SLAPSTIK COMEDY: LIVE YOUR LIFE: MOTIVATION ISSUE

SLAPSTIK

June 2023

ALSO FEATURING:

Niles Abston
JJ Williamson
Liz & Carlos Wallace



FEATURING JOSH BLUE

Photography By: @NickLarsonPhotography

MECHA SWAIN

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dreams come true, as long as you create a strategy and stay dedicated to your goals. One dream that came true for me was the opportunity to work with Josh Blue. I've wanted to meet and work with him for over 10 years. When we were planning this issue of the magazine and we decided that the title would be Live Your Life: Motivation, Josh Blue was the only comedian I envisioned being on the cover. I have a list of comedians that I would love to feature on the upcoming covers of SlapStik Comedy Magazine such as Flame Monroe, Neal Brennan, Adam Sandler, Sommore, Michael Blackson, Rikki Hughes, and Roy Wood Jr, to throw out some names. I'm excited that now, I get to cross Josh Blue's name off the list.

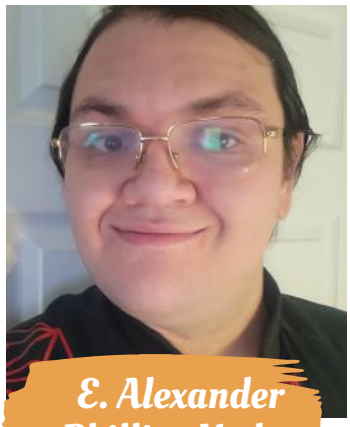
I have to be honest, being that he recently won America's Got Talent, I thought he was going to reject the idea. I thought he was going to say he is bigger than SlapStik Comedy Magazine. Nope. Josh Blue came through for us and worked with us for over an hour so that we could complete this mission. For this to occur, I prayed, and I am confident that prayer helped. Josh Blue is a super cool, laid-back dude, and the vibe was fitting. I love that while working together, he didn't rush the process. If he were to say no to being on the cover, I would have cried. I would not have been prepared because I did not think of another comedian. Not for this issue. I'm immensely thankful that it worked out.

That leads me to speak about manifestation. It really works. I am currently manifesting a considerable amount of resources for my life as well as my business. When I need reassurance, I sometimes turn to tarot. The tarot topic is covered in this issue, which is discussed by two different writers that are on Team SlapStik. I use tarot as guidance and as my burning bush. To be honest, it drives me crazy when people relate tarot to witchcraft. But hey, if that's how they think, that's on them. I also enjoy listening to positive messages. Ones that inspire, give spark, and encouragement. I will continue to receive messages from the universe and my ancestors. If you are not into tarot or divine messages, that is simply your decision, but don't judge me.

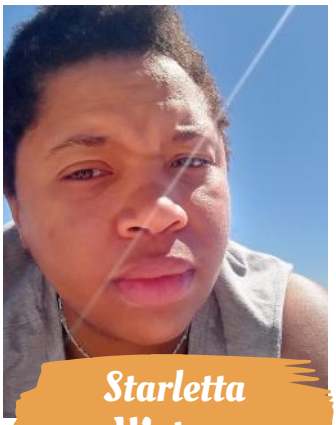
This issue of SlapStik Comedy Magazine is to encourage you to Live Your Life and to give you Motivation. A short while ago, I left my full-time job after almost nine years. I can't explain how free I feel. Some family members wanted me to stay on the job. Entrepreneurs inspired me to take this leap of faith. I knew what I wanted for myself, so I took this leap of faith because this is My Life. My happiness is imperative. Plus, God brought me this far; he will not fail me. My vision is just that, mine, and others can't see my range of view, the plans that are in place, and how we will grow SlapStik Comedy. With that Live Your Life.



