

Keep Your Wits
Review

W · I · T

To Keep One's Wits About One-
a. to remain mentally alert.
b. the ability to perceive the incongruous and to express it in spontaneous ways that delight.

Keep Your Wits About You- Welcome to Our Network

What is Women inventing Themselves (WIT)?

WIT is a cyber network of versatile, clever, committed women like you who are ready to make conscious choices about all aspects of their lives.

WIT is a forum for supporting one another as we clarify our priorities and enter new territories. We will share practical tips and intuitive wisdom, valuable contacts and subtle insights, exciting breakthroughs and quiet victories.

WIT is a quarterly e-review with columns on personal development, artsy audacity, career and lifestyle transitions in the second phase of adult womanhood. WIT has a special interest in your compelling visions and the strategies you've discovered for realizing them.

Warning:

WIT may subvert conventional definitions of certain terms. Success, failure, courage, selfishness, attraction are but a few of the terms subject to controversial definitions.

WIT is an affinity group of midlife women. We have in common a certain life experience and the likelihood of decades more of active life. Some of us want to play to a larger audience; others prefer a more private arena. But it matters to each of us more than ever to become our authentic selves and to add value to the lives of others.

Who is WIT for?

WIT addresses a woman who likes to connect with other women but is short on time to chat. She's quite self aware, but still open to new insights. She contributes to others but realizes the importance of self-care. She has spent a certain portion of her life satisfying all the "I should's" and is now ready to take a few risks. She is troubled by the state of the world and wonders what she can do about it. She has education, smarts, style and experience. She is frank about the fears and anxieties we all share but ready to live life on her own terms. She's all for indulging in some down time, but needs more than the daily crossword puzzle to feel right. She'll speak



cont on pg 2

CURRENT ISSUE

- What is WIT? p. 1
- The Visibility Notebook, Part One p. 3
- Reverse Invisibility Now- 12 Tips For Staying Visible p. 5

FUTURE ISSUES

The Visibility Notebook
Part Two

Role Revival

What happens when Nancy H, a founding WIT member, is called out of suburbia to New York City to revive a starring musical role written just for her - 25 years ago?

Report from Pakistan and Afghanistan

A WIT member gives us an eyewitness report on the women behind the burquas for whom visibility is not an option.

Transitions

After a bout with breast cancer, a tenured academic turns away from documenting her sources towards self-styled mysticism.

Self Promotion for Introverts

You want to launch your own enterprise but you find self-promotion about as appealing as a root canal. Read how my coaching colleague, Nancy Ancowitz eases the pain.

Your Core Tensions

Each of us has within us a paradox that is a key to who we are. Learn to know it, love it, and use it.

I went to Harvard for this?

The adventures of a Harvard MBA, mother of four, returning to the work world after 10 years away.

to you about her love life privately. Meanwhile, she's looking for ways to stay vulnerable, vibrant and spiritually alive.

Why Now?

Most of us are considering new directions or soon will be. Some of us are re-entering the work force after time off, some are ready for a corporate exit. Some have sold their interests in former endeavors and are turning to non-profit. Many of us are multi-talented but unsure how to carve a professional niche of our own. Some of us are moving to new countries, others are exploring internal terrain. Kids are leaving home, our parents are dying, couples are forming and dissolving. Some of us are coming back to our beginnings only to shed new light on long-neglected resources.

Now is time to talk about transitions, for asking provocative questions and making subtle shifts.

WIT is an Invitation

Each of you is invited to assess where you are now and where you would like to go from here. My goal, as a writer and a coach, is to support each of you as you transition to the next phase. I invite you to contribute your stories and collective wisdom. *WIT* is an opportunity for exchange that begins with a small group and finds its larger purpose as it grows out in the world.

Five Ways to Keep Your WITS About You

1. Join my weekly telephone class- it's free
Every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. EST, beginning March 30th. I will lead a one hour telephone class. All welcome. The topic is "Sustaining Visibility in Times of Transition." Just dial 1.775.478.0000 (The call is billed at your regular long distance rate.) When prompted, put in the code 2323232 and join the hour call. Want to register for the teleclass? Call or write to me.

Tel. 917.470.4222

Email. coach@visibilityproject.com

2. Write Something Witty

I welcome letters from readers. E-mail your ideas for articles and personality profiles (even, or especially, your own). Just put Wit Writ in the subject line.

Email: coach @visibilityproject.com

3. Spread the WIT word

For more information on sending *WIT* along in a personalized way to your mailing list, just call or write.

