

# Being a Woman

*Toni Grant champions a return to traditional femininity.*

BY RENÉE GEARHART LEVY

**D**O MEN PREFER old-fashioned women? That's the hot question on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, where debate has reached a feverish pitch.

Radio psychologist Toni Grant is unruffled. "Today's woman sees every trivial confrontation as major," she tells the audience. "They yield to nothing and as a result they're always fighting with men. . . . A man wants to come home to some serenity, some peace and some harmony."

"Me too," interrupts copanelist Lettie Cottin Pogrebin, founding editor of *Ms.* magazine.

"Stop talking about yourself," fires Grant. "Women today are so self-centered. Every woman in this audience wants [a man's] credit card. But what do you want to do for him?" Applause, groans, howls from the audience.

"I was simply pointing out," reflects Grant several days later, "that I don't see loving behaviors, choosing to yield on trivial points, as old-fashioned or submissive in the least. I see this as simply being intelligent. . . . Yes, men like these so-called old-fashioned virtues. But I don't really think they were ever out of style."

Grant's opinions are controversial, but they aren't solely self-contrived. During her more than 18 years experience as a psycholo-

gist—the last 13 spent offering advice over the radio airwaves—she has counseled more than 40,000 people.

Grant believes that the liberated woman, who has pursued a career and self-sufficiency, has an overdeveloped masculine consciousness. In her new book, *Being a Woman: Fulfilling Your Femininity and Finding Love*, she writes: "What began as an effort to compromise and find a better balance through feminism has tilted so far the other way that today's woman only knows how to relate 'man to man.'"

In order to be happy, she says, women must learn to integrate their

new-found abilities with feminine instincts. Grant considers herself a role model for this theory. A disciplined career woman, she juggles a demanding schedule with celebrity and motherhood (she has two teenage daughters), but is "not afraid," she says, to relinquish power to a man when it comes to personal relationships.

**I**T'S 6 P.M. IN LOS ANGELES as the "On The Air" sign lights up the control booth at the Westwood One radio studio. Millions of people across the country turn on their radios, some with telephones close at hand. They're participants in one of the

largest group "therapy" sessions around—*The Dr. Toni Grant Program*.

Kelly, a 28-year-old military wife, is upset that her husband's frequent reassignments are hindering her own career growth. Accept the situation "cheerfully, and with a smile," advises Grant. "This is his life. If you wanted a nice nine-to-five'er, you should have married one."

Jim is concerned by his pregnant wife's unpredictable moody spells. "View pregnancy as one long menstrual cycle," says Grant. . . . "This is something men have to learn to cope with."

It's a ritual played out five nights a week, as the show is broadcast live to nearly 150 stations nationwide. Grant's no-nonsense approach, peppered with humor, keeps listeners tuning in for more.

Grant's radio career began in 1974, more or less by accident. Already a prominent psychotherapist, she made a guest appearance on a popular talk show and was such a hit she was given her own late-night slot. A year and a half later she moved into a regular weekday program and national syndication.

With tremendous media success aborning, Grant found her private practice less and less satisfying, but kept a minimal patient load at the insistence of her station. In 1986, she took her program to the Mutual Broadcasting System, which doubled her exposure. She hasn't seen a private patient since.

Grant became a national celebrity. She has appeared on countless TV talk shows and the soap opera *Days of*



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Dr. Toni Grant, radio psychologist and controversial new author

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our Lives; her program is featured briefly in the film *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. Last year, the County of Los Angeles named April 3 "Dr. Toni Grant Day."

Grant was the pioneer of radio psychology. The popularity of her show started a national trend and thrust her, and her imitators, under ethical scrutiny. In 1981, the American Psychological Association forbade the broadcasting of therapy and diagnosis, limiting members to giving "advice" over the air. To many, the distinction is vague.

Grant views her program less as dial-a-therapy than an "ongoing seminar in psychology."

The program, she says, is for "the garden-variety neurotic. This really includes all of us, who, in spite of being relatively well-adjusted, nevertheless have problems in living." Said Grant in 1980, "my critics will have to realize that I am here to stay."

