***" and that's helping to clarify the gender differences in communication; and attached to it there is a list of the characteristics of males on one side, and the females on the other so you can see how they contrast to each other. It is really quite shocking, sometimes. And then I have two articles; one for married and one for singles. You can see how this affects you if you are married, and if you are just dating and/or in a relationship.

Dotsie: And how can we find that?

Dr. Lewis: It's real simple. It is www.drkarengaillewis.com/clues

Dotsie: Okay, good. And so we just go to that site and we will be able to enter an email address or something like that and then get the information?

Dr. Lewis: It will be downloaded and sent to you immediately, I think.

Dotsie: Okay, okay, that sounds great. And then it will be on the site in future months for people who listen to this at a later date, is that also right?

Dr. Lewis: Absolutely. So whenever anyone is picking up this call and listen to it, they will get that.

Dotsie: Okay, that sounds good. Alright, did anyone have a question they wanted to ask us?

Caller No. 1: I do.

Dotsie: Okay go right ahead. Thanks for asking.

Caller No. 1: And the question is, when a woman is trying to—she's at midlife and now she wants to have a career and move her—advance her own life, and the situation that you were talking about earlier about the spouse that maybe will hold her back, what's the best way to create; for a woman to create a partnership with the man that she is married to, and do it in a way that doesn't belittle her or minimize, or diminish what she is attempting to do?

Dr. Lewis: Okay, that's a great question and it's really, really tricky because you are saying what is the best way for a woman to create a partnership. Well, a

woman can't create a partnership. A partnership is created by two people. So "he" has to be willing to create it with you. Probably though, if you keep in mind the winner mandate that I was telling you about; that men feel threatened if women move on, is to let him know that he is loved, let him know that you're hoping that he is going to show some interest—of course you don't want him to take over your business or whatever you're going to be doing, but reassuring him in a number of different ways that even if it takes off and you are successful, you are not leaving him, you are not going to forget him, and you will always need him in your life. That is what men need to hear. It's patronizing but it is what they need to hear.

Dotsie: And did that answer your question well enough, or do you want to kind of go ahead and dig a little deeper on the call?

Caller No. 1: No, I think that that's a good one. Thank you.

Dotsie: Oh good. And thank you for asking.

Dr. Lewis: It always takes some real bravery to ask a question on the calls.

Dotsie: Yeah, and a lot of things, like your response, it just boils down to everybody needing to be loved and feeling loved, you know, in many regards, but some people can't get to the core of that without all the other garbage.

Dr. Lewis: A lot of the other garbage has to do with invisible strings and you can't even see them.

Dotsie: And whether they are yours or your spouses, I guess.

Dr. Lewis: Absolutely. Everything we're saying fits for the spouse too because he has his invisible strings, also.

Dotsie: Yes, okay, does anybody else have a question? And we can wait a second, if you like, in case anyone would like to ask a question. Are you okay with someone emailing you and asking a question, after they listen to this?

Dr. Lewis: Absolutely

Dotsie: Okay, why don't you give us your email address?

Dr. Lewis: It start the same way, drkarengaillewis@msn.com

Dotsie: Okay very good. You can find Karen at www.uniqueretreatsforwomen.com and I think it would be fun to kind of be in the middle of a retreat where you would have lots of time to talk about these things. Or you can visit her at www.drkarengaillewis.com. And if you are not a member

of the association and you're interested in corresponding with me, you can reach me at dots@nabbw.com, and visit us at the **National Association of Baby Boomer Women** which is www.nabbw.com, and also at www.boomerwomenspeak.com. And also for those of you listening in, we have a great forum community at Boomer Women Speak.com, and women often discussed these types of things in the community and it can be done anonymously which I think gives people courage to kind of speak up and ask these kinds of things. And it is a very supportive community of women who are just very wise and there is usually someone who has lived through a similar situation; and if not, it is just interesting to hear the kind of feedback you can get from other boomer women. So I would encourage you to join the association if you are not a member, and pop in our forums and let us help, encourage, and support you at midlife. That's really all we have Karen, is there anything else?

Dr. Lewis: Yes, I completely forgot; can I take one more second?

Dotsie: Sure.

Dr. Lewis: When you mentioned **Unique Retreats for Women**, there is one coming up in August and this is for single women; always single or single-again women, where we will talk a lot about these same kinds of issues, as well as, any issues women may have around being single, but particularly around these issues about how to own your own power with men. And then in the fall, I'll be doing a retreat for women who are married, or previously married to powerful men; where these are women, more often than not, who started to grow and the men got threatened and leave. So the woman is afraid to grow.

Dotsie: Okay and where are they? Where are these retreats?

Dr. Lewis: They are held all over the country.

Dotsie: Okay, well where are those two?

Dr. Lewis: These particular ones—the single one is in Indiana, and the one in the late fall, I haven't decided; maybe in the Washington DC area.

Dotsie: Okay good. I just want to thank you for all of your information. I'm sure you've helped some women today and more in the future by listening in; and have a great day!

Dr. Lewis: Thank you very much, Dotsie.

Dotsie: You're welcome, good-bye.

Dr. Lewis: Good-bye.