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Barbara Pease

getting personal



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BARBARA PEASE WEARS SASS AND BIDE END OF THE LINE DRESS, \$390, LA VIDA, MOOLOOLABA, PHONE 5444 8833. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN HUGHES, HAIR AND MAKEUP BY KATIE WILLIAMS, SHOOT STYLING BY GENINE HOWARD AND CREATIVE DIRECTION BY KARA DE SCHOT.

Barbara Pease

getting personal

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AUTHORS BARBARA AND ALLAN PEASE ARE TWO OF THE WORLD'S FOREMOST EXPERTS ON RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION ... BUT DID YOU KNOW THEY HAVE LIVED IN PEACEFUL BUDERIM FOR 10 YEARS? AND DID YOU ALSO KNOW THAT BARBARA IS CONSIDERED AUSTRALIA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL FEMALE AUTHOR ... EVER? NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT BARB BECAME A MUM IN HER 40S, NOT ONCE BUT TWICE, DEFYING THE ODDS AND PROVING THE NAYSAYERS WRONG, YET AGAIN. THIS MONTH, ALI GRANT CHATS WITH BARBARA ABOUT HER INCREDIBLE JOURNEY AND DISCOVERS HOW THIS COUNTRY GIRL FROM MARYBOROUGH BECAME A GLOBAL CELEBRITY, ACCLAIMED AUTHOR, DEVOTED WIFE, MUM, STEP MUM AND GRANDMOTHER.

“While I was pregnant and people used to ask how many kids we had, Allan would say we had four on the ground, one in the oven and one in the freezer.”

My husband, Simon, never listens to me. Actually, I think he listened to me once back in 2005, but it was an accident. Simon hears me, yes, but 99.9 percent of the time he doesn't seem to take in the words. Sometimes I feel like I'm speaking Swahili! I have come to understand that it's a bloke thing. And while I'm on the subject of things Simon isn't very good at, you can add cooking and putting his dirty clothes in the laundry basket to the list.

Not that I'm without flaws – far from it. I know it will surprise you all to learn this, but I have a list of imperfections myself. I have a shocking habit of leaving lights on and cupboard doors open – it drives Simon to distraction. And then there's the anal rule that no one is allowed to come over if the house is a mess (post baby I have had to relax this rule a little), and, okay, I have an obsession with buying shoes ... many would say these are very female characteristics. I am woman, hear me roar!

Is it any wonder we bicker occasionally? Simon and I are very, very different creatures; he's a man and I am a woman ... he may as well be an aardvark and me an alpaca for all our similarities, or lack thereof. Don't get me wrong – we have a wonderful marriage. It's just that sometimes we don't 'get' each other.

And I know Simon and I are not alone in our differences or our challenges. The topic of relationships (and how to fix / improve / better understand them) is big business – just ask television's Dr Phil or John Gray, author of global mega-seller *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*.

We all want to better understand our partner. None of us actually want to fight – we want to make love, not war! But these ingrained differences keep rearing their ugly little heads and causing unnecessary and frankly exhausting battles.

One couple doing their part to ease the frustrations for couples all over the world is Barbara and Allan Pease. And if their names sound familiar ... they should.

Allan Pease became famous the world over as 'Mr Body Language' back in the 1980s, quickly becoming a sought-after public speaker and bestselling author. Today, Allan is one of the world's foremost experts on body language and relationships, thanks to a little guidance and a lot of hard work from his wife, Barbara, who incidentally is Australia's most successful female author – ever.

Together, Barb and Allan have created a series of books (and supporting tools) on relationships, with *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps* and *Why Men Don't Have a Clue and Women Always Need More Shoes* translated into some 51 languages in more than 100 countries. The duo has clocked up nine number one

bestseller places, has produced 15 bestsellers and had documentaries made on their work.

Barb and Allan are the country's, and perhaps the world's, greatest experts on relationships, and, believe it or not, they live in Buderim on the Sunshine Coast and have done so for 10 years. The Peases are yet another string to the Sunshine Coast's global export bow, but bestselling author is just one of Barb's many achievements as I was to discover upon meeting the blonde bombshell, who, at 48, is stunning and bursting with energy.

