



HEALTHCARE STAR



Dr. Nancy O'Reilly: Published Psychologist with Sass

[By Mahsa Khalilifar]

It seems that Nancy O'Reilly always knew what she would do with her life, even at a young age.

"I was the family therapist as a kid," she says. "People just seemed to come to me for advice, so it was a natural fit."

Growing up with a supportive family surrounding her, O'Reilly started working at a young age.

"I really did not like traditional education and found life experiences and people a much better education," she explains. "I started working as soon as I could get a work permit, and it was an amazing education."

O'Reilly did, however, go through some "traditional education." She went to Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, for undergraduate school. There she studied sociology and psychology. She then went on to Southwest Missouri State University for her master's in guidance and counseling. Finally, she went to the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology in Missouri for a doctorate in clinical psychology.

After graduating college, she worked at Big Brothers-Big Sisters, after which she went right into counseling, education, and program development.

Years later, O'Reilly is now a clinical psychologist; a researcher and founder of an online resource called WomenSpeak.com; a host of a weekly radio show; and a noted published author.

"I can do just about anything I want [thanks to my job position]. My education and experiences give me the advantage to

educate, publish and write, counsel, consult, and develop programs and projects of all kinds," she elaborates. "It also gives me the skills to assist with fund-raising, and helping social profit organizations to make a difference in the community I live in. I spend many hours each week helping other women 'make a difference.'"

O'Reilly takes pride in her work and came up with the concept of Womenspeak on her own, starting it from the ground up.

"The original site was set up to collect data for my Womenspeak project 'Looking at the Perception of Women of all Aging Views of

Their Own Aging Process.' The site evolved after I collected over 1,000 surveys. The site then evolved into a research project and a resource web site for women," she says. "Since that time, it has continued to grow and become a full service website for women, and it has a Help Yourself section (articles on relationships, finance, aging issues, and health for women), Ask the Experts (online consultation), and an EZine that goes out to over 400 members six times a year."

Thanks to her notable success, O'Reilly has been sought out by universities to help female college students with their women's studies curricula. She has also been selected by her community as one of the leading influential women. She is also the chair of the Female Leaders in Philanthropy, a group which works toward ending childhood hunger.

"[I] love getting information out there for women," she says, "and helping women to live better, especially as they are growing older in a youth-driven society."

With her radio program "Timeless WomenSpeak" and her book *You Can't Scare Me: Women Speak About Growing Older in a Youth-Oriented Society*, she hopes to be a voice for females going through such situations.

"The book is to help other women with issues," says the mother of three daughters. "It is their voice, and I want other women to know that they are not alone in their frustrations with growing older."

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Travel, golf, run, artwork, paint.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now, or what was the last song you heard?

A. Celine Dion.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. I read books. I enjoy things like Tami Hoag...*Alibi Man*...mystery.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. I like *Boston Legal* and *Shark*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. Eleanor Roosevelt...women who make a difference in this world!

Q. What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

A. Rocky road.



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O'Reilly, now a grandmother, credits her own 4'11" grandmother for influencing her the most.

"[She] taught me more about women than any woman out there. She had fire and sass and demanded respect from her world," O'Reilly recalls with pride. "I watched her carefully and can say I am a lot like her."

Keeping up with so many projects is what O'Reilly, who has been married for 38 years, likes the most about her job.

"The ability to do so many different things [is the best]. I counsel, have a radio show, write, and do research. I have a tendency to get a little bored and need new projects to keep me energized," she adds. "Some of the lessons I've learned [involve] realizing that

you are learning each day and that each of us is a work in progress."

In the years to come, O'Reilly wants to continue to educate, speak, write, and air her radio show. She says she will definitely be "doing more of what [she] loves."

Asked for her advice to future healthcare professionals entering the psychology field, she says that devotion to your career is essential.

"Know what it will take to get your license and know that it takes time and commitment. You will really know nothing until you go out and work in the 'real world' and find out how things really work," she says. "Keep your eyes and ears open; I especially find it important to get a mentor — someone who is out there to give straight answers."

She concludes with some advice that she herself has always followed.

"Find your bliss and the purpose and passion," she says. "Give back. Make a difference in this world and do not take up space unless you plan to do something good with it."

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www.womenspeak.com

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