

Dalia Vasiulis: Kindness, Art and Being True to Yourself

Dalia Vasiulis was born in Germany after World War II in an American refugee camp to Adolphus and Sophia Vasiulis. She lived and worked in the advertising business in San Francisco, California, before moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where we met her working in a downtown shop. She has one step daughter.



“Prior to being married to my current husband, I was married to someone else who died at a very young age, age 45. He was very, very sick and that was very difficult. When I was 18 my only brother died, also of a long illness. The most difficult times of my life have revolved around people I love dying - my parents, my whole family.”

“I made it by just sheer survival, hope and wanting to be happy.”

“When I was younger, I thought great wealth and great beauty were important. I thought great physical beauty, great popularity, those sorts of things mattered. Now I know that good health, knowing that I am a decent person, my husband, my pets, my garden, those are the sort of thing that really matter. The simple things in life.”

“I can’t really give any advice to young women, because I think that everyone has to find out for themselves. I really think that everybody is different. I think that everybody makes mistakes and they learn from their mistakes. But I guess the most important thing is to be true to yourself and to like yourself. I can’t say I have gotten there, but I strive for that.”

“What’s helped me to get closer to liking myself is therapy! Just time, and age and learning how to forgive myself. Things like that. That’s a real hard one. I don’t think there was a great revelation, a great ‘ah ha’ turning point, but gradually, slowly it taught me some things. Things like trying to forgive yourself and kindness, which I think is very important. In fact going back to what advice I would give to younger women, I would say work on kindness. Do unto others, you know, that old adage.”

“I do feel good about my relationships. I have had very good luck with that because they are so important to me, so I have had very good luck with that. I have been very good at loving, but that said, I still feel guilty for not doing that enough.”

“My biggest regrets are that I wasn’t nice enough to my parents; that’s a big one. I still live with that. And I have a habit of working really hard. Like when my husband was dying, I thought to myself, ‘I am not going to be able to feel guilty about doing anything wrong because I am being such a good wife,’ but I still found things to feel guilty about. Like I should have done this, I should have done that. I did the same thing with my mother, a lot with my father, a lot with pets that died; that’s my personal little flaw, guilt.”

“I was brought up Catholic, so as you know a lot of religions are very rigid and dogmatic. Throughout the years, and throughout my losses and hardships, I sort of cobbled together my own morality, my own spirituality. And whenever I lose someone it gets stronger because I don’t want to believe that there is nothing else. You know, I don’t have a formula. I don’t have any specific beliefs. I just have a belief that they are with me just because I want them to be.”

Asked what she got from people she loved, or her culture that is important to continue, Dalia said, “I suppose I should think about these things a little bit more because I spend so much time thinking about what I didn’t get. But I guess I got a lot of unconditional love from people. All those people put up with me and I appreciate that. My culture, my Lithuanian culture, gave me a sense of belonging, so it’s being from some place. My husbands have loved me so much, I can’t believe it.”

“It’s hard to give advice to young people because they are going to go their way no matter what. But had I, at a very early age, been less cynical and much kinder, and much more forgiving towards others and less judgmental, I probably wouldn’t be struggling with a lot of the guilt that I have now.”

“Before I moved here, I lived in San Francisco and I had one of those real heavy duty jobs. I was in advertising and that sort of thing, and, you know, I found that through all that stress and that necessity to survive that kind of world, you became a meaner person. And when I gave that up and I moved to Santa Fe, the stress left my life. I became healthier and I opened my eyes. I was less judgmental and less mean to people. When you are under that kind of stress and when you are in your 20’s and 30’s, boy, that so happens to you because you are trying to survive in the world. I have a step daughter actually and she lives in San Diego. She is 24 and she is going

though that now. I just watch her. I can't give her any advice because she is going to find her own way, but she just stepped into that world as well. But she is a good girl; she is kinder than I was at that age."

Marriage

***“Larry and I are probably each other’s
best friends. That’s the most important
thing in marriage”***

—Jeannette Turton

