The Character of You

But the most exciting, challenging and significant relationship of all is the one you have with yourself. And if you find someone to love the you you love, well, that’s just fabulous.

CARRIE BRADSHAW, SEX AND THE CITY

If you’re like the thousands of women I’ve talked to, you’re probably thinking there are millions of hot, young, single girls and all the good guys are taken or gay—or maybe even both. You’re doing everything in your power to keep up. Hundred-dollar haircuts? Check. Trips to all the right vacation spots? Double check. A membership at the gym? Hanging out at the target-rich environments otherwise known as “trendy nightclubs” or “new restaurant bars”? Check, check, check. And still, you feel as though you’re wearing yourself out, running on a treadmill and getting nowhere fast and sweating in the process. You’re sitting around scratching your head and wondering, “What’s wrong with me? Why her and not me? What am I—some kind of dog biscuit? Why can’t I seem to get a guy to save my life while that girl who is unkempt, sloppy, smokes and has five piercings in her lip is walking hand in hand with what looks like Jude Law’s younger brother! Or some guy who may not look like much, but who seems pretty cool.”
I don’t know how to answer that specific question, because I don’t know you. Maybe there is something people perceive as wrong. Maybe they think you look, act or smell funny, I don’t know, but I’m betting it’s none of those three things. I’m not going to kid you: It’s a dog-eat-dog dating world out there, and if you want to win and have the relationship that you want you’re going to have to raise your game. And yes, in my opinion, at least at this level and stage, it is “a game.” I know, I know, I can hear some of you with all the progressiveness of Aunt Bee saying, “Well, Andy, I don’t think finding a life partner to enter into the sanctity of marriage is any kind of a game. So there.” All I can tell you is that you aren’t walking down the aisle just yet, so lighten up about 1,000 percent and have some fun!

The social marketplace is highly competitive, and men and women have been “playing the game” and “doing the dance” for centuries. It doesn’t cheapen the process if you play with integrity and are who you are. First and foremost, you have to know yourself and then commit to who that is.

So how are you going to go from sitting on the sidelines and watching other people score to taking the ball to the hoop yourself? How are you going to jump off the endless dating merry-go-round, where it’s one cool jerk after another, and not one of them can commit to a hairstyle, much less to a relationship with you? Seriously, what are you going to do—short of moving to Alaska, joining a fraternity or getting a job on the floor of the stock exchange where the odds are ten to one in your favor?

The first thing I’m going to tell you is that you’re probably right: Carole in accounting may not be funnier or prettier or cooler than you. The reason you’ve spent the last four Friday nights watching TV with your cat while her weekend nights are
booked months in advance is that she is better—better at the game. I’ve said it a million times, “Either you get it or you don’t.” What you need to get is what this chapter is all about—how to identify the best-quality Character of You. That means being honest with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses, which isn’t always easy. It can be painful to admit that you may sometimes be shy or controlling, or whatever your weaknesses may be, but knowing and accepting them gives you a confidence that can’t be faked. This awareness also allows you to understand how those traits may turn people off, in the short or long term, and how you can rein them in so they don’t interfere with your relationships.

Once you’ve identified and embraced every part of the Character of You, you can put whichever traits you wish out into the world as a defined product. Take me, for example. When you tune in to the Dr. Phil show, buy a Dr. Phil book or go to a Dr. Phil speech, you know what you are going to get because it is a defined product. It is going to be a straightforward, no-nonsense, in-your-face representation of reality. That is the defined product that is Dr. Phil. But that is not a full representation of my Character of You. There is so much more, like what I am like as a husband, a father, a member of my church community; what I personally believe and value; my life story—you don’t get to see all that in every situation. But whatever particular setting you encounter me in, what you do get to see is a true subset of my Character of You. It’s authentic, it’s genuine, it’s me, but it is what I choose to put out that is appropriate to that situation.

The Character of You is the broad and all-encompassing definition of who you are from the inside out, while the defined product is whatever side you choose to exhibit
in a given social situation. Now make no mistake: After you’ve decided that this is the horse you are going to ride through the race called life, your entire experience in the social, dating and creating-a-relationship arena will change forever.

If You Wouldn’t Date You, Who Would?

