



One-on-One with Mariel Hemingway

General Session: One-on-One with Mariel Hemingway
Wednesday, June 6th 2012 11:45am - 12:05pm
Paepcke Auditorium, Walter Paepcke Memorial Building, The Aspen Institute

Speaker:

Mariel Hemingway, Academy Award-Nominated Actress & Wellness Advocate, U.S., with **Susie Ellis**, President, SpaFinder® Wellness, U.S.

Transcription:

Taylor Gannon, Assistant Marketing Coordinator, Global Spa & Wellness Summit

SUSIE ELLIS: I never like walking anywhere with Mariel Hemingway as you can tell. It's great to see you, you look fabulous. Last time I saw you was, I guess, in New York when we had dinner; you looked great. So I want you to share with me and with everyone a typical week in your life when it comes to fitness, eating, spa treatments, beauty treatments.

MARIEL HEMINGWAY: Okay, here we go. A typical week or a typical day for myself and my partner, Bobby Williams, isn't kind of the norms. Our life is our lifestyle, and our lifestyle is our life. What we do from moment to moment is really, very important. From the moment we wake up, the first thoughts we have, are very important. What you program before you go to sleep at night, to what you think the first thing in the morning, to [the] breath that you take. Breathing is very important. We lie in bed, and we actually do some exercises that help move the body. Our blood cools at night, so energy gets locked up and if you move your body, you actually move that energy through the body. So that's a very important thing that we do, breathing, thinking thoughts of gratitude, thinking about our day, and the way that we'd like to see it be.

Once we get out of bed, which is usually very early, we try to see as many sunrises as we possibly can. Bobby and I are at the belief that sun is healing; Vitamin D is very healing. I know you're in the spa industry, and skin is very important, and "don't get sun," and all that stuff. I think sun is very important; obviously, the heat of the sun in the middle of the day is not good for your skin. First light and last light of the day is actually very good for you. It helps balance your endocrine system; it does all kinds of

wonderful things. So we tend to go and watch a sun rise. Bobby tends to do more Shaolin monk stuff, and I tend to do more yoga. So at a sunrise I do more yogic breathing. Shaolin monk is a martial art, monk-related, so he does exercises that are sort of more martial arts. We have a company called “The Willing Way”; he’s the male, I’m the female, and I definitely do [softer], feminine, sort of warming up the body. And that’s all before breakfast.

Drinking water is incredibly important to us. Where is your water coming from? We’ve put a whole filter system in our house, which I’m sure all of you, with spas, are really conscience of the water that not only people drink, but the water that people absorb. Our skin is the most absorbent organ in our body, so you really want to make sure that your water is quality water. In fact, we had a pool, but we just got it converted to a saltwater pool, a very specific saltwater pool that has a filter system that actually energizes the water. We put many, many pounds into the water, but a very specific salt, the filter energizes that salt, which creates the total vitality to the body.

We’ve just gotten this, that apparently — and you’ll all like this; we haven’t seen it yet [as] it really is very new in our lives because the saltwater pool hasn’t been activated enough, according to the scientist we’ve been working with — but, apparently, one of the side effects of vitality of this saltwater pool was that you’re supposed to be wrinkly free [laughter] after being in it for 20 minutes. We don’t know if that’s true, it hasn’t happened yet, but we’re working on it. So we have great hopes for this pool to be “the incredible.” If we come back next year, and we all look like we’re 12, you’ll all [want] one.

[Susie Ellis]

That would be an innovation that our industry would be very interested in.

[Mariel Hemingway]

The reason why I kind of bring these things up is we look for technology that is not invasive. We love nature, our lives are about nature, and my life is about nature, which is where we connect. We love the outdoors, when I talk about sunrises and sunsets. Our connection to nature makes us healthy, and we can be more vital, more youthful, happier, and healthier by connecting with nature. So when you find those technologies, and you connect them with the normal everyday things that we all can do, it’s a powerful connection that can make us all healthier. So have I made a breakfast yet?

[Susie Ellis]

I was going to say, we are not even at breakfast yet. I'm overwhelmed. Tell us a little about your eating regime.

[Mariel Hemingway]

I am the girl who has tried everything: I've been macrobiotic, I've been vegan, I was completely raw one year — stinky, stinky year, I ate nothing but fruit and drank organic coffee, but it was organic, so it was okay that I was over-amped and wanted to kill my children. So I've done pretty much everything and followed every guru, so I've eaten a lot of different ways is what I'm trying to tell you. Until I realized, “Aha,” very close to my age now: “Wow there's not one size fits all, and not everybody has the answer for what's right for you.” There is a way that is right for each and every individual, each client and each person that is going out there, but it is not one size fits all. I've finally come to what's right for me, isn't necessarily what's right for Bobby or my children. But what I do know is, I eat ethically, and what I mean by that is I don't eat abused animals, I don't eat animals that aren't free range. We actually have chickens on our property, so we have our own eggs. We try to buy locally; I think things like that are very important. We eat sustainably and organically. We have six biodynamic garden beds in our backyards. So we believe we want to inspire people to have a little bit of this, not necessarily all of it because we're a little wacky, but we'd like to encourage people to do a little bit of it and think “community.”

What I love about this wellness community, spa, and all this stuff, is that it's a community, and you have all the voice to help people understand. The more that they link up with their friends, their family and their neighbors to do healthy things, they can take that practice into their lives because it's not about just going to a spa. Though we love that, I love that, and I think that's very important, it's one of the things that I want to inspire people to do is to take care of themselves because there is still guilt around that, like, “Oh if I go to a spa, it's not a good thing” — but actually that's a very good thing for you. If you don't take the oxygen for yourself, you take it first and then you give it to the child.

