

PERSONAL BEST



AIDS ACTIVIST Elizabeth Taylor says the "insanity of homophobia" must stop.

Loss of Rock moved Liz to action

Editor's note: Each week in Turning Point, celebrities share a key moment in their lives, a pivotal point that affected them deeply.

Picture this: Elizabeth Taylor enters a room rubbing sesame oil into her skin. Arms opening wide, violet eyes flashing, she invites you to come closer: "Feel me... My arms, my neck. That's right, my face, too."

It happened to me, I did, and I can tell you the oil is the best moisturizer around. She chuckles. She looks into the mirror, and says she sees "something that needs to be fixed, dear."

After reminding me to watch what promises to be her knockout performance in "Sweet Bird of Youth," airing Oct. 1 on NBC, the conversation turns serious, for Elizabeth tells me she remains haunted by the **TURNING POINT** — the 1985 death of her friend Rock Hudson — that prompted her to singlehandedly raise \$15 million as chairperson of AMFAR (American Foundation for AIDS Research). "Rock," she says simply, "was my sweetest friend and I miss him terribly."

A favorite memory? "Oh yes," she smiles hazily, thinking back to the set of "Giant" in 1955: "Walking in a summer storm in Texas, collecting hailstones the size of golf balls and putting them in our Bloody Marys!"

Inborn ingredients for happiness

DEAR DR. BROTHERS: My sister seems to have all the ingredients for satisfaction and happiness. She's achieved success in her chosen field, men like her, and while she isn't married at the time, there's never been a shortage of opportunities. My life has been much less glamorous and yet, I believe, my wife and I are much more contented with our lives and with each other. My mother tells me that we're simply larger versions of what she saw when we were children. What does this mean?

— J.L.
Dear J.L.: Perhaps it means that even in childhood she was aware of differences in temperament. There is some evidence that temperament may be genetic. This doesn't mean that environment isn't important in determining a child's personality, but some infants seem to be born happier than others.

Her worst memory was a visit to Hudson a few days before his death: "I've never seen a more painful, cruel, degrading death," she whispers, now close to tears. "When I saw Rock the day before he died, he didn't know me — he had no idea where he was. So lonely. The brain, mercifully, seems to totally disintegrate."

And there has been little peace for Taylor since: "I'm goddamned sick and tired of people blaming gay men for AIDS. It was an accident that the disease was picked up by homosexuals in Haiti. It could just as easily have been spread by some horny rich babe from Miami."

"AIDS," Elizabeth shouts, violet eyes now flashing, "is not a sin, it's a disease — and the insanity of homophobia has got to stop."

"The government has cold scientific knowledge, but I don't think it's heard about AIDS from an emotional heterosexual woman like me. I'm not an endangered species — although I've had blood transfusions, so maybe I am. We're all potential victims, for Christ's sake."

Not to be stopped, Elizabeth leaves me with these words: "Whatever happened to compassion? And to caring? What happened to the 10 Commandments? How dare so-called religious people say it was God's idea. His wrath to kill the homosexuals. We're all God's children."

TURNING POINT



GLENN PLASKIN

Temperament, which changes little over the course of life, is a strong determinant of how satisfied we are. Achieving a long-held goal seems to be less satisfying than simply avoiding unpleasantness from day to day.

Studies at Wesleyan University revealed that, temperament aside, men and women tend to differ in some of what leads to satisfaction with life. For instance, childlessness was strongly associated with unhappiness in elderly women, but not in men, and is probably more important for women throughout life.

Human relationships are important to both sexes, as is having time to do what pleases you, what you consider meaningful and what you feel you do well. This brings happiness and satisfaction to men and women.



DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

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Do gays really want to change?

DEAR ANN: I could not let another day go by without writing to tell you that your knowledge about the way homosexuals think and feel is zero minus 10.

Your statement that most homosexuals would be straight if they had the chance, because of the way society views them, was incredibly dumb. Following that logic, do you honestly believe that all Jews wish they were Gentiles, that all Catholics wish they were Protestants, that all blacks wish they were white and that all women wish they were men?

I am straight and happy, but I know several homosexuals who enjoy their lifestyle and wouldn't be anything else.

— J.M., Milwaukee
Dear J.M.: Ten thousand readers can't be wrong. Read on:

Dear Ann: You are ill-informed, rock-headed or brain-dead. My sexual attraction to males is a part of me that feels normal, natural and exciting. Where do you get off speaking for us?

It's high time heterosexuals got off their high horse and realized that they are not the end all and be all of human sexuality. I am happy with what I am and I don't need your sympathy, your tolerance or your patronizing attitude.

Sign me — Gay and Happy in Vancouver
From New York: Thank you for the good you have done in promoting understanding and acceptance of lesbians and gays in your column. I must take exception, however, to your recent statement that most gays would be straight if they had the choice. We don't want to change, Ann, we want SOCIETY to change and accept us as we are. — S.T.

Augusta, Ga.: To all those Bible-thumping screwballs who keep quoting Corinthians to prove that we are "an abomination" I would like to say this: God made us as surely as he made you, and God does not make junk.

— L.B.R.
Dear Ann: I was deeply disappointed by the response you gave to the woman who wrote to say she had just lost a brother to cancer and was infuriated to see promiscuous and reckless homosexuals with AIDS being treated like "national heroes" on TV. (She was referring to the broad television coverage of the AIDS quilt project.)

Instead of telling the writer that you "understood her feelings" you should have told her that anyone who attempts to call attention to a horrible, life-threatening illness should be admired, not vilified.

You might also have told her that the vast majority of the over one million people in this country who are infected with the HIV virus had never heard of the disease AIDS at the time they were infected.

Finally, you might have suggested to your reader that she channel some of that energy she is wasting on anger over a disease-awareness project like the AIDS quilt into useful work at a cancer hospice in memory of her brother.

— Mark R., Boca Raton
Dear Mark: Well said. Thank you.

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