



If you are a middle aged American woman living in the suburbs and you haven't seen the movie Revolutionary Road, I suggest that you do.

It depicts the story of a married woman trapped in the mind-numbing, ordinary life of a suburban house-wife and full time mother, her struggle to reclaim her identity, and her relationship with a husband who tries to hush her cries while he continues with his undisturbed career. The movie shows us the malaise of a culture that prefers to shut down a woman's feelings in the

self-serving illusion that a pretty home with a yard, a faithful stay-at-home mom with two beautiful children and a hard-producing husband are the answer to a her quest for happiness and fulfillment (ironically, the only person seeing through the lies is a guy who had been hospitalized for an alleged mental illness and who has the courage to tell April's husband that he is a hypocrite). The movie doesn't end well, predictably so, but leaves one with the clear picture of how and why so many women cries have gone unheeded, and continue to be so, over the years, in the name of outward appearances and peace for their husbands and families.

Like April, I too for years have questioned how and why I have come to lose my identity, lost in the myriad of household chores as much as in raising my child and in living my life mostly through the successes of my husband's career. I held jobs here and there, but none of them panned out as smoothly or as visibly successful as the professions I had had prior to marrying and having children. My talents (I speak four languages and have worked in high-tech, highly regarded positions) struggled to find a place in the small talks of a suburban town while performing mind-numbing chores like grocery shopping or taking my child to the park. Why was this happening? I asked myself over and over.

Literature points out that a woman goes through three phases:

- a first encompassing youth and adolescence and the assimilation of notions relevant to her culture;
- a second during which she expresses what she has learned in a professional sense, in her family life and in her community;
- a third where, particularly in a Western culture, she questions the value of her actions and longs to revisit her deepest feminine side.

That a woman finds herself puzzled and often in distress during the third phase of her life is a byproduct of her having assimilated and bought into the patriarchal values which have been prominent in the industrialized societies since the birth of the Greek and the Roman cultures. Throughout time, we have lost our ability to recognize how we take care of others before taking care of ourselves, and often fall into the trap of believing that "a job" will save us, forgetting how this job and its parameters were created by men, and lack an intuitive/feminine side which allows for balance and a life beyond work. Thus, a woman has to choose: she either raises a family or works. If she does the first, her creative expressions and talents are underutilized and the privatization of the home since the 50's and 60's will most likely cause her to become desperately isolated. ; if she chooses the second, she needs to renounce her dreams of having balance in her life.

Maureen Murdock, author of "A Heroine's Journey," writes of how a woman feels after having raised kids and done everything asked of her:

As she peels off the well-worn mask she presents...being nice, polite, compliant, agreeable...(she will) find daggers of rage about time sacrificed, confusion about betrayals...sadness for having abandoned herself, and helplessness about taking the next step. (120)

What is a woman to do, one may ask, after all these years?

The answer lies in our ability to communicate with one another and come together in full consciousness of the mechanisms at work around us. Only then can we begin the task of changing those aspects of our culture that don't accommodate our needs as women, as mothers and as very creative individuals.