Meet The Team



E. Alexander Phillips Hedge



Starletta Watson



Shannon Lynch



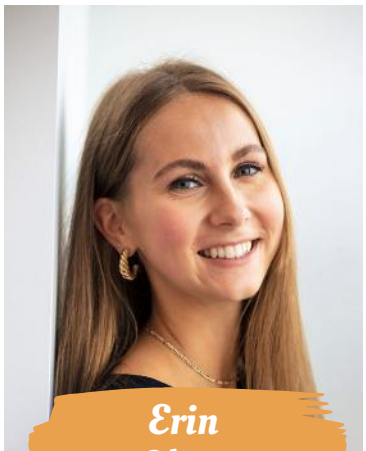
Angie DiDomenica



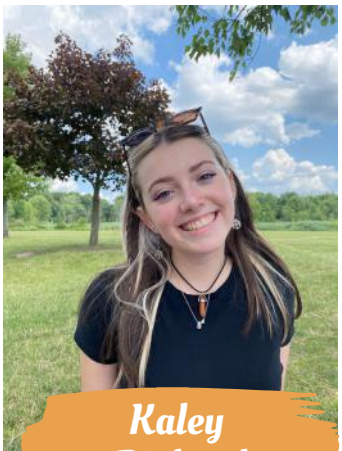
Ben Cena



Alexandra Webb



Erin Oliver



Kaley Richard



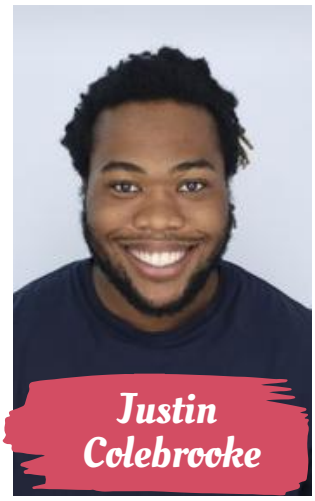
Katherine Hoang



Jonathan Hernandez



Malik Harvey



Justin Colebrooke



Tameeah Browne



Leah Jo Wickstrom



Sable Hawkins



Zach Rush



Sally Bessette



Karlos Gutierrez

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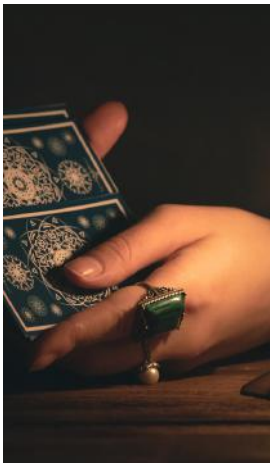
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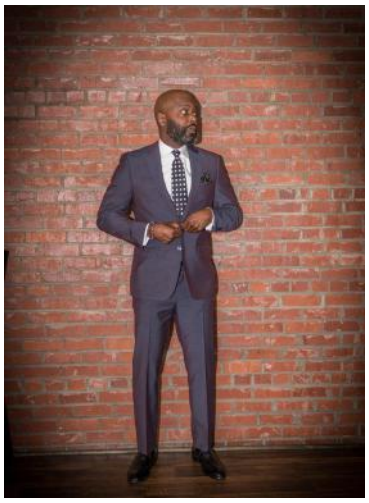
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Luisa Lange

“I may not be the prettiest girl in the class, but I can make everyone laugh in the whole room. That is so valuable”.

"Stage time is so valuable to me that I'll do bar shows, club shows, not because my standards are low, but because I'm trying to take every opportunity I can."

I got to spend time with the multi-talented, down to earth, and simply super cool comic Luisa Lange. Luisa is big in the NYC stand up scene, but has most recently made her mark on Tik Tok and Instagram with (my personal fave) hilarious song analysis videos.

What I treasure most about my conversation with Luisa was how real and honest she was about achieving a solid work-life balance. We discussed how culture and the stand-up scene screams to constantly "do the most" all the time, which ultimately leads to burnout and uninspired content. Luisa discussed how crucial it is for her to take time off and that it should be a normal part of life.

To produce the best content, you need that time for yourself to recharge, in whatever way that looks like for you.

She also instilled in me strong motivation to just start on something, whether it be stand up, making goofy videos, taking the step to move to a different city, or going after anything in life that you want. Having the confidence to start something. Once you begin, you're golden. You'll figure out the details along the way, but don't wish you started earlier or regret not going after what you want. Nike and Luisa said it best: "Just do it."

How often do you do standup on a weekly basis?

A couple nights a week. Ideally, it'd be every night of the week, but right now I have a couple bookings per week. I get to do a bunch of comedy for my current day job, making video content for different brands. It's kind of a perfect gig for a comedian.