I met Barb at the couple's unbelievable home in the hills of Buderim, with panoramic views to die for and all the trimmings ... a much deserved reward for many years of hard work and hardship, as I was to uncover. Upon entering their home, Barb immediately confesses that the house reflects both her and Allan's tastes ... eclectic.

“We are completely eclectic, and we love it,” she enthuses, showing me around.

We start where every good story should, at the beginning. Barbara Pease was the third of four girls born into a working class family in Maryborough.

“My parents were really very poor. We lived in housing commission homes most of the time, but they gave me a strong work ethic. I watched them work so hard – it must have been such a struggle. From the age of 12 I worked three jobs. I learnt that if I wanted anything in life I would have to work hard for it.”

Not a natural student, Barb cruised through school, until year nine, when her maths teacher asked her if she was as dumb as she acted.

“This triggered something in me ... I knew I had to show him. I went from an average student to getting 99.9 percent in maths. Soon, in all subjects I was in the top five percent in the state. It just took someone to challenge me,” she explains.

After school, Barb moved to Rockhampton to study accountancy at uni, but after 12 months she decided there had to be more to life and so moved to Townsville to live with her sister and find a job.

It was in Townsville that Barb settled in to what would become a familiar career pattern – get a job at ground level, learn everyone else's job, fill in for them while they were on holidays and move her way up the food chain – but her youth would work against her.

She started working in admin for a Townsville hotel and by 19 was assisting the accountant. However, Barb was soon approached to join a small regional newspaper which recognised her potential and within no time, she was a manager with the business, taking

global author barbara pease has come from humble beginnings to stake her claim on the title of australia's most successful female author, with husband allan by her side

“We have both come from tough backgrounds; we just looked at it like we were going back to where we came from. We just needed to dust ourselves off.”



BARBARA PEASE

on a new features department and making Rupert Murdoch a cool \$1million in her first year in the role.

It was at this time that Barb met and married her first husband and her son, Adam, came along. But the marriage was to last only six years. Realising she had to move on, Barb started a modelling and department agency, having modelled since she was young. She also relished the government work she did with long-term unemployed and spent a lot of time working on training and educational programs.

“Someone told me this guy called Allan Pease was coming to town [Mr Body Language] and that I should teach his material. I loved his work – I bought the first ticket in town. I don’t think I’d ever laughed so much in my life ... he was so funny!”

“After his presentation I started to interrogate him. I have always had this ability to look at something simple and expand it – make it more successful. He asked me to take a closer look at his business and our friendship grew from there.”

“One day he suggested I move to Sydney to work with him in his business.

“So off I went. After three days I had to tell him I couldn’t work with him. He didn’t have any systems or procedures in place. He was so reactive – I’m such a proactive person, I can’t just sit and wait. Next thing I know he’s offering me his business to run, and I thought yeah, that will work. I did wonder what would have happened if I failed, but I somehow knew I wouldn’t. I had the drive.”

After about six months, Allan declared his love for Barb and the couple has been inseparable ever since, give or take a few world tours.

As CEO of the wildly successful Pease International Pty Ltd, Barb obviously has a natural head for business. Soon after taking on Allan’s business, she realised it was time for a “refresh and a rebrand”.

“He had been doing Body Language for 15 years – it was my job to recreate Allan and to give him and his business a new lease of life.”

What Barb didn’t realise was that it would be the couple’s relationship and marriage (they married in 1991) that would be the catalyst for their next business idea. At the time, Barb thought they would head in a more sales-focused direction, but fate was to intervene.

While driving around the UK, Barb and Allan locked heads – Barb wasn’t especially good at reading a map or giving directions and it frustrated Allan.

“We were driving each other nuts – it was crunch time. We had to work out how to move forward. Allan couldn’t understand how I could run a multi-million dollar company but not be able to read a

map, and I was accusing him of never listening. So we wrote down a list of all the things that annoyed us about each other.

“This was the start of our book – we did this to make our relationship stronger as we are both really fiery people. We started talking to our friends and we realised we were facing the same challenges as they were, so we did some research. I realised we had hit on something big – really big.

“It was so liberating to realise that it is okay that I can’t read a map. What we should do is understand what we are good at and outsource the rest.”

This first book took nine years to research, write and hit the shelves.