[Susie Ellis]

Tell us about what kind of spa treatments you do and beauty treatments?

[Mariel Hemingway]

I get facials, probably once a month; I'd like to do it more often. My girls are always saying, "Why don't you do it once a week?" and, obviously, I got too much sun, and I don't need all you experts to say anything to me [laughter]. So I do get facials. I love massage. I love the power of touch. When I was working with you and SpaFinder...and just the fact that people don't get touched in this society anymore, I think is really sad. I think that the longing to be comforted and touched, it goes back to being babies. We want that touch, and it's very important, so I think that massage is such a powerful tool. It's kind of like eating, as in, whatever turns you on. Whatever kind of massage really speaks to your soul, I think that is what's really important.

[Susie Ellis]

All I can say is whatever you are doing, it is working. So let's talk about your famous grandfather, Ernest Hemingway, and obviously he's probably one of the most famous writers. I know that you have written two books?

[Mariel Hemingway]

Three books — actually four books; Bobby and I have written the fourth book.

[Susie Ellis]

Okay. Well, I'd like you to tell us what you have written. And I have read one of them, looked at the others. Also, tell us a little bit about how it feels to have a grandfather who is such a famous writer and now you're going to write a book.

[Mariel Hemingway]

Hence I write self-help. [Laughter] When I wrote my first book, I wrote *Finding My Balance*, which I actually think they have in the bookstore here. I wrote it like I was writing in my journal. I wrote about yoga, and how I saw yoga as it pertained to my own life. I would just write it like I was writing in my journal, and I sent these journal pages to a friend to transcribe them. Then, as it got closer, and I realized that this was going to come out in a book, I was so terrified, so mortified, like, "Whom you think you are writing in your journal?" Whatever, that was difficult. But I'm sticking to the self-help until I pseudonym and write something fictional. [Laughter]

[Susie Ellis]

Let me just say that was the book that I read, *Finding My Balance*, and I thought, "She's really a great writer." So there might be some — you would know this — but truly I

have to also say she's photographed in that book doing yoga. This is a yoga master, the kind of yoga she was doing, so I do think that it's a book you'd want to get, you'd enjoy reading it, and seeing photos.

So I want to talk about mental health because it is something that I'm so impressed with that you talk about openly. We all know of the suicide of your grandfather, but what I didn't know was that there is a lot of that in your family, so would you mind sharing with us?

[Mariel Hemingway]

No, not at all. In fact, I think that it's really important to talk about. I had a table of lunch-going people the other day, and we were talking about mental health. I come from seven suicides that we know of, probably more. My grandfather committed suicide; his father committed suicide; my grandmother's father committed suicide; my great uncle committed suicide; my uncle [committed] suicide; my sister committed suicide; and another cousin committed suicide. It's a powerful legacy to come from that kind of mental illness. It's just on the one hand, Ernest Hemingway, the greatest writer of the 20th century, on the other hand, I'm terrified that one day I might wake up one day and be bonkers. That is why I sit here, and I talk about wellness because I think that lifestyle, the foods you eat, the thoughts you have, the water you drink, the movement that you do, all that you do in your life, has to do with your mental being, as well as your physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. All those things go together.

This year I was honored at McLean, which is the psychiatric hospital and school of Harvard University. They honored me, and I said, "Are you honoring me for being crazy?" And they said, "No, no, we just like that you speak out about this issue." I had mixed feelings because I'm very mixed on the whole — there's so many drugs being taken for depression and all of these different things. Now people that suffer schizophrenia, like my older sister, need drugs. They need lithium; they need their medication. But what's being ignored is somebody's lifestyle, what food they're eating, what they're doing, all these different things are being ignored, and it affects the mind. If you put an Advil in your head and 20 minutes later don't have a headache, why doesn't someone think that their food has the same effect on us? And it does. It's a powerful statement, and it doesn't mean you have to be a saint about everything, but having knowledge about food is power, and having knowledge about food is power for the brain because our brain is so sensitive. Our brain eats first, it eats before the body eats, so having an understanding that all of this goes together, and all of life goes together, meaning holistic living, all goes into understanding all of these elements of living.

[Susie Ellis]

I'm speaking from the spa industry, and I find it exciting that somebody is not only talking about the physical, but the mental, so I really appreciate [it], and I think all of us do. I just have one last question — you've been involved in spa and wellness from an industry, and I'm just wondering if you could give us some advice. What would you suggest to those of us who either own a spa establishment, a wellness establishment, or somehow are working with — whether its products or consulting — with spas. Give us a little advice from your experience.

[Mariel Hemingway]

I think the spa industry is really doing a magnificent job creating in the sense: body, mind and spirit; I think it should just be done more. I think that there is an element of food that is lacking in the spa. I think it's still a little bit slanted, or maybe it's not slanted, but just the people's perception of it is just that it is all about pampering, luxury and "Oh if I had money." If there was more of a focus on how you live all of your life and even with the things you're talking about, I think that would be powerful.

[Susie Ellis]

Mariel will be doing a book signing during the next couple sessions. And I just want to thank you for being here, being an advocate — and somebody mentioned about the value of celebrity, and to have you as a spokesperson for health and wellness, we all benefit. Thank you.

[Mariel Hemingway]

Thank you.