Growing up, were you always a fan of comedy?

I was never a huge fan of comedy or stand up. When I was little, I liked funny shows like The Amanda Show, but I didn't necessarily watch standup. I just knew I liked to make people laugh and felt like it was the one thing I was really good at. From the youngest age I can remember, my social form of currency was making people laugh. When my family and friends heard I was going into comedy it wasn't a shock to them. Sometimes I feel like a fraud because I can't participate in those types of conversations about the classics, but I just like to do it and that's what matters.

Would you be happy with just doing standup?

Yeah, I would love to just do my own comedy. That's the goal, being able to support myself just doing that. The way the internet works today, I could make some of my income through Tik Tok and videos. I love making video content and podcasting too. I would love to do a combo of video content and stand up and make my own brand.

Do you find it overwhelming with the many different platforms nowadays to create content or do you view it as more opportunity to make material?

It's a lot, and it's crazy because it's both of those things at the same time. Part of me is so overwhelmed. I'm 29, so I'm not Gen Z. I'm not as savvy as them, but I still understand it all. The endless opportunity is overwhelming but also amazing. You don't need anyone's permission to release content. You just do it. So then, the only thing stopping me sometimes is me.

We live in such a hustle culture. We're told to just grind until we're burnt out and want to die.

Stand up is really like that too. I try to avoid that, and I'm not sure what the best solution is, but I try not to push myself to the limit with comedy. I know comics who would never take a week off, but I need that. I need time to see my family, see my friends, go out and live my life. So then, I have things to talk about on stage. That has kept me going on stage for so many years, because I can recognize when I'm starting to burn out. So, I say, I'm taking a break and that's alright. You see everyone around you hustling convinces you they're all working so much harder than you are, and that's a lot of pressure. It's helpful for me to remove myself from that.



As a woman in comedy, do you feel like you've had to hustle harder, or has it been easier than you thought?

For the first couple years, it was mostly open mics in a room with just me and a bunch of dudes. But I never felt ostracized, maybe because I never let myself feel that way. I had the confidence knowing I was funny. But it is a very male dominated field, however, once you get to a certain level, I think the men are just telling dick and the racist jokes get weeded out. The good women rise to the top and there's a good amount of us. There's a lot of women in comedy now. There's strength in numbers, we just have to stick together. I have so much respect for the women who have made it in comedy. I'm also always aware of how many women are on that night's lineup. However, this has never been something I've ever been super upset about. I think I'm really lucky in that way.

How did the opportunity for Impractical Jokers come along?

I started working as a Production Assistant for Broad City in the early years of living in New York for two seasons. Years later, I was randomly contacted by a woman I worked with on the set who had then become the show's producer. She asked me if I wanted to have a small role for Impractical Jokers. I said, "Of course, what do I have to do?" She said I just needed to cry on command. The girl who was originally casted got COVID last minute, so she just thought of me. I'm not happy that the girl got COVID, but it did work out for me.

I am obsessed with your TikToks revolving around the origins of making popular songs. What first gave you that idea for those videos?

I actually had this old TikTok account that was just stuck at 14K, and I didn't really know why because I was posting all the time. I started a new account last September, and I immediately started getting more views. Videos of me just talking to the camera started to blow up. I also reposted a song one I had previously on my old account, and it showed me that people love this song analysis thing.

It hasn't been long since I really started doing that, but it's helped my following a lot of TikTok and Instagram, which in turn has really helped my stand up.

I know you said you weren't into stand-up growing up, but are there comics you follow now?

I love Nikki Glaser. She is so funny to me, and amazing. She's also been super nice to me and is an example of what I want to be in this industry, which is someone who genuinely wants to help younger comics and women get into the industry. I also love Nate Bortgaze, I think he's a genius. His whole schtick is "Oh, I'm just this dummy", but you have to be so incredibly smart to make the jokes and incredible juxtapositions that he does. I love comedy that's not about sex, almost clean, that's just about everyday things that everyone experiences, which I think he does really well. I really like John Mulaney too, and think he follows that same token well. I love Bo Burnham and Inside, that fully changed my life. However, I also think I want to find my own voice on stage and don't want to take anyone else's. There was a period of time where I listened to this podcast where I started to talk like the hosts when I performed on stage. It's like when you hang out with the same friends a lot, you start to talk like them. It's a slippery slope because podcasts feel like you're talking to your best friends. Which is fine if you're a regular person, but as a comic it's really tricky. Also, I think I am not watching a lot of stand-up on TV because I'm watching it live. I'm watching amazing comedy all the time, so I don't feel like watching it at home. It's my time to not be thinking about comedy or doing it. I do love it, but I'm seeing so much of it live, who are genuinely hilarious and incredible, so I feel like I'm getting my fix just watching it all around me. Having that separation is so important.