“It was our first joint book – a lot of heart and soul went into that book as we really did write it together. Allan is so scientific in how he works, but I am more about what it all means and how I can make it work for other people.”

So what is at the core of their relationship series?

“You can either learn to understand the differences or you can fight. So many people want to fight and win, but if you have a winner you are really both the losers as your relationship will start to die.

“We give you the tools to make your own solutions. If your partner is really messy around the house, tell him how it makes you feel – don’t point the finger at him. If Allan leaves anything lying around, I don’t mind picking it up, but I refuse to put it away, so I put it in his office. When he’s sick of the mess he tidies it up. No more fighting! It’s a solution that works for both of us.”

Barb goes on to explain that, while Allan is still in high demand as a public speaker on the topic of body language (the pair recently released *The Definitive Book of Body Language*), large corporations also invite him to speak on relationships relevant to the workplace. Ultimately, Barb says the duo “works to make people more successful. We teach them how to sell and how to better communicate.”

But as with so many successful people, they have had their fair share of ups and downs.

“We had this accountant [in Sydney] who completely wiped us out ... we were \$2million in debt. We decided to move to England to recover – we thought Allan was overexposed here so that it would help to move to greener pastures. We went to England with £2000, our computers and our stationery, with nowhere to live.

“Allan and I have both come from tough backgrounds; we have both lived in housing commission houses. We just looked at it like we were going back to where we came from. We just needed to dust ourselves off. We are such a powerful team; we knew we would



BARBARA AND ALLAN PEASE

move forward."

Barb decided that British couples had the same challenges as Australian couples ... surely relationship dramas were universal? It was time to find a publisher and distributor in England for their first book, *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*, which had been successfully selling back in Australia for a year.

"I sent out our book to the big companies and gave them the first right to refuse ... and boy did they refuse! I just don't give up, so I decided to give myself a month to learn how to self-publish in England, and I started sending out books to the media.

"We did it all ourselves – we were packing at night, shipping the books and doing the invoices, then doing media interviews to promote the book."

Impressed with the enormous amount of publicity Barb had generated, publishers were soon falling over each other to buy the Pease's book, but it took one publisher more than 12 months to prove his worth – although self published, they still work closely with Orion.

"*Why Men Don't Listen* went so well here and in the UK. We did a tour of Japan – they had presold 50,000 copies and by the time we got there they had sold 250,000 copies. We are also massive in Germany – we were number one for three years ... our second book was the only one to knock *Why Men Don't Listen* off from number one. So far, it has sold over 13 million copies.

"It's a universal problem – the differences between men and women are just so vast. It really makes my heart sing knowing how we have impacted people."

While the Peases had paid off their debts and were enjoying newfound global literary success, the couple was about to have the wind well and truly taken out of their sails.

In 2000, Allan was diagnosed with prostate cancer. "He was only 47 and it was aggressive. We saw a doctor who told us Allan wouldn't last five years. We had faced and overcome our business challenges and now had been handed a death sentence.

"We became research junkies to work out how Allan could survive and I did everything Allan did. We sat on mountains and meditated, we drank natural medicines ... we tried all types of healing.

"But the cancer was spreading and so Allan had surgery and underwent radiation. We knew we had to move somewhere healthy – which is why we moved to Buderim."

Barb goes on to explain that, while Allan had three grown children and she had one, she always wanted more, but up until this point it "hadn't been too high on Allan's priority list".

"We had achieved so many amazing things together – we had this great life, fabulous children ... but we realised that if Allan died there wouldn't be any 'us' ...

"This death sentence made Allan think differently. One day he told me he wanted children together. I was ecstatic!"

The move to the Sunshine Coast marked a new phase in the Pease's life – it was time to defy the odds and make a baby.

Barb and Allan's journey to parenthood was littered with hurdles. The couple faced challenge after challenge, set back after set back – eventually hiring two IVF specialists, one locally and one in Sydney.

Finally, there was light at the end of the fertility tunnel – just! While Allan was in Fiji working at a convention with global megastar Anthony Robbins, Barb was being impregnated in Sydney.

"I went back to the Sunshine Coast and I just knew I was pregnant ... but that was just the beginning of a new set of worries – I could have had an empty sack or my baby could have had Down Syndrome because of my age."

