

LIFESTYLE

■ TWELVE NIGHTS WITH TRACEY

From cowgirl to dominatrix, the most fun you can have for \$100

By Nadia Arandjelovic

Tracey Caswell decided to surprise her husband with a dozen themed date nights back in 2004.

She had no clue the idea would snowball into something far greater; that she would end up dressing up like a geisha, a North American cowgirl and a wild dominatrix, eating feasts from a handful of different countries and strengthening her marriage at the same time.

Mrs Caswell has documented her journey in her latest book 'Twelve Nights with Tracey'. She is the author of the popular book 'Tea with Tracey: The Woman's Survival Guide to Bermuda', which has sold more than 14,000 copies.

She said her latest book is the result of a Christmas gift she gave her husband of 29 years, Paul.

"I just couldn't give him another book, another CD, another tie; pair of pyjamas. I just couldn't get excited about getting him anything, so what I decided to do in the end was to go back to when we were young and fun and crazy."

Years before, while they were still dating, Mrs Caswell hired a Playboy bunny to 'kidnap' her husband from work on his birthday. She decided it would be a great way to get her reserved and scholarly husband to "do something crazy and maybe a little bit sexy, but still tasteful".

"When I was trying to come up with his gift 20 years later, I thought [about] that incident, but then I thought 'I don't have money now. I can't do all these things and pay all these people.'"

Seeing that her husband loves food, learning about different cultures and travelling, Mrs Caswell decided to organise 12 affordable, theme nights.

She talked to people in the community, visited thrift stores and trunk sales and decided to get inventive.

She decided her first theme night would have a Jamaican theme. The author got her hair braided, borrowed a Bob Marley CD and found a traditional Caribbean costume to wear.

After telling people about her plan, friends and acquaintances got on board to help. Actress Ruth Thomas offered to come to Mrs Caswell's home and tell a Jamaican legend in their native patois; the author's Jamaican friend, who happened to be a chef, cooked up a cultural feast — curried goat, ackee and salt fish, home-made ginger beer, peas and rice and a cabbage casserole.

She decorated her home with pictures of Jamaica and the nation's flags and blared reggae music from their stereo.

Over the next five years she organised 11 other nights for her husband, each more elaborate than the one before.

The focus varied from India, Mexico and Thailand, to a dominatrix, a cowgirl, China, Scotland, Egypt, Japan, Africa and Switzerland.

"I tried to pick countries or themes so if that person bailed at the last minute I could go to a restaurant — to Jamaican Grill, Rosa's Cantina or Silk — if I had to. I always had a Plan B.

"The same with the entertainment, if they didn't turn up I always made sure I had a movie with me."

The dominatrix night was probably the most risqué. Mrs Caswell used left-over lingerie from bachelorette parties and screened 'The Full Monty'.

"I thought [my husband] would be scared to death, I really did, because I was standing when he came home in my barbed-wire, black leather paraphernalia and I had [fake] tattoos. But he looked pretty excited, he was a good sport."



Tracey Caswell, author of *Twelve Nights with Tracey*, is seen here in some of the costumes she used for the theme nights she describes in her book.

Mrs Caswell said it took sometimes up to eight months to plan one of these elaborate theme nights; she never spent more than \$100 on a given occasion.

"I think I took it seriously, because it's just a part of my personality. I clean with toothpicks and Q-tips. I think any-

thing I do I try to do my very best and as good as I can, just because that is what I need to do for me. My husband is also a perfectionist."

She hopes the book gives ideas for how people can think outside the box to do something special for a loved one.

"You don't have to do this for your husband. Let's say it was your mom and dad's 50th anniversary and they went to Hawaii for their honeymoon, well you could have a Hawaiian night and wouldn't that be neat for them?"

"You could get out pictures from their

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album, put those up and you could get yourself in a coconut bra, grass skirt and even make pineapple chicken.

"Don't give stuff. Give a night, one night. Don't give 12, because it's too much work, but this book gives you ideas of where you might go and how you might do it."

She said most people don't need material possessions, sometimes they just need to have fun and to know that someone put their heart and soul into planning their gift.

