

A charmed Life

Selectively superstitious. BY BETH BERNSTEIN

WHEN I WAS TWELVE, my grandmother took me to an eclectic shop in Brooklyn that sold everything from Native American jewelry to gold chains to diamond rings. While trying on a silver ring, I was cautioned by a formidable woman with a thick Russian accent. “Don’t place a ring on your left ring finger until someone proposes, or you’ll never get married.” “We don’t believe in old wives tales,” my grandmother whispered. “We don’t?” I wondered and put down the ring.

Since then, I’ve been selectively superstitious in my choice of jewelry. At 45 and still single (but not without hope), I wear a stack of seven diamond eternity bands only on my right hand.

My jewelry superstitions spill over to other aspects of my life. A frequent but fearful flier, I’m convinced that my last 16 trips to Europe have been safely guided by—not control towers or careful pilots—but by a silver chain dangling with weighty amulets that I wear whenever I fly. This hefty rosary is a concoction of charms that my friends and family have given to me over the years. The heavy metal sets off the security beepers each time I pass through, but so far, so good.

When I’m not avoiding plane crashes or (worse still) the prospect of remaining single, my personal jewelry style supercedes superstition. It includes diamonds, rubies, delicate antique-inspired looks, men’s vintage watches and cuff links. Recently, however, I had my tarot cards read. It occurred to me that I had been warding off bad luck instead of trying to attract good fortune. No longer would I indulge my unfounded superstitions, I would become more spiritual in order to invite positive energy into my life. While not quite willing to trade my aerobics or Latin dancing classes for chanting and meditative yoga, wearing talisman jewelry was something I could definitely manage. So off

went my diamonds and on went gold medallions. The first piece I chose was a lotus leaf, symbolizing renewal, transformation and new beginnings. (Translation: forget commitment-phobic boyfriend and find a new one.) Next I layered an aquamarine and diamond charm necklace for courage and greater understanding. (Maybe this summer I’ll manage a weeklong vacation with my family without strangling a sister-in-law...) Then there was the Ganesha-etched pendant, the god of strength and fortitude, which promotes success by removing obstacles. (I’d stop stubbing my toe on the magazine pile that doubles as an end table; a more organized living space would lead to an uncluttered mind.) I also wore a ruby horn for passion and luck, and a simple disc that read “hope” (surely my future would include that ring for my left hand...)

Reluctant to weaken the power of my talisman by taking them off to shower or sleep, I decided not to risk it and awoke every morning to tangled chains. Even so, they weren’t working. The first week, my ex-boyfriend kept calling, my bank lost all my savings in a computer glitch, I went on three blind dates with three Mr. Wrongs, and the crystals cracked on two of my vintage watches. My new spirituality was becoming an expense I couldn’t afford.

But somehow, I was actually getting attached to these finely designed necklaces. They looked fashionable layered around my neck. I decided to throw caution to the wind and mix them with my diamonds. Within three weeks, I met an interesting and attractive man, all bank errors were straightened out, my watch crystals got fixed, and life was generally looking up. So while I may never wear a ring on my left ring finger or fly without my lucky charms, I’m learning to sit back, have faith and mix spirituality with a bit of bling. ♦