I’ll say it again because it bears repeating: The first person you have to sell yourself to is you. That is the crucial first step to identifying the Character of You. I call it defining your personal truth—it’s what you say to yourself when no one else is looking. If you’re telling everyone that you’re the greatest thing since the iPod, but deep down inside you believe you are an eight-track player or the “chubby girl” who couldn’t catch a man with a net and a pack of hunting dogs, then you’re heading for more nights alone than a cloistered nun. You will generate the results that correspond to your personal truth.

I mean it. I don’t care how polished your presentation is or how ironclad your argument; if you have a crummy personal truth, you can look like Miss Universe for all I care. If underneath it all, you believe you’re living a big lie because you’re really just an unlovable outsider who is destined to wander the planet alone, people will sense it in a heartbeat and run the other way. They will figure, “Hey, she knows herself better than anyone else, and if she thinks she’s worthless, who am I to argue? See ya!” Or maybe you’ll find some loser who doesn’t care who he’s with or who you are, just so long as he’s got somebody—anybody. That’s not what you want either. You deserve better. Trust me—there’s a world of difference between being with the one and
being with someone. If you’re out there acting as if you’ll take whatever you can get because beggars can’t be choosers, you’re destined to wind up with the scraps.

When your personal truth is negative and riddled with doubts, distortions and shame, you scream that message to the world in a million and one nonverbal ways. What you believe is your “real deal” reflects itself in your body language, your facial expressions and your actions, which all conspire to contradict every word you say and the impression you strive to make.

Oh, I get it all right. You have a history that maybe you’re not proud of. Maybe you’ve slept with enough guys to make up two football teams—including the practice squads. Maybe you’ve been dumped or left standing at the altar. The point is that all this stuff is in the past and you can’t do anything to change it. What you can do is start spending 5 percent of your time trying to figure out whether you screwed up or got a raw deal, and 95 percent of your time figuring out what you’re going to do about it.

Now, it’s possible that you have some deeply entrenched scarring in your life such as molestation or abuse. If these things have happened to you, your suffering is very real and understandable. A damaged self-image, compromised self-worth and negative self-truth are all to be expected. Do not for one second trivialize those experiences by telling yourself that you’ve got to gut up and get over it. Those experiences can cause you to de-value yourself. They can lead to decades of believing that you are damaged goods who no one would want for any reason other than sexual gratification. While it is wrong thinking, it is understandable. You will probably need to get professional help to
overcome that—and not because you need it, but because you
deserve it. Whether you ever form a relationship with someone
else or not, the most important relationship you will ever have is
the one with yourself. So get help, if not for the sake of creating
a healthy relationship, then for the sake of creating your own
peace and joy in this life.

Getting your personal truth straightened out is the first step
to identifying the Character of You. Everything about
your message, everything about your aura, everything about you will change. If you are not
sure about the contents of your personal truth, now is the time
to ask yourself some hard questions:

1. Do I feel that I have to disguise myself?
2. Do I live with shame?
3. Do I live with guilt?
4. Do I believe that I lack intelligence?
5. Is there something fundamentally wrong with me?
6. Do I lack confidence?
7. Do I think my ______ (best friend, sister, etc.) is somehow better
   than I am?
8. Do I feel like a fraud?
9. Do I think I am a second-class citizen?
10. Do I feel unworthy of love?
11. Do I often feel I have no control over my life and behavior?
12. Am I damaged goods—have I been dumped so many times that
   there has got to be something wrong with me?
13. Do I feel that I am not as smart, sharp or interesting as other peo-
   ple?
14. Do I believe that I am not going to find happiness?
15. Do I say to myself that I’m not worthy?

Dr. Phil McGraw
16. Do I feel that I am masquerading and just one step ahead of being found out?

17. Do I believe that I'm totally clueless in comparison with my peers?

18. Do I play the game constantly afraid of being hurt and humiliated?

I have just taken you through a structured examination of possible negative content in your personal truth. The first thing that should go on your to-do list is to eliminate, heal, change, do whatever you have to do so that it no longer has an impact on you. Hopefully, much of or most of your personal truth is positive. The majority of people have a combo deal.

The reason we are doing this inventory of negative personal truths is that we all generate the results we feel we deserve. So if you can eliminate, minimize and manage the negatives, you will be able to maximize the positives and present the results that are consistent with someone who has positive self-worth. In other words, if you don’t like you, you will not get anyone else to like you. If you love you, then other people will love you. If you believe that you deserve the best relationship, you will attract a healthy, positive, fulfilling relationship into your life.