Tel. 917.470.4222

Email. coach@visibilityproject.com

4. Come to a Live Event

Look for upcoming announcements of workshops, special speakers and live networking events.

5. Start a WIT group in your area.

Look for the upcoming WIT KIT- life sustaining instructions for starting and growing a *WIT* group where you live.

I want to share – and test- my belief that once we seize the right to design our lives in accordance with our own values, we instantly add value to the lives of others.

If you are reinventing yourself, you have new paradigms to share. The need for a forum of communication speaks for itself.

- Susan Reimer-Torn, Visibility Coach

For This First Issue of WIT...

I chose the theme Visibility.

Just at the age when social visibility is increasingly challenged, sustainable visibility – the kind that is a by-product of owning your whole self- is foremost on the agenda. That's exciting to me as a visibility coach. It is also a personal statement since I have been doing an approach-avoidance dance with my own visibility for some time.

When I coach a *WIT* woman, together we address both the sources and the obstacles to her visibility in the present tense of her life. Perhaps her visibility is eclipsed by a refusal to let go of the old ways of being seen. Surely her visibility quotient would rise if she dared reveal some of her quirks and develop her hidden talents. Perhaps, like me, she is negotiating a core tension between a desire for - and fear of- personal visibility.

Want to know more? See inside...

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The Visibility Notebook, Part I

Why Highlight Invisibility?

New York City. During a single week in early summer, I ran into three women friends, none of whom knew the other and each of whom, unprompted, confessed to me the same concern: Creeping invisibility among women of a certain age. When I began to inquire of other contemporaries, I discovered that many of us have a latent to active fear of no longer being seen.

How Does Invisibility Feel?

I asked a group of women, pioneer members of *WIT*, if they were troubled by personal invisibility. Most agreed it was a growing concern. These are excerpts from some of the E-mail I received.

“After a certain age, you walk into a social event and no heads turn, none of the other women even register jealousy. Before long the phone stops ringing and it’s like you no longer exist.”

“In my company, they tolerate me because I still bring in money and do my work. But I’m never given credit for what I do or even asked my opinion. This gnawing feeling of personal invisibility is an emotional drain.”

“I know I am not visible in the striking way I used to be. But I wonder if there isn’t some other way to be visible that’s more meaningful?”

Are You Wearing See-through?

What renders a human body socially visible or invisible? We sense that being seen (i.e. acknowledged, valued) should not depend exclusively on our visual interest to others. Then again, fears of invisibility do tend to increase in proportion to a loss (or perceived loss) of erotic power. The question becomes who defines erotic charisma and according to what criteria. Sex

appeal is linked not only to washboard abs but also to self-confidence, and engagement with others. Might not a renewing passion for life, the willingness to be vulnerable and a playful note now and then make for midlife magnetism?

Now You See Her, Now You Don’t

Not long ago, I had a quiet dinner with one of New York’s most visible (some might say grotesquely so) fifty-plus socialite icons. Her lips were inflated with silicone, her breasts were ballooning over her tightly corseted shirt, her eyes could barely stay open weighted down as they were by layers of false lashes. Withal, I found it surprisingly easy to engage her in conversation. She rather sweetly confided in me her weariness. Maintaining her image was no small burden to her. She felt obligated to be seen seven nights a week in various seasonal in-spots around the world. When home in New York City, she allowed herself to stay home only one night in the week. She confessed those stolen hours were her favorite evenings of all. When I asked why she couldn’t allow herself more of those, she sighed deeply over the dangers implicit in disappearing from the public eye. “I have to be seen all the time or I don’t exist.”

It became clear that my image-obsessed dinner companion was not simply afraid of disappearing in “the public eye.” Deep down, she was panic-stricken at the idea of disappearing altogether. She had no internal evidence to support the belief in her own existence. The conversation pushed an alarm button of mine. In my case, the deeply held fear of disappearing as a substantial being inhibited my visibility efforts. In both instances, her’s and mine, there is a core tension to be explored.

In the Eyes of The Beholder

I keep reading books by psychotherapists that say it all starts in earliest childhood. The eyes with which we are

If older women are to be released from the realm of the invisible; it is clearly a matter of collective action.
-Marcelle Clements,
The Improvised Woman

Zest is the secret of all beauty. There is no beauty that is attractive without zest.
- Christian Dior

The core, the incommunicado element is really a fear of our own insubstantiality.
- Mark Epstein,
Thoughts Without a Thinker

What is essential is invisible to the eye.
-Antoine de Saint Exupery

We need to be seen with loving eyes... We need to be seen and reflected back just as much as we need oxygen and food.