In that same token, how do you like to decompress so you're not always "on"?

I'm actually super introverted. I'm such a homebody. I've stopped drinking so much and going out like I did in college and my young 20s. I love just being with a couple friends, taking an edible, smoking weed. I really value intimate friendships right now. I feel like when I'm in a big crowd of people, I'm not recharged. When I'm alone, by myself, or with just one or two friends, that recharges me. When I get burnt out or overwhelmed, I love making my apartment a great place to be. Lighting a candle and knowing you have nowhere to be that night is just the best thing. I need to take those nights for myself. You have to be "on" all the time when you're doing comedy. Maybe if I didn't do comedy, I'd be looking more for that "fix". But I'm very social in the comedy scene so that's where I get my fill of strong, extraverted energy.



What shows have been recharging you lately?

I've loved Abbott Elementary. I thought it was light, funny, and not too serious. I can't handle really serious TV and don't care to get so invested. Unfortunately, I love The Bachelor franchise. It's just a dumpster fire and I love it. I always love trashy reality TV. Then I have my comfort shows, like Broad City and New Girl. Then I watch what's trendy too, like Ginny and Georgia and You.

What's the best piece of advice you can give to a young comic, and what did the process of moving to New York look like for you?

It's a scary thing to do. I just made sure to get a job to pay rent. I was working at SoulCycle and doing a bunch of random stuff. Just move here. You will get a job. Work at a restaurant, anything to pay your rent. For starting stand up, just get up on stage. There's no other way to start than to start. The scariest thing to do is first getting on stage and then it's over. Some people at open mics are so bad, but they're just so confident. Starting is the only way to do it. You're also never going to start with your dream job. I wanted to be an NBC Page so bad. But I moved around so much in terms of how I made money, but it's been so good. I've met so many people and learned exactly what I want to do.

Erin Oliver

How To Change Careers and Do It Effectively

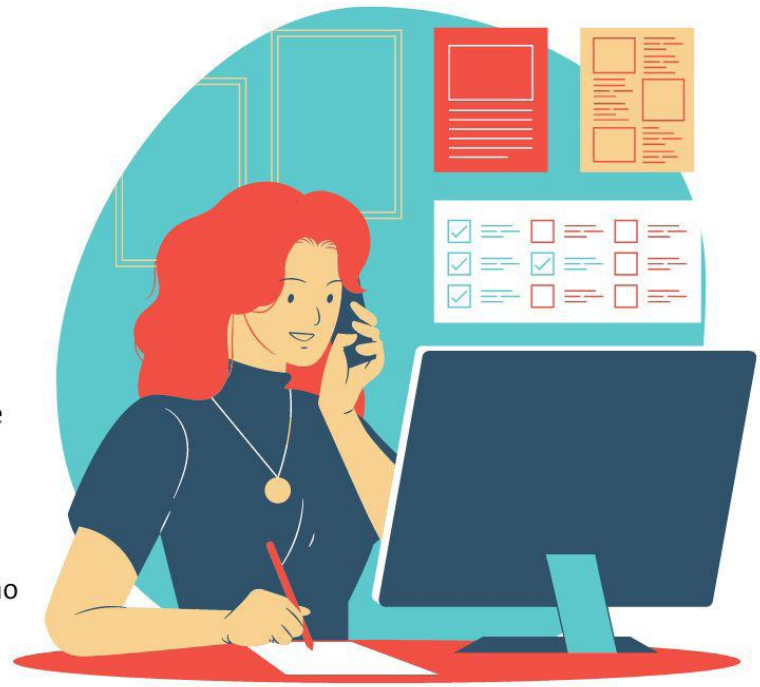
I envy people who knew what they wanted to be when they were 10 and grew to become it. The nerve of these people. At 10, I thought I wanted to be an architect, due to my love for drawing. It was right before high school when that desire began to fade, as I was getting more interested in sports and video games.