It’s as simple as your personal truth saying, “I am a quality person and so I should be treated in a quality fashion.” So when some jerk rolls up, slaps you on the butt and says, “Hey, baby, you want to take a tumble?” you can say, “Wait a minute. You don’t talk to me that way, jerk. I deserve better treatment than that. You address me as a lady with dignity and respect or you don’t address me at all.” But if you are sitting there thinking, “Geez, I will take what I get because nobody wants me,” and somebody slaps you on the butt, you may think, “Well, at least I’m getting groped and it’s better than being alone.” Then you’re
getting what you expect. You should be telling yourself, “I deserve somebody to spend time with me, share experiences with me and get to know me. Not grab my ass.” If your personal truth is negative, you will settle for being groped. If it is positive, you won’t.

That is why I do not want the negative voices in your head screaming louder than the positive voices. If any of the answers to the above questions is yes, roll up your sleeves and prepare to do some real work. To truly sell yourself on you, you’ll have to change each one of those self-destructive answers and the perceptions that led you to them into positive, constructive thoughts. Once you have sold yourself on you, you’ll realize that you don’t need a man in your life to be whole. And that’s getting your head in the game—coming at it with the mind-set of a winner, not a loser. Because if you’re telling yourself that you had better find a partner fast or you’ll just curl up and die, then you are playing with sweaty palms, running scared, coming off desperate and turning guys off—and guys sense desperation the way a dog senses an earthquake; and when they do, they take off and never look back. You’ve been doing fine on your own all these years, so just go for it. It’s not so frightening to go out and show the world who you are.

**The Character of You Dying to Get Out**

Who are you? Don’t just gloss over this question. This part is critical to defining the Character of You, so take it seriously. Give it some real thought and answer, who are you? Now write it down:

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*Dr. Phil McGraw*
If you said a teacher, a student, a daughter and sister, a Christian or a single white female, try again. Who are you?

Annoying, isn’t it? “Who are you?” is a question that leads to another question: “What do you mean?” Do you want my name? My age? My religion? My gender? My occupation? My role in my family? Who I am with my friends? The person I am with my business associates? So many of us despise this question. We don’t like writing about ourselves, or talking about ourselves. We don’t even like thinking about ourselves all that much. And that is a big problem if you’re looking to make a love connection.

Getting noticed in the singles scene is all about getting in touch with your own unique character. That is your power, and nothing—I repeat, nothing—else will do. You have to know who you are and forget about everything else. When I do interviews, sometimes beamed via satellite to stations all over the country, I can wind up talking to dozens of anchorpeople in the space of one day. Sometimes it feels like speaking to the same person over and over. Sure, they have different names and come from different states, but they each have the same purchased smile, the same flawless hair and the same Rhonda Radio from Nowhere USA voice. No accent, no uniqueness, no distinctiveness. The ones I remember, the ones who really stick out, are the ones who have a little attitude, the spicy ones who are people first and anchors second. And it’s not that they’re surly or unfriendly, it’s just that they’re not desperately
trying to erase their individuality to fit central casting’s “reporter mold.”

You have to be distinctive like this. You don’t want to be any old face in the crowd. You may think all eyes go to the tall, skinny blondes when they come into the room, but don’t they all kind of look alike? Be someone distinctive. I’m not saying you should try to appeal to everybody. There’s no way you are out there trying to get everybody in your zip code to date you. That’s easy, and so is the girl who does that—which is about the nicest thing you can say about her. We all know what we call that girl. You are just trying to find that one guy who has the Character of Him that fits with the Character of You.

Some of you are the Jennifer Aniston type: sweethearts with a charm and magnetism you can’t help loving. Then you’ve got your Angelina Jolie sexpot types. Both women are highly successful, both are highly attractive, both would appeal to an awful lot of men—even to the same man . . . but these women are as different as day and night. They make an impression precisely because they are so distinct. And that’s what you have to do—make an impression. Luckily, there are a lot of different ways to do this that don’t involve dating Brad Pitt.

You can take your pick of ways to be a champ, but there’s one sure way to be a chump—and that is to fade into the background. The worst thing that can happen is that you go to a party or a social event and the next day, a group of guys who were there are talking and not one of them could pick you out of a lineup! If not one of them can remember if you were the tall girl or the blond girl or the girl with the talking parrot on her shoulder simply because you failed to have an impact of any sort, then welcome to Singleville, population: You!