"We are now getting to the age where some friends are getting cancer and they pass away, or your parents are getting to that age ... I don't ever want to think I should have, I could have, I didn't say I love you enough, I didn't do enough for [my husband]."

"I absolutely positively know if I go first I have left him with incredible memories, and pictures and a book. If he goes first I know I did my very best to be the best wife I could be.

"So for me as soon as I was able my great goal in life was to be able to spend my time, energy and intelligence working for ideas, rather than money or people."

She believes the book can encourage people to not take loved ones for granted.

"In the end it doesn't matter what you have got, those are the people who are going to be with you at the end, stand by you, support you and care about you.

"I don't ever want to have regrets, so I try and live my life in a way that I am not going to and I am going to make sure whatever I do I am going to do the best I can.

"If that's not good enough it doesn't matter because I couldn't do any better."

Twelve Nights with Tracey costs \$25 and is available at the Craft Market in Dockyard, A S Cooper's, The Book Mart and The Book Seller in St George's. Mrs Caswell will be available for book signings at The Craft Market on Sunday, May 27, from 1.30pm until 4pm.

Amazing what power of positive thinking can do

How are you? How's your day going so far?

Careful how you answer.

These typical questions get asked at least daily and we usually reply with a rote response: 'fine', 'OK', 'terrible', 'you wouldn't believe', 'don't even ask'. Sometimes it's just a noise that comes out. 'Ugh' says it all.

We speak without giving a second thought to the words we use or their effect on ourselves or others.

Our language, the words we choose and our common phrases, informs our subconscious (that faithful servant of ours) of what is expected of it. Remember that the subconscious, which controls much of our behaviour and function, doesn't discriminate commands based on usefulness, nor does it have a sense of humour.

Ben yells: "I've lost my keys. I don't know where they are. I've looked everywhere. I need to go and I can't find them!"

Bob walks in. "They're right here," he says, picking up the keys from exactly where Ben had been looking.

Ben had scoured the area but all the while chanting: 'I've lost my keys'.

This is the power of the subconscious doing what it is told. Ben literally couldn't see the keys because he was telling his brain they were lost.

It comes back to the same phrase I write almost weekly: we get what we focus on. And our language is a great director of focus.

You will recall that the subconscious also cannot distinguish a negative ... (the whole, 'don't think of a pink elephant' example). Just imagine how un-

helpful we are being when we issue commands, like 'don't drop that!', 'don't move', 'don't fall!'.

If the subconscious is taking everything we say literally, what else are we informing it to deliver? Self-deprecating jokes, reoccurring negative self-talk, repetitive teasing, comments or criticism ... said enough, the subconscious will present the biased evidence to confirm them. 'An old codger like me', 'I'm so fat I can never find a thing to wear', 'I'm such a klutz', 'I never get anything right', 'butterfingers', 'don't be so stupid', 'the middle child is always a trou-



Julia Pitt

STEPS TO SUCCESS

blemaker', 'I'm a smoker' ...

What are you talking yourself into?

What is your repeating negative talk? If you don't know, ask your friends and family, they hear you everyday. Can you detect any limiting beliefs (see last week's column) in what you repeatedly say? Are you focusing your subconscious (or someone else's) on detrimental things?

Habitual language patterns will reinforce habitual behaviour patterns. Break the habit, ie change the language and the perception and behaviour will follow. Instead ask: What empowering things can I tell myself on a daily basis that will be useful, support me in my goals and create a positive perception of myself and others?

Not only do our thoughts and language create our perceptions and deter-

mine our actions, they also have a direct bearing on our physiology. Our bodies create chemical reactions to words and we physically connect to what we say. Have you noticed how we can get caught up in the 'story', and relieve all the feelings attached to what is being said. We can even pre-live things too — invoke a negative mental state around things that haven't even happened.

Talk radio is a great way to observe this (noticeable as we are somewhat distanced from the speaker). Callers can get very worked up by what they are discussing, re-experiencing their emotions surrounding a subject. We can almost hear them getting red-faced, their blood pressure rising when they are caught up in an angry story/idea/projection. Or if the subject is a gloomy one

Continued on Page 25