**G**RANT'S RADIO CAREER was launched during the peak of the feminist revolution. Daily she was deluged with calls about women's issues—entering the marketplace, job harassment, assertiveness training. It was the era of "having it all." Careers went hand-in-hand with home and motherhood. When relationships suffered, divorce became a common solution.

Women made strides professionally, Grant says, but only to experience new problems. They became frustrated with single life and had difficulty getting along with men. They were fatigued from being overburdened. Women delayed childbearing for careers and then had trouble conceiving. Grant began to believe that feminism had made promises it wasn't delivering.

Grant had long been an independent woman. The daughter of traditional parents (her mother gave up a career to raise her children). Grant says there was never any doubt that she would excel and become "more than a housewife."



On the Oprah Winfrey Show, Toni Grant (left) advised women to drop their "Amazon armor."

She earned her college degrees—including a Ph.D in clinical psychology from Syracuse in 1970—married a physician, had two daughters, and earned tremendous professional success. But even Grant wasn't immune to the litany of feminism.

Grant ended her 14-year marriage in 1980. "Like many women of my generation, I ended a marriage that was fundamentally pretty good," she says. "But the trend was to be independent, to be your own person. I was part of this trend."

It wasn't long before she began to feel the shortcomings of independence. Her problems reflected the defeats of her female callers.

Around the same time, Grant was introduced to Jungian psychology, based upon classic theories of masculinity and femininity. "It was the first theory I ever read which seemed to believe that men and women were different—that there was such a thing as maleness and femaleness," she says.

Something clicked. Grant felt she had found the answer to the unhappiness modern women were experiencing. "Many things fell into place for me," she says. "My own sense of womanhood. . . . my relationships with men." Grant began to share her findings with patients and radio listeners. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

**T**HE CULMINATION OF Grant's symbiosis with Jung is *Being a Woman: Fulfilling Your Femininity and Finding Love*, recently published by Random House. It takes a hard stance against the legacy of feminism.

In *Being a Woman*, Grant asserts that contemporary women have been deluded by "the big lies of liberation" and explains that love and happiness can be found by reembracing femininity. "This has nothing to do with a career, this is a way of being—a consciousness," she says. "It's about love as opposed to power."

The modern woman, who is aggressive and challenging, does not attract men, says Grant; she threatens them. "The first thing that must be understood about men," she writes, "is that their greatest and most primitive fear is that of castration, both physically and psychologically." Grant believes it's a woman's job to reduce this fear and show a man, through her feminine powers, that she is complementary to him.

Not surprisingly, *Being a Woman* causes many women—feminists particularly—to cringe in horror. However, in its first month the book had entered its second printing and rose to the "top ten" lists of several bookstore chains. Grant isn't concerned with popular opinion. She says there's a certain security in knowing she's right.

The fact is, she says, the most popular type of book sold to women in the United States isn't the self-help book, but the romance novel. "Women have strong yearnings and needs to be swept away by love," says Grant. "Why do we have these needs to be ravished if we're so liberated? . . . It's because we're women and we still have a yearning to surrender to men. . . . Women have the same needs that women have always had. Today they're just ashamed to admit it."

**O** PRAH CAN'T believe what she's hearing. Long a champion of the independent woman, she is incredulous that Grant pre-

scribes yielding to men as the cure-all for love.

"Oprah, I think it's very important when you're a tough career woman . . . to drop what I call 'Amazon armor' at some time," says Grant. "It's actually a relief to melt that 'Amazon armor' and yield control to some men."

"But," Oprah answers, "this is what happens in many cases: Because you're the kind of woman who, when your husband is two feet from the refrigerator and says 'Honey, would you get me a beer?' you do it for him, that carries over to other areas of the relationship. So perhaps in some relationships, with some men, you need to stop it at the refrigerator door. . . ."

"We're talking about something as stupid as a refrigerator door," sighs Grant.

"But it's not stupid if . . . it's symbolic of power and control in a relationship," Oprah counters.

" . . . I'd like to give women more power," Grant says. "There's power in femininity. There is power in feminine behaviors. You have to learn how to use it. Every time I talk about these behaviors somebody shrieks, 'Oh, that's submissive!' It isn't. It's powerful. Love is the most powerful thing on earth." Applause. The audience is listening to Grant.