You want each one of those guys to have a very clear and
distinct recollection of you. One may have liked you and another may not have cared for you at all, but—most important—both of them noticed you and have no problem recalling you and their experience of you. How do you make sure that this happens every time? Answer: You identify your unique Character of You and form a defined product that you show the world. Commit to it, maximize it, embrace it and love it. That is the horse that you are going to ride. Some people will like it and some won’t, but if it is uniquely you and you commit to it, you are going to get someone else to commit to it as well.

This all starts by you accepting that you are who you are. But that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t improve yourself where and when you can. This is not an excuse to be lazy. If you are overweight, jack it up and get the extra pounds off—not only for the sake of your appearance, but for your health, energy, self-esteem and general attitude. Superficial? Maybe, but if you want to win, you’re going to have to work at it and take your game to the next level. The difference between winners and losers is that winners do things losers do not want to do.

If your hair and clothes look right out of I Love the 80s, then change them! You don’t want people to see you and think, “Oh, yeah. I’m old enough to remember when that was in style!” Look around, have some social sensitivity and clean up your act. Don’t tell yourself that it’s okay and that it shouldn’t matter if it’s not okay. It does matter. If some quality is changeable and worth changing, change it! A five-year-old knows you should change it. As for those qualities you can’t change, like your height, your general intelligence, your upbringing and your background, it’s time to accept it and don’t look back.
Self-Love Boot Camp

If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times: People trust authorities. Think of yourself as the authority on you—if you think you're damaged goods, the rest of us will just have to take your word for it. Men will follow your lead just as surely. If you take yourself for granted and underestimate yourself, you will get exactly the same reaction from men. They will barely remember your name as they're searching for their socks the next morning. If you think you're it, one of the most exciting women on the face of the planet, guess what your dates are likely to think?

It is a mistake to think that love just happens to us and that we cannot fall in love on purpose. Each and every single one of us who has ever felt love has created that feeling. The only problem is that some of us don't know how we did it. Follow these steps to simulate the feeling of falling in love—except this time, the object of your affection will be none other than you. It'll be fun and you won't even have to buy a new wardrobe to impress yourself.

1. Take a profound interest in you: Remember how fascinating the life of your love interest once seemed? You were interested in him, so you were interested in what he was doing. To fall in love with yourself, you'll have to express the same level of interest in yourself, your life and everyone in it. What that means is:
a. Taking stock of your past and creating a rich personal history, filled with stories and anecdotes you don’t mind sharing with others because you know they are fascinating.

b. Playing a more active role in social and family functions because you want to know all about the people who are so closely connected to you.

c. Becoming more engaged in your work and with your coworkers because that is where your love interest—your—spends the majority of her time.

2. Be your own best friend: If you want to see yourself clearly, just step into the shoes of your closest friends. What do they see when they look at you? Probably not the things you complain about, but all the things that keep them coming back for more of your company: Your easy laugh, Your compassionate ear, Your sound advice, Your fun-loving spirit. Get very clear on what it is about you that draws people in. Then spend your time contemplating that idyllic image.

3. Only have eyes for you: The grass is always greener on the other side, except when you are in love. When you are losing your head over Jim, you don’t stop to think, “Gee, Jim is great, but I wish his name were George . . . Clooney.” Instead, you believe you have found the best of all possible worlds because of the connection you’ve forged. That is how I want you to feel good about yourself. Connected, I want you to stop comparing yourself with the Miss Thangs with their flat bellies and endless legs, and start admiring yourself for your great smile, smooth skin and hopeful outlook.
Your Defined Product

In this chapter, we’re going to begin improving your game so that one day, someone can look at you walking with your boyfriend or husband and say, “What does she have that I haven’t got—I mean, besides that great guy on her arm?” When that happens, you can just smile and hand her your dog-eared copy of this book.

I’m betting that those girls you’re “hating,” the ones with the really decent boyfriends, the ones you’re going to be like by the time we’re through, either just got dumb lucky being in the right place at the right time or really did have something that you just don’t have. That something is what I call a defined product and a strategy for exhibiting it to the world. Women who get what they want in life and love have figured out their own best and most powerful combination of traits, behaviors, physical attributes and personality characteristics that sets them distinctively apart from all the other women in the world. They’ve turned these into their defined product—and then they’ve worked it for all it’s worth.

