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University of Dayton

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LORETTA LAROCHE, "ERMA BOMBECK OF STRESS MANAGEMENT," BRINGS HER BRAND OF WIT, WISDOM AND HUMOR TO UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, Ohio — As a young housewife in Levittown, N.Y., Loretta LaRoche remembers running out to get Newsday whenever Erma Bombeck’s column appeared.

“'I would say, ‘Omigod, this woman has such a handle on life. She’s so amusing and insightful. She always saw the humor behind the insanity.’

Today, LaRoche calls herself "the Erma Bombeck of stress management" and has made a niche for herself by teaching people how to see their "inner folly" and use humor to overcome everyday hassles.

Best-selling author, Emmy Award-winning PBS star and an international consultant and lecturer in the field of stress management, LaRoche will give the 9 a.m. keynote address, "Relax — You Only Have a Few Minutes Until Your Column is Due" — at the Saturday, March 9, Erma Bombeck Writers’ Workshop at the University of Dayton. The workshop, which has attracted 250 attendees from 28 states and Canada, sold out before Christmas, but LaRoche also will be on hand to sign copies of her books at a networking party and book signing from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Torch Lounge in Kennedy Union. It's open to the public.

"I show people how they internalize and exaggerate stress," said LaRoche in a phone interview from Plymouth, Mass. “We’ve lost our common sense. I call it the death of the obvious. People drive themselves crazy in traffic, saying, ‘Where did all these cars come from?’ Well, it’s a road. In a supermarket, they ask, ‘Where did all these people come from?’ It’s a plot. The management is calling people and having them bused in to stand in line with you. And isn’t bottled water unbelievable? Death by tap water?"

Through humorous anecdotes and practical exercises, LaRoche’s best-selling book, Relax — You May Only Have a Few Moments Left, introduces how humor can help people overcome 

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stress. Her newest book, Life is Not a Stress Rehearsal, brings “yesterday’s sane wisdom into today’s insane world so we can slow down, smell the roses and learn to laugh at ourselves.” She writes a weekly column, “Get a Life,” for The Patriot Ledger and serves as an adjunct faculty member for The Mind/Body Medical Institute, an affiliate of Beth Israel and Harvard Medical School. Each year, she conducts more than 150 lectures, seminars and workshops for women, health care professionals, hospitals, Fortune 500 companies, government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Growing up in an extended Italian family on Long Island, LaRoche learned how to laugh early, though she earned a reputation as a “mouthy student” in Catholic school. Still irreverent, she’s not afraid to criticize the self-help movement that has helped her make a living.

“I’m always on the edge of irreverence,” she told the Boston Globe in September. “Self-help can take you to the place where you lose your own ability to make decisions about your life, where you’re waiting for some expert to kick in with their advice. When it gets to where you don’t have your own inner wisdom, you’re losing sight of your own ability to get through life. I always say, ‘Listen, this is not the tablet of Moses; I don’t have a program.’ Humor is just part of the puzzle of life. You need connection, touch and love in your life, and humor and passion.”

LaRoche doesn’t claim to be cured of stress, but the prescription for relieving anxiety isn’t indecipherable. It's largely human connection.

“I get massages, try to work out on a regular basis and infuse my life with new things, such as racquetball, which has become a new passion within the last year,” she said. “I try to hang out with thoughtful people who are filled with loving kindness rather than doubt and despair. Social support, above all else, has been recognized as the key to higher moods and longevity.”

LaRoche urges people to live life in the moment, as though it were New Year's Eve, with hats, horns, confetti and champagne.

“The Western mind has a hard time living in the moment,” she acknowledged. “There’s constant chatter. Look at CNN. The anchor is telling you the news while you read below.”

Humor helps people step back from the lunacy. “When you get stuck in the overly serious, you can’t see the light. It’s the divinity of humor that takes us to a higher place,” she said. “It allows us to witness our own human folly.”

For more on Loretta LaRoche, see www.lorettalaroche.com.

For a digital photo, contact Teri Rizvi at (937) 229-3241.