Between high school and the time I finished my first year of college, I can count on two hands and a couple of toes all the things I thought I would be: sports broadcaster, professional basketball player (but only grew to be 5'5, so...), an actor, video game designer, physical therapist, musician, HVAC technician and on and on.

Picking what I wanted to do felt like trying to decide what I wanted to cook for dinner, yet the meal I chose in this situation was going to be dinner for at least the next 30 years. While at the time, I felt as though I had no direction (a feeling that still pops up from time to time) what I certainly had was intuition which helped give me guidance, as I traveled down a murky road.

After getting a job at Ford Motor Company post freshman year of college, it wasn't long before I no longer found myself in school.

Being only 19 and making $400-$500 weekly was, at the time, the ideal situation to be in: it afforded me vacations, frequent concert outings, clothes, various cars and motorcycles, tattoos, my own apartment, and whatever other shenanigans I felt worth the price. It was great. Although everything looked glossy on the outside, internally my intuition was starting to speak to me. It questioned the purpose behind what I was subjecting myself to for at least 40 hours a week.



> Most people will spend on average 90,000 hours at work over the course of their life. This equals out to about 13 years and two months (if you don't include overtime).

By 2017, I had given Ford about 8,500 hours of my life (nearly 10% of my expected lifetime working hours). According to the 10,000 hour rule, I was about 2,500 more hours away from being considered an expert at installing tailgates. When I was a teenager, I had many ideas as to what the future Malik would be a master at, becoming a master at installing tailgates was not one of them.

With the realization that Ford was no longer in my future, I knew it was time for me to change careers which drove in some long-awaited questions like, "What am I good at?", "What am I bad at?", "What deal beakers do I have going into my next career?" and so on. The following year I found myself two and a half hours away from home enrolled in school for journalism.

To pull off an effective career change, there are certainly steps that need to be taken. In the following paragraphs, if I haven't already provided you with some clues, I'd like to spell out a little more explicitly the steps I took and others I deem as useful on your journey to a new beginning.

1 Self-Assessment

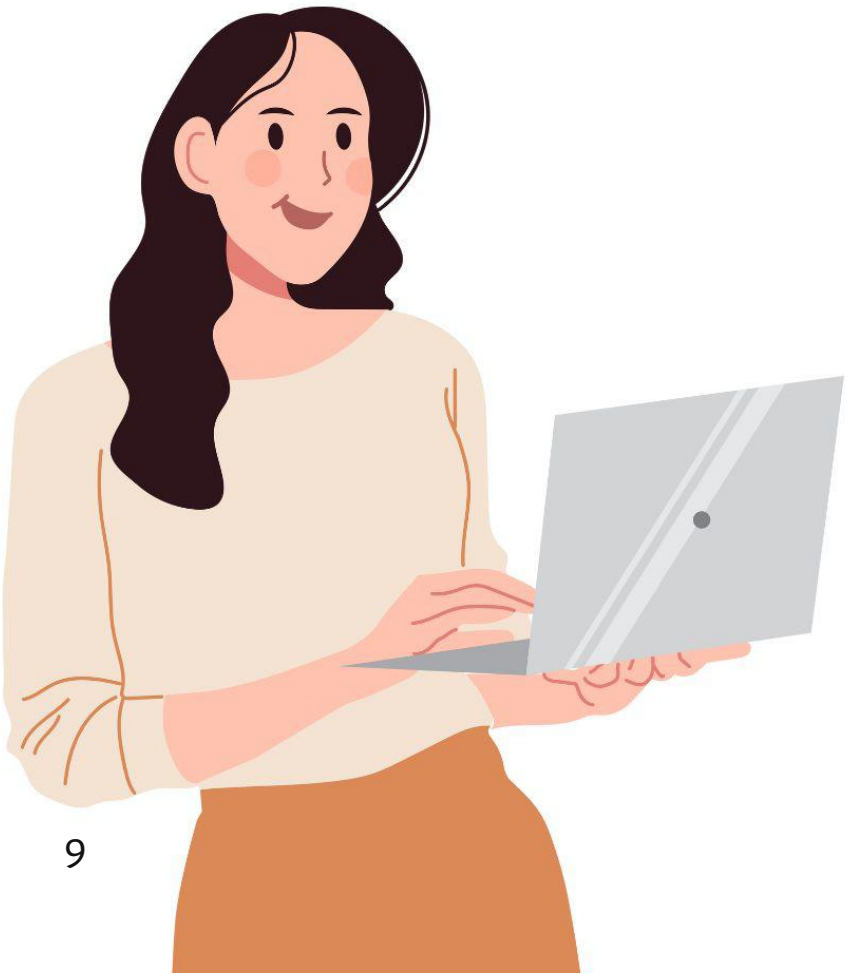
Trying to thoroughly psychoanalyze yourself does feel quite perilous and fraught inducing on most days, but for the sake of working somewhere you'll enjoy, it's good to figure out the bare minimums of who you are as a person. Ask yourself, "What are my values?", "What kind of things get me out of bed in the morning?", "What have I failed at in the past?", "What have I succeeded at in the past?" Questions like these will help pull back the layers and reveal enough information for you to figure out what kind of career may suit you best.