Think of a choir of beautiful voices, all great but none distinguishable from the others. Then a soloist steps up and that voice rises above the rest with angelic tones. That is what we have to do with you. **You have to rise above the noise. You have to become the figure against the wallpaper of the world. You have to stand out against the background.** And to do that, we will have to identify the characteristics that set you apart from the women around you and make you the soloist in the choir of your life.

Now you may be thinking, “Oh boy, we’ve hit a snag here because I’m just not that special. I just don’t have those unique traits and characteristics.” That’s why I’m here—to tell you that this is not true. You may not appreciate your finest qualities right
now, but we are going to find them before we go on to the next two chapters. Granted, the end result may not be what you had hoped for. It may not be everything that you would order up and plug into yourself if you were going down a cafeteria line—“I’ll take one order of that shiny hair and a helping of charisma, please; and thank you very much!” You’re not Ms. Potato Head, you can’t stick on a new nose, ears and a mouth, and those who try end up looking more fake than a Halloween mask—and usually a heck of a lot scarier. But I promise you will find that what you do have is worthy of being loved and cared for by somebody that you love and care about. You just can’t continue to be the best-kept secret in your life.

Men are not dating detectives. They are typically not out there consciously looking for a life partner with the same vigor that women have. They are not going to come into your life with the sole purpose of assessing whether or not you are “the one.” They’re not going to dig and root around looking for the traits, qualities and characteristics that are the best fit for their special someone. They may not even know what those traits, qualities and characteristics are. Men will spend endless time researching a new car or a boat or which big-screen TV has the best picture, but they just don’t have that relationship-marriage “chip” in their brain at the same level women do, which we will talk about in Chapter 6. That means you are going to have to get their attention. Telling them what they think they want to hear is not the answer. Trying to guess what they think they want and fill that bill is not the answer. As you are about to find out, you are not for everybody. But you, and not some people-pleasing version of you, will be right for somebody.

If you wonder how it is that some people find the partner they are looking for and some don’t, I can promise you that one of the big factors is that they have embraced their Character of
You and defined that character’s product. It’s this clear and distinct product that caused somebody to be attracted to them. It was powerful because it was real; it was authentic, and it was accepted by them long before they decided to try and get it accepted by “him.”

Everybody, including you, has a certain constellation of traits and characteristics that, once identified and displayed, creates a power you cannot begin to imagine. As I said, I don’t want you to continue to be the best-kept secret in your life. I don’t want you waiting for “dumb luck.” I want you to make your own luck.

My wife, Robin, is in my view a crystal-clear example. I will admit that, at least in my opinion, she’s got a big plus that a lot of people don’t have. She is and always has been a smooth-running “ten.” And I admit it was her looks that got my attention from minute one, but when I met her and started talking to her, I was mesmerized. She had a kind of assured attitude: “I am who I am, I know what I want and if you don’t like it, someone else will.” (I still think she was kind of bluffing and was crazy in love with me, but she will never fess up!) She was spunky, irreverent and a definite enigma. She wasn’t Goody Two-Shoes and she certainly wasn’t a “bad girl.” She was, however, a distinctly spunky “double dog dare ya” sort of girl who was fun, unpredictable and had a great spirit of adventure. When it was time to let loose, she was definitely “Woohoo!” When it was time to be quiet, she was powerfully and magnetically connected. Never, never boring. That was her defined product. I know it was authentic because it felt authentic then, and thirty-plus years later it hasn’t changed one whit. It sets her apart from everyone else. She didn’t care if she had makeup on or whether her hair was perfectly groomed or sticking out in twenty-four directions—she was always the same.

Dr. Phil McGraw
sparkly, spunky Robin. You knew when you were with her you
would never be bored. Before I knew it, I was working really hard
to win her approval, a really good place for her to be in. I want
exactly that for you.

I want you to be in the power position in your relationships
so that you are the one pursued, rather than the pursuer. And
trust me, that is what you need to go for. If you have to run him
down like a hungry cheetah after a gazelle, you don’t want him
anyway. Relationships are tough enough when the two people are
running toward each other; you don’t need a relationship where
he is squirming to get loose. You want to get his attention, get
him to notice who you can be in his life and then let him be
“Cheetah Boy.” So you need an edge. That way, when you find
the special guy and he finds you, he will wonder where you have
been all his life.

