

Dr. Phil's secret weapon

She worked with him on his rise to the top. Now Libby Gill is using her life experience to help others. *by Kate Coyne*



As the saying goes, behind every great man is a great woman. In the past seven or eight years, Dr. Phil McGraw has gone from an unknown Texas courtroom consultant to a media sensation. As his star continued to rise and his Dr. Phil talk show grew in popularity, Libby Gill was quietly working behind the scenes. Now Dr. Phil's former media consultant is ready to step into the limelight herself.

Gill's life story would, in fact, make for a compelling episode of Dr. Phil. One of six children, she was shattered by the death of her oldest brother in a car accident when she was ten. A couple of years earlier, Gill had been molested by a handyman her parents had hired. They divorced when she was 12, and she had a strained relationship with her stepmom, who later committed suicide. As an adult, Gill married and had two sons, now ten and 14, but went through a painful divorce. Finally, she realized she needed to make some changes. "I was 25 pounds heavier than I am now, and I had created a life that was full of unhappiness," she says in a calm voice. "My marriage was failing. My job wasn't what I wanted. My relationships with my children were strained."

Gill decided to refocus her career, leaving behind public relations and concentrating on what would make her feel fulfilled. Over the next five years, she started writing about what she had learned as a mother and as an executive, as well as teaching at a local university and offering one-on-one career coaching. Then Dr. Phil came calling, and Gill returned to her roots in publicity. "It

seemed like a great opportunity to work with someone who had so much to say," she says, her long brown hair and striking blue eyes making her seem far younger than her 50 years.

Now, having left the McGraw camp (with Dr. Phil's blessing), Gill is the author of the recently published book *Traveling Hopefully: How to Lose Your Family Baggage and Jumpstart Your Life*. She hopes to convince her readers that change is not only possible but also easier than they might imagine. At her lowest point, "I said, OK, I have all these sweeping changes I want to make. But I'm going to make them into little bite-size pieces instead of saying, 'Oh, I've got to reinvent my entire life in one fell swoop.' I think that just shuts people down. But if you take your goals and break them down, you can create an action plan. I've got my road map with all my one-year goals and my six-month goals."

In *Traveling Hopefully*, Gill offers readers several action plans to achieve their goals. And the author has started to realize many of her own ambitions. Now spending more time with her kids—and engaged to a "wonderful" man—Gill has plenty of reason to be hopeful about her future. "I want people to know that you can change whether you're 20 or 40 or 90," she says. "I'm living proof." ■