While this was not a practice I engaged in before I quit Ford, this was something I decided to do last year. When I quit Ford, I knew I wanted to do something in writing so I went to school for journalism.

Since my first year of college, I've engaged in multiple side hustles as I was being introduced to all kinds of new opportunities. It took me getting to a point of near exhaustion last year for me to sit down and ask myself some of the aforementioned questions. Coming to the understanding that I always thrive best when I can be autonomous, coupled with the fact that I'm immensely curious and a deep thinker, I decided writing was something I should commit to regardless of whatever alluring opportunities showed its head along the way.

2 Be Confident and Craft Your New Narrative

Leaving one career for a completely different career can create a lot of self-doubt, as it'll seem as though you have no "experience" to offer potential employers. You're wrong.



In fact, it's your previous experiences that have lended you the clarity and ambition to chase after what you now desire. To communicate your ambitions cogently with your next employer will take some work and a few rejections before you can have a firm grasp on what it is you desire.

I remember talking to my career coach about my lack of confidence in applying for writing jobs/internships. I told her that the few columns I had written for my school paper just didn't seem to fit the bill when stacked up against my fellow columnist at school, let alone those in other academia. She told me to get the idea of "not being good enough" out of my head and to focus on what I saw myself as in the future, and be proud of the little work I had completed up until that point, because if I wasn't, employers would smell it. I decided to listen and continue to put in my resume wherever I saw fit.

Three weeks later, I found myself in an interview with Mecha Swain and a week later, I was in meetings on how to help grow the brand of SlapStik Entertainment.

If you can foster an idea of where you see yourself at least five years from now and be excited about it, that will present you with the proper enthusiasm and clarity going into your next interview.

3 Figure Out How To Get in the Game

Whenever I've been faced with an idea for a career, whether it be real estate, reselling or writing, I always figured out a way to get involved.

During the summer that I discovered wholesaling real estate, I found myself going to my local real estate meetings, cold calling, going on appointments for homes, listening to podcasts, getting involved in Facebook Groups and whatever else I could do to achieve the goals I had.

The same went for when I discovered there was money in reselling sneakers and vintage clothing, as well as when I realized that writing was a career path I should commit to.

No matter what it is I want to do, I always figured out a way to get involved or in touch with people who were doing the same thing I was striving to do. Whether you're involved in online communities, working an internship, or enrolling in classes, being close to people who are achieving what you hope to achieve is the best case scenario. This can give you valuable insight as to if you see yourself fulfilling the same shoes.

4 Small Steps Will Lead to Big Results

Maybe quitting your job cold turkey isn't the ideal action for you to take because of family, expenses, etc... this means you'll have to assume the role of a "Weekend Warrior." Being a weekend warrior entails someone who engages in their side hustle or passion projects on the weekends.

This could spill into you also being a "Weeknight Warrior," (not as catchy of a name, but it still has its purpose). Either way, it's important to engage in these weekly small steps even if progress doesn't