You all know those girls who can come into a room and just
own it. They may not be the prettiest ones in the crowd, they
may not fit the media’s image of what is conventionally attrac-
tive, they’re probably not even the ones flashing the most skin,
yet they always seem to be getting all the attention. Love ‘em or
hate ‘em. But here’s the key part: It’s confidence and self-
acceptance that are making them so radiant, and those come only
once you’ve mastered the first rule of the game, which also hap-
pens to be the first rule of sales: If you’re not sold on your prod-
uct, you won’t be able to sell anyone else on it either.

You have to get right with you first. And I don’t mean just
telling yourself a bunch of rah-rah positive thinking. I mean
really discovering your best attributes, your most desirable traits,
the actual characteristics that make you distinct. If you are sit-
ing there saying, “Look, I know a funny girl or a good-looking
girl when I see one, and I ain’t it.” That’s okay. That must not be
the Character of You and that’s fine. I promise you, if fully em-
braced and presented to the world, whoever you are and whatever you have going are plenty good enough.

Most of us can pick ourselves apart. Look at me. I have a “bad hair day” every day! But so what? How many Hollywood stars have you looked at and said, “How in the world did that person ever get famous?” Case in point: Danny DeVito. The man is barely five feet tall, overweight and bald. If you are filling out résumés for leading men, I don’t think you will see those traits on the short list. Yet he is a celebrity. Why? (1) He is talented, (2) he is likable and (3) he is distinctly different from anyone else.

If Danny had sat on the sidelines saying, “I have a face and body for radio,” we wouldn’t have been able to enjoy his screen presence.

“Yeah, but he’s a guy,” you say. “It’s different for guys,” right? Well, then, just look at a woman like Kathy Bates. She may not be conventionally Hollywood or exotically attractive, but yet she is such a charismatic and powerful person that you can’t take your eyes off her! She is cute, funny and multitalented. So don’t sell yourself short just because you don’t meet the typical standard. You do not have to measure yourself by traditional, typical standards of what makes a person attractive and appealing.

*Here’s What I’ve Got Versus What He Wants*

The common complaint I hear from men is that they’re dating Stepford women. They go out on a date, and all they hear is, “Oh, yes, I completely agree.” That is great at first. Why wouldn’t you love someone who likes all your ideas, laughs at all your jokes, focuses solely on you and buys into everything you say? But one log won’t burn.
If you are nothing more than a yes-girl there is no spark, no tension, no heat, no interplay. It’s boring. You become totally predictable and never challenge him. You become an accessory.

I’m going to let you in on a little secret: men need to feel that they have worked for and earned something, or they will not value it. Easy come, easy go. If you give up too easily, you’re not going to hold his interest. At first, being agreeable is all well and good, but eventually we want to know your genuine opinion, and if you don’t have one, you are snooze city. A guy could pick up a coma patient and get the same thrill he has with you. All men want is a genuine opinion. It doesn’t matter if the opinion is different or even shocking—as long as it’s real and honest and doesn’t involve human sacrifice, a guy is happy. He is entertained. He is interested. He is curious. He feels that he’s getting to know you.

Seems simple, but the fact is that a large percentage of women would sooner shave their heads and join the Krishnas than express an honest opinion and run the risk of turning off their date. Some of you may be shaking your heads, thinking, “Oh no, that couldn’t possibly apply to me.” Well, I wouldn’t bet on that. Since men have traditionally been the pursuers, women have been conditioned to look for signs of interest from men before beginning to assess their own feelings. It’s the old attitude: “I’ll ace the interview, get the job, then decide whether to take it” —great in business, terrible in dating. In fact, this is precisely
the attitude that leads so many to turn against dating altogether because they can’t face the prospect of another “job interview” date.

Trying to be all things to all people is at the root of these lackluster dates and shallow conversations, and it is the single biggest mistake women make when they are dating.

Those of you still sitting here thinking, “Well, what if I just don’t have any great characteristics?” are not off the hook either. Let me put it to you this way: What is the best of what you’ve got? I’m not saying that if you had your druthers, you’d pick those traits out of a catalog, but relatively speaking, given only what you have to work with, what are your long suits? Think of it this way. If we were lost in a forest and had to survive, the first thing I would ask is, What do we have? Do we have blankets, a compass, flares, matches, food, a tent? If I’m out there and I don’t have a tent, I’m going to pull branches off trees and cover myself up so I don’t get frostbite. Sure, I would rather have a tent and a Coleman lantern and a nice campfire, but I’m living in the real world, so I’m going to make the most of what I’ve got—two arms, two legs and a survival instinct that propels me to construct a makeshift shelter.

