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# Loving People Without Judging

## An Interview with Jessica Porter

Julia Ferré

*Everybody loves Jessica! Whether she is teaching a class, hosting a panel, or just hanging out, Jessica has the ability to make people smile and feel great. Author of The Hip Chick's Guide to Macrobiotics, Jessica is passionate about including humor and laughter into macrobiotics and helping introduce it to an audience beyond those already converted.*

*The Hip Chick's Guide to Macrobiotics incorporates many of the teachings of George Ohsawa—the grand ideas of macrobiotics—and infuses them with examples everyone can relate to. If you haven't already read it, take a chance to check out Jessica's view on the subjects beyond recipes and healthy foods. Currently, Jessica is writing another book, The MILF Diet, which takes her writing and message to the next step and the next audience—women in the prime of life. The MILF Diet is set to be released this fall.*

*Carl and I interviewed Jessica while on the Holistic Holiday at Sea Cruise in March. After a few years of trying to connect with Jessica (even to arrange a dinner date—she is really in demand!), we managed to squeeze in an hour to get acquainted and find out what rocks the Hip Chick.*



**JESSICA PORTER**

*Carl and I are excited to feature Jessica in the pages of Macrobiotics Today magazine and even more thrilled that she is teaching at French Meadows camp this July. This camp, Jessica will not only present information from her new book, but also will offer classes on hypnosis, one on cooking, and host the variety show. Be prepared to have a great time.*

*— Julia Ferré*

**J***essica, we are excited about having you come to French Meadows! We have wanted to have you at camp for years.*

Thank you for asking. I am really excited except that I am kind of nervous about camping. I have been to Burning Man and I went to summer camp every year in Canada where I grew up. I have even been in the Amazon jungle with spiders the size of my head, but I just feel kind of klutzy around seasoned campers.

***You are going to fit right in. Camp is regular people, no nakedness or crazy stuff. What are you going to do at camp?***

Hypnosis and some talks about gender. Men, women, and the neuroscience that is coming out lately about male and female brains and how it compares with what we learned in macrobiotic classes, that is, the yin and yang of men and women. It is fascinating.

***Do men and women have different brains?***

In macrobiotic classes, we compare the bodies and have the upside down triangle as the man and the right

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side up triangle as the woman. There are some teachings about the nature of each gender. I researched a number of books for my next book, among them *The Female Brain*, *The Male Brain*, and another called *Why Gender Matters*. *The Female Brain* and *The Male Brain* are both written by a female neuropsychiatrist, and *Why Gender Matters* is by a male psychologist. Men have bigger sex and aggression centers of their brain, whereas women have bigger emotional and communication centers of their brains.

Another difference is that men and women process stress differently. Women process stress through the parasympathetic nervous system, which to macrobiotic people is labeled yin. What that means is that when you (Julia) and I are stressed out, our first inclination is to retreat, go to sleep, throw up, or even faint. We want to check out. When men feel extreme stress, they are squeezed by the sympathetic nervous system, and there is almost a positive charge. They rise to the challenge. This can explain why men like to go see action movies, they get a kind of a high out of seeing a man hit another man—not that they want to do it necessarily—but that their nervous system is responding in a positive way. Whereas women sigh, say, “What a bore,” or worse, they want to get out of the theater.

#### ***Or fall asleep or throw up!***

We want to literally get away. I mean, hey, you don’t see a ton of women at boxing matches. Another difference is that men and women problem-solve differently. There are two different neuroprocessors in the brain for problem solving, and one is based on analysis and the other is based on empathy. While both genders have access to both, women spend more time in the empathy processor and men spend more time in the analysis processor. There is a cliché of the couple coming home from work and the woman says, “I had such a bad day,” and the husband wants to

fix it. He goes straight to the analysis processor, while she just wants him to listen to her. She just needs empathy and that will feel to her like she’s solved her problem.