- Stephen Cope,
Yoga and the Quest for the True Self

Underneath the visibility issue we find some conflicting intentions. We have parts of ourselves that desire acknowledgment and parts that fear it. It's all about finding an intelligent balance between your secret vulnerability and your enduring longing to be seen.
-Susan Reimer Torn,
Visibility Coach

The Tao's vision of wholeness includes polarities in active balance - public and private, active and contemplative. In a balanced life, these opposites alternate as naturally as breathing in and breathing out.
-Diane Dreher,
The Tao of Womanhood

seen from our first days become the eyes through which we see ourselves. And the ways in which we see ourselves give rise to the ways in which others see us.

If this is indeed true, it sets us up for some serious, lifelong visibility issues. What if, as is too often the case, we were simply not seen as children for our unique talents and gifts? Will we therefore never see ourselves as worthy? Will we as a consequence never behave in ways likely to make others see us as worthy? Worse still, what if our quirks, foibles and shortcomings *were seen and were not loved*? This all too common experience leads to the construction of the false self, desperate for approval but too insecure to reveal its true face.

Finding Favor in Your Own Eyes

Yet, I am certain that a necessary - and possibly sufficient- condition of sustained visibility is the courage to be real and fully present for ourselves independent of others' approval. There are phases, and we can be coached to recognize them, when we need to construct our visibility from the inside out. One by-product of this phase is learning to resolve our conflicting intentions, a core dynamic in which stated goals are neutralized by conflicting (usually fear driven) counter-intentions.

Another by-product of periodic invisibility is acquiring authentic presence; a way of being that allows us to become visible to others in modulated doses and in ways that matter to us.

But it's best to have some fun feeling your way into the fullness of that idea. Sustaining visibility takes more than religiously reciting a mantra of self-acceptance. It's also about owning your full self, the dark and disappointing aspects without which your light cannot be sublime or truly compelling.



Create An Environment for Optimal Visibility

We all know that there are situations that make us disappear (or long to) and others that show us off at our best. People are visible - or not- in the context of an environment. But did you ever consider that you could design your own environment for optimal visibility? And do you realize that your thoughts (self-limiting or expanding), your body and your values and even your spiritual perspectives are all significant parts of self-created environments? One of the most measurable aspects of the visibility coaching I do has to do with setting up a self-evolving environment that helps women upgrade their lives almost effortlessly.

Something's Gotta Give

So here it is at last and not a bad way to kick off the New Year - a romantic comedy where the heroine is well into midlife and both dreads and dares to be seen naked. Diane Keaton plays an accomplished playwright in her late fifties who crosses over from assumed invisibility to joyous (and sustainable!) visibility. Late one night Nicholson, an unwanted houseguest and aging womanizer, "accidentally" sees Keaton

naked. They are both aghast, mortified. But this moment of seeing and being seen is a turning point in their lives. What's so engaging about the ensuing romance is that each clearly sees - and fully embraces - the flaws of the other.

A Breakthrough on the Small Screen

A new TV miniseries, called "The L Word" about a group of gay women prompted some interesting visibility reflection from Stacey D'Erasmus, an "L word" woman herself and writer for the New York Times. She explains that belonging to a group that heretofore was so under represented gave her a kind of "wildness of feeling" arising from being not only "unrepresented, but unrepresentable in ordinary terms." Much as she welcomes the miniseries in her January 11th article, D'Erasmus is wary of popularized versions of who she is. She writes of "a ferocious desire not only to be seen in some literal sense-...but to be seen with all the blood, magic and angst you possess."

If Life is a Stage, When did the Lights Go Out?

Barbara Sher, a very visible coach and best-selling author advises anyone looking to create "a second life at any age" that going for star billing and seeking the self are mutually exclusive. In her latest book, Sher urges us grown-up boomers to give up narcissism and "an addiction to applause." On the bright side, she has lots of truly enticing things to say about the possibility for engagement in our more inner-directed pursuits. Here's to the power of the invisible woman. "When people stop seeing you, they lose control over you."

I wonder what would have happened if I had thought of saying that to my image-obsessed dinner companion.

Reverse Invisibility Now- 12 Tips for Staying Visible

You are most visible when you...

- ... are fully you.
- ... are fully engaged.
- ... are fully present.
- ... are vulnerable.
- ... inhabit your body with grace.
- ... are honest about your feelings.
- ... see others as they are.
- ... are energized and balanced.
- ... inhabit a well-designed environment.
- ... live by your own values.
- ... are loving.
- ... realize you are enough.

At Your Wit's End?

Not to worry. The review will be back every other month and we can be reached anytime.