Some women are really good at this “use what the good lord gave you” approach. Recently Robin and I were attending a function at a governor’s mansion. Both of us were going to be making a speech in front of a distinguished black-tie crowd. But when she opened her suitcase, she realized that she had brought only one shoe. Then, in her haste to get dressed, she broke one of the spaghetti straps on her gown. So here we are: clock ticking, broken strap on gown and one shoe. Did she panic? No. Next thing I know, she comes out of the room looking like a million bucks. I have no idea how she did it, but she never missed a beat. You women know how to make the best of what
you’ve got and you do it every day of your life. Think of every time you’ve ever done something like this, whether it was when you fixed that unraveled hem using a glue gun or created an entire lunch from what looked to anyone else to be an empty refrigerator. All of that was preparation for what we are talking about here, right now. All those experiences were just preparing you for this moment in time.

When it comes to defining yourself, there is a distinct difference between women who say, “Here’s what I’ve got” and those who ask, “What do you want?” The former are defining themselves in terms of what they have to offer. The latter are trying to define themselves in terms of what they think people want—a recipe for disaster if I’ve ever heard one.

I’ll tell you right now, you will not know what your defined product is until you’ve identified your strongest attributes, traits, assets and characteristics. So you need to take an inventory and then present your findings to the world, instead of going around lamely trying to be all things to all people. Chronic people pleasing either puts the kibosh on the relationship from the start because your potential partner senses your motives and gets bored, or it kills the relationship slowly, after you disappoint all the expectations you’ve set up. When Robin and I first started dating, I told her that I play tennis. When I asked her if she played tennis, she said, “Oh yeah.” So I thought, “Oh, great, she looks great and a tennis player too.” So we made arrangements to play, and the first thing she said to me when she got in the car was, “Okay, I give. I don’t know how to play tennis.” We both just about died laughing—and then I beat her in straight sets, or could have beaten her. She fessed up so quickly that I wasn’t annoyed. I loved the attitude and honesty.

There is no surer way to fail than to sacrifice who you are for the sake of success,
popularity or a relationship. Take me, for example. Growing up, I knew I was never going to be Robert Redford or Paul Newman. My nose was broken seven times and I started going bald at twenty-two. Model material I wasn’t. But I was big, tall, athletic and fairly smart. So I became that tall guy with a great sense of humor. I was comfortable with that, so others were comfortable with me. Maybe you wouldn’t fall in love with me at first sight, but give me a minute. I might sneak up on you if you are not careful.

Not much has changed since those days. I showed up in Hollywood, where everyone is under thirty, is tan and has great hair. Check the cover of this book if you need to refresh your memory, but that is not what I look like. A lot of people said, “Oh, you’re fifty, you’re balding and you have that distinctive Texas drawl; that’s not going to work on TV.” But I’ll tell you right now that in a world where everyone is desperately trying to look like Johnny Depp, looking like yours truly can mean big success. The fact that I’m bald alone is enough to make me one of the most recognizable faces on TV. Yes, I’m middle-aged. Yes, I have a unique speech pattern. Yes, I’m not the handsomest devil to ever grace the silver screen. So what? If you’re looking for eye candy, you’ve got hundreds of channels to choose from. Believe me, it’s no accident that I’m doing a talk show, not a look-and-see show. You’re not going to find me on the WB’s new hot-guy drama. I do a talk show because talking is my long suit. So if you’re looking for someone with something to say, I’m your guy.

Think Different

On the whole, people who have never taken the pains to identify their Character of You and define their product don’t think all
that highly of themselves. It’s as if they’re still the same vulnerable eighth-grader who got teased for a bad haircut or a funny pair of shoes. They want to blend in instead of stand out, because if they blend in, people won’t notice them to make fun of them or criticize them. The essence of the defined-product strategy runs counter to that type of logic because it’s all about getting noticed.

It’s about not buying a Prada bag if you can’t afford to pay the credit card bills. It’s about not agreeing to go for sushi if you are not a fan of raw fish. It’s about not saying that you’re twenty-nine if you are really thirty-five. You don’t have to be rich. You don’t have to love sushi. You don’t have to be young. You don’t have to go along to get along. All you have to be is genuine. Trust me, there is someone out there who wants you precisely for who you are and what you have to offer. You just have to figure out what that is first.