There are other things too. A male eye is designed to track movement of objects, like hunting ducks, watching a puck going into a goal, or looking at a woman’s breasts walking by. Look at sports, warfare, and sex, they are all about hunting and moving objects. When little boys draw in school (of course these are generalizations), most will pick up gray, black, and dark purple markers and

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draw something moving into something, like a rocket hitting the earth, a flying swords, or a fast car. Girls will almost universally show a house with a family, sun, a tree, and lots of color. Women’s eyes are naturally better at texture, color, and facial recognition. Women have better hearing than men and are more naturally generous than men. Men have more blood than women, and more red blood cells per pint of blood than women.

#### ***Why did men and women’s bodies develop that way?***

I think it is literally the yin and yang of nature. When you look at these things, they are all complimentary opposites. What fascinates me about seeing the neuroscience is that what I have been told in macrobiotic philosophy is true. Now, neuroscience doesn’t use the words yin and

yang and isn’t explaining the dynamic of yin and yang—I’m not sure I can do that either because it is complicated. I wanted to write this book for women and explain that women naturally bring to the table a lot of great qualities—empathy, communication, and a natural inclination to feeling, nurturing, and sharing.

Little girls will universally play in a sharing way. Little boys will play in a competitive way. Neither way is good or bad, but I think the world needs a lot of feminine quality in order to save itself, and that women, especially in our generation, don’t know that our dominant mode is very positive and definitely necessary!

If you have a country that hasn’t been populated yet, if you have a frontier that hasn’t been settled yet, if you have a political system that hasn’t been developed yet, you need tons of yang energy to do that. However, we are getting to a point where society is getting really fast, really pressurized, really self-absorbed, really violent, and really pornographic. It is like yang out of control. And, there is an absence of good quality yin too. What I’m trying to do is prove to women that they have this natural force. If they eat natural food, then this natural femininity will be theirs to play with, and they can bring balance into their own body, balance to their husband, balance to the family, and balance to the world. Yes, there is political feminism, which was critical in breaking women out of the domestic servitude of patriarchy, and now women have a role, a voice, and a choice. And, maybe now’s the time for women to embrace our natural, organic gifts.

#### ***What is the name of your book?***

*The MILF Diet.* MILF means, “Mother with whom I’d like to fornicate,” although the “f” means something a little more crass. It is a term that is fast becoming a compliment, because it means an older woman who is still sexually attractive. I was curious about how many of my

friends found that term complimentary, unlike other terms for sexy women. It dawned on me why it is complimentary—it allows motherhood and sexuality in the same body. We are living in a world with a Madonna/Whore complex that is projected onto us unconsciously, like there is a good girl and a bad girl, you are a mom or the slut.

***There are no other kinds of women around.***

Yes, you recognize that. The word “MILF” actually heals. When I looked at the macrobiotic women that I have known for 20 years, they weren’t aging at the same rate as

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other women. They were maintaining a sexual fizzle, they had lots of kids, and they were downright MILFs. More than that, they have spirituality and a sense of earthiness and connectedness to the planet that regular mainstream women are seeking to achieve. My book is written because of these macrobiotic women who are my teachers and models. I collected a bunch of women who have—collectively—400 years of macrobiotic experience and 37 children. They have donated recipes and relayed their experiences.

The book talks about what I mean by a MILF—I am literally repurposing the word in a political sense, like, “I want to be a MILF.” I am not a mother, but you can be the age of a mother, and that is a powerful thing for a woman to be. The MILFs I know are MILFy because they understand

balance. The book talks about balance and all the natural wisdom of balance and how you get balance. There are discussions of personality, both yin and yang; diseases, both yin and yang; and foods. I talk about MILF sex and the yin and yang of sex. We live in a world where sex is reduced to an orgasm, and if you don’t achieve an orgasm, you are failing. Studies talk about female orgasm and say things like 30 percent of women never have an orgasm.

***It is goal orientated!***

Exactly, you must achieve this thing. So I ask, have you ever heard of energy? Have you ever heard of an energetic exchange between two people? Have you ever heard of yin? Because as women know, sex is more like—you open up, you release, and you disappear. I say in the book, forget about coming, you are leaving!

They did a study in the Netherlands showing that men and women perceive orgasm differently. Now, men are very sensation based, and the sensation that’s created at their sex organ is where they derive pleasure. Women have physical pleasure as well, no doubt, and certainly there are times of the month when a woman is more orgasmic. The real hormonal and chemical payoff for a woman for an orgasm is the 10 minutes of complete shutdown of the mental and emotional stress. It is the zone afterwards.

***It relaxes the parasympathetic nervous system?***

Yes, right. The zone. I’m not saying the getting there is not great, it is, but the whole arc of female arousal brings her pleasurable payoffs. You don’t always have to get to the end of the hockey game to score a goal.

***This sounds like a great book. When is it coming out?***

Right now, we’re working on the cover and it is being printed this fall. It is 300 pages and more than an intro-

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ductory book. It is more sophisticated and it is really a feminist book. This is what I call my feminist Trojan horse.

***Are you writing for women beyond the macrobiotic audience?***

Yes. I don’t use the word macrobiotic, although I point to my first book, and do thank Michio and Aveline Kushi in the front. I like teaching in a way that funnels people into macrobiotic education and gets them in the door without that word. With all respect to Michio and George Ohsawa, it is a clunky word. I love giving macrobiotics a wide, initial presentation in order to get into mainstream audiences and hope that my explanation of why I use the words I do serves as a hook to get people interested.

***How has The Hip Chick’s Guide to Macrobiotics done?***

I think it stretched the macrobiotic audience. It has sold somewhere between 60 and 70,000 copies. I know people for whom it has been their intro into macrobiotics. As far as I am concerned, I think it is important to educate women (and especially those with children) and let them know that by stepping back into the kitchen and taking control that they are doing something more powerful than they will ever know, even though we all had feminist mothers who said, “Get the hell out of the kitchen.” Haha! Everything eventually becomes its



**Jessica Porter Teaching on the Cruise**

opposite!

***I love that you are writing macrobiotic books that talk about claiming your whole self, your sexual side, your mother side, your career side, your home side.***

Your yin side. This is the stuff of spirituality, the stuff of love, the stuff of community. Jesus, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Gandhi were basically showing us their girly sides, you know, but women have this in spades—we do this in our sleep! As long as we aren't twisted with personality disorders or were really messed up as children, by default we just enjoy each other and help each other. Men need women, and women need women. You know there are more single women in the United States and in Canada then there are married women now?

Whenever a girlfriend complains about being single, I say, "Enjoy your freedom while you have it! Do you realize that we live in a generation that is unprecedented in all of human history? And that it may never come around again?" All we need to do is run out of fossil fuels for this party to end, my friends. And why not be the women who go all the way to the end

of the pendulum swing? Let's find out what it is to be actualized. In other centuries it was illegal! A woman was her husband's property. She wasn't allowed to participate as a leader in religion, or business, or to pursue her dreams. Our freedom is so precious, and so delicious and just like democracy, it is something that needs to be protected and maintained. It may not be here forever. I am a proud daughter of a feminist who believes that women can live life fully, whatever that means.

Don't get me wrong; I love men very much, but I write mostly for women because—in our culture—women are more often the ones in the kitchens—of course not always, (and by the way, a man stepping into the kitchen is a wonderful thing... I am always very impressed and moved by my male macro friends who do lots of cooking. They are beautiful, soulful people, but it is in our female wiring to nurture others. So women have the power to make more balanced children, and more balanced mates.

***And, growing healthy societies and generations.***

Yes. I believe it's one of the most powerful things you can do. And then

you can go cook dinner for your congressman!

***Do you consider things are more positive or more negative? People are more sick than ever, but there is also this rising consciousness.***

It depends. Some days I think we are going to hell in a hand basket and very quickly. Other days, I think there is a quantum leap going on. When I started getting into health foods there was one health store near me, and it was dusty and tofu was sold in big 5 gallon buckets and everyone there was stoned. A short 20 years later, you can find brown rice and organic foods at almost every supermarket in the United States. Veganism has gone crazy in the last few years. Have you noticed that many of the macrobiotic principles have come in through the back door? Whether it is local, organic, sea vegetables, whatever.

***Do you counsel people macrobiotically?***

I am not a macrobiotic counselor. I made a decision a long time ago; I am not good at it, and I don't like the responsibility. Sometimes macrobiotic people come for hypnosis. I am happy to help someone with the emotional and mental things and get their mind on board with their life but I am not interested in counseling them about specific foods. I realized early on that I am a communicator and that is what I am good at, whether writing or teaching a class, that is my forte.

***You communicate with hypnosis, books, are you performing somewhere too?***

I moved to Los Angeles about 4 years ago to get back into acting. I have acted since I was about 11 and have been in a ton of plays. I went to graduate school in acting in New York and got into macrobiotics at the same time. Actually, eating really healthy food made me quit NYU.

***Why did you make that choice?***

Macrobiotics screwed up my acting career. For the first time in my life, I wanted to be in the play of my life. Macrobiotics brought about so many exciting changes that my life became “the show,” and I didn’t want to step on the stage and be somebody else. Seven years later, the bug came back—you never really lose the bug to step on stage. For those seven years, I was fully committed to looking at my own self and getting my stuff together. I spent my 20s meditating and cooking rice, and missed what was for other people a very party- and social-expansive time. My 20s were incred-

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ibly contracted, and I am grateful for that as I formed a strong spiritual relationship with the universe and grew a lot. When I got back into acting, I had a completely different agenda, which was no longer about my ego. I just wanted to have fun.

***When did you realize you had the comic in you?***

I had two awakenings. One was at summer camp when I was 11. There were four girls on our bunk beds, and I just did something and everyone cracked up. In that moment, I thought, “this is interesting, I have just said something without trying and everyone had this positive reaction.” The second awakening happened when I was at the Kushi Institute and I had lost my sense of humor for a while. You see, I arrived at the KI in 1993 after practicing macrobiotics on my

own for a couple of years in New York City. I had made lots of macrobiotic mistakes and I was really, really yang. I lost my period for 5 years. I got frighteningly skinny and got a really short haircut. I became a little Japanese man!

I worked the front desk at the KI, and after six months or so of learning about balance, I was feeling better, more relaxed, and just generally happier. I would sit at my desk and have these fantasies about doing stand-up comedy, or some sort of funny performance. One day, someone told me about an open mic in a little café in Lee, Massachusetts. I started going there, and I had this desire to be on stage and say all this stuff in my head. I went to the open mic and hadn’t practiced anything, but I did what I do here (on the cruise), and would say, is Julia a MILF or what! and Carl, what is going on? And people would ask, “Did you just think of all this off the top of your head?” I would just riff and it was funny. It was like a second awakening and like being 11 years old again. I became the host of the talent shows and started taking stand-up comedy classes. When I get up on stage in front of hundreds of people, my blood pressure goes down. I channel the Sheky-comedy gods or the Catskill Jewish-type gods. I can’t help it. But just so you know, I can’t keep a room clean or balance my checkbook.

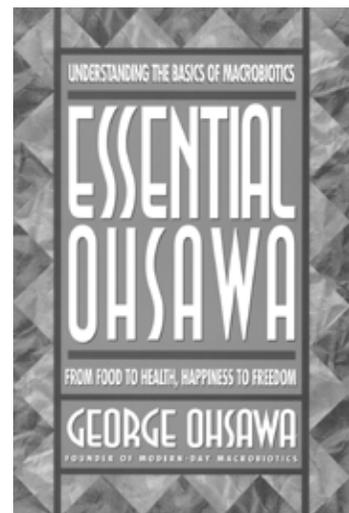
***When did you start doing hypnosis?***

I quit smoking using hypnosis when I was 20. Hypnosis for smoking was the first thing I ever experienced in my life that I would call a miracle. As a non-smoker, I got into yoga, tai chi, and macrobiotics, and my path really changed. 10 years later, I was a private chef with my friend Howard Wallen, and we had a cooking gig with Roger Waters of Pink Floyd. Every day we delivered food to them. We were in Florida at the time and would pass a couple of hypnosis clinics every time we drove to their house. I wondered if hypnosis would help my

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clients, the sick ones (not Roger Waters, he and his wife weren't sick). I bought a book about it, made a tape, and it helped me maintain a discipline around food. Then I got a hypnosis certification, and thought I would specialize in helping macrobiotic people practice, but that is a limited market. I got into smoking cessation and then into hypnosis for childbirth. I taught HypnoBirthing to midwives all over the world—South Africa, England, the United States—the English-speaking world. I have been at 54 births, and really love helping the husbands to work with their wives as a team to give birth. Men feel such empathy for their wives and often feel they don't have anything useful to do. With HypnoBirthing, they are more useful on a certain level than the midwife. The husband can keep the wife relaxed, and program her mind to be positive, and they can practice for weeks, it is very bonding, and a good experience.

### **How did you come to macrobiotics?**

It was in Toronto. My sister started dating a guy who later, after a couple of months, was diagnosed with leukemia or something. He and his whole family became macrobiotic, and so I heard the word. My sister bought some books on it and dragged me to a macrobiotic restaurant, which I thought was disgusting. But the seed got planted. When I graduated

from college, I borrowed one of her books—stole it actually—it was the only form of cooking I was interested in pursuing. I had an eating disorder and was obsessed with food. I was constantly overeating and was addicted to sugar and felt miserable. I went to my first macrobiotic cooking class at the New York and Murray Snyder was my first counselor. I just loved it from the get go, although I wasn't good at it from the get go.

Then I stumbled on Ohsawa and started busting through my spirituality. I came to macrobiotics without a diagnosed condition. Stakes weren't high for me like for other people. I had freedom to leave, if you think about it. I was madly in love with George Ohsawa. I always have found his teachings to be inspirational. Passionate. I got high on it. Now, he did die in April of 1966 and I was born in December of 1966, so think what you will about reincarnation! Just kidding.

### ***The Hip Chick book has a lot of Ohsawa in it.***

I have always connected with Ohsawa because there is a spirituality connected to it. Spirituality goes missing when people get afraid, and Ohsawa had no fear. He just had passion, and I loved it when he talked about the 7 conditions of health, and that 51% of health is about your relationship with the universe.

I loved Ohsawa and I wondered why there were no books that explained yin and yang in an interesting and funny way. To me the 12 laws of change are not only incredibly fascinating but life changing and empowering. Many macrobiotic books are quiet and respectful, but that isn't always engaging to a newcomer... I found some macro books were even confusing when it came to yin and yang, and that's unfortunate because it means the reader has to be really curious about the topic in order to penetrate beyond some of the literature. So I wanted to write the book that would hook people. I want to say,

"Hey normal people, check this out, and you might find this interesting." Hopefully *The MILF Diet* will do the same thing.

### ***I have one last question. What do you think is the meaning of life?***

You end the interview with this! I don't know what the meaning of life is, but I have discovered the purpose of my life and what gives my life the deepest satisfaction: My deepest pleasure comes from loving people. Being present for human beings and loving them. It is a real, natural yin force and I feel it come out of me. I feel that there is no greater pleasure than loving people and that it is never a waste of time.

People are great, for the most part. 95% of people are a gas. No matter what they eat! I never judge people by what they put into their mouths. I consider it sort of criminal to judge people for what they eat. People are much bigger and better than that. Judging them doesn't work anyway. On the practical level, do you want to make a friend or try to change someone, (which rarely works)? Judging them is about the last thing that you should do. I love loving people. Love loving little kids. Love loving my friends. Love animals. Love my family. I think people are cool!

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*Jessica Porter is author of The Hip Chick's Guide to Macrobiotics and co-wrote The Kind Diet with Alicia Silverstone. Her next book, The MILF Diet, is due out in the fall of 2012. Jessica has been practicing macrobiotics since 1991, managed the Way to Health Program at the Kushi Institute in the mid-nineties, and has worked as a traveling macrobiotic cook. She also teaches HypnoBirthing in Canada, the U.K., and throughout the U.S. Jessica is a hypnotherapist and actress who makes her lectures funny, inspiring, and informative. See her website for further information: [www.hipchicksmacrobiotics.com](http://www.hipchicksmacrobiotics.com).*