Allan and Barbara were given terrifying odds – they were told their baby had a one in nine chance of being born with Down Syndrome. "Statistically, I was on the wrong end of the scale. I just couldn't enjoy the pregnancy – there were just too many hurdles to jump."

Further tests completed, the odds worsened to one in five. Their doctor advised them to undergo amniocentesis.

"I just didn't care if my baby had Down Syndrome. I had waited 20 years for this ... It was the toughest thing I have ever had to go through – all those emotions and hormones."

They agreed to the amnio and with Barb and Allan's tiny, little baby boy on the screen, Barb heard the words she had been longing to hear.

"Barb, he's perfect!"

Finally, they could relax.

Soon after, Barb received a call from the couple's IVF clinic.

"They told me they had good news and bad news, so I asked for the bad news first," she recalls. "They told me one of the babies [embryos] they had created was scrambled and wouldn't live. But then they told me that I also had a perfect little daughter. I couldn't believe I had a girl – I'd always longed for a daughter. I told them to put her into the freezer for later!"

"While I was pregnant and people used to ask how many kids we had, Allan would say we had four on the ground, one in the oven and one in the freezer," Barb recalls with a smile.

Barb and Allan's first born was Brandon, who will be six in March. At the age of 42, Barb underwent a 13 hour, drug-free labour ... only to discover that Brandon was in the posterior position. Ouch!

"We picked a really strong midwife who we knew was against drugs. It was such a hard labour ... but I finally pushed him out. No one could believe that a 42 and a half year old woman had just pushed out a baby after a 13 hour labour with no drugs... posterior!"

If Brandon was a miracle, Bella is a miracle squared; she followed some three years later.

"All the specialists said I couldn't and shouldn't do it [have Brandon] at 42. But I didn't care about the statistics – you can give me all the statistics in the world, but they aren't my statistics. I won't take them on."

Not only did Barb battle through drug-free labours with both children, she had one hell of a time breastfeeding – her nipples were "almost completely broken off" with Brandon. But, in true Barb style, she was too determined to give up. As a matter of fact, Bella, who is almost three, is still enjoying breastfeeds from her loving mother.

The Pease family is now complete. Ironically, Barb went through both of her pregnancies with step-daughters Melissa (37) and Jasmine (28) pregnant at the same time ... both times.

"We have six children and six grandchildren. There are definite plus sides to being an older mum, but there are also downsides to having children and grandchildren at the same time. Most people our age are empty nesters but we are living it all – changing the nappies and going through all that our children are going through. And Bella and Brandon have six nephews around them who are the same age. It's amazing."

While Barb has cut back on the workload, she is still very much the active CEO of Pease International Pty Ltd. I ask her if she misses her old life.

"I don't really. I travelled the world and got to stay in the best hotels and meet the most amazing people in over 50 countries. But I had this ache in my heart that I could never fill. Now I feel healed and fulfilled.

"But I still run the business – I start my days between 3:30am and 4:00am so I get lots of work done before the kids get up. We have a great team in place too. We are seen as such a huge corporation because we have arms and legs that reach all over the world. I am slowly increasing my input in the business again, and I love doing the deals. But what I love most is being a mum."

While Allan is the family celebrity in Australia, it is Barb who enjoys the highest profile overseas.

"In Europe, I'm much bigger than Allan. He tells me I'm his handbag in Australia and he's mine in Europe. He's the larrikin. I'm the problem solver – I'm more focused on what I can give you and how I can make you a better person. I don't tell the jokes – that's Allan's job!"

She ponders their relationship for a moment and adds, "I just know that whatever life throws at us, whatever life can take away – we will always be an unstoppable team. Nothing else matters."

It goes to show what is important in life. While Barb is one of the world's most successful female authors and a celebrity in her own right, happiness for this local is watching her three-year-old daughter make a caterpillar out of an egg carton (which she did while I was there) and being a soccer mum.

Barb's advice has helped to strengthen and solidify relationships all over the world – I happily left loaded with reading materials, determined to learn a little more about my husband and his manly ways and to accept and celebrate our differences. If Barb's personal happiness is anything to go by, her professional advice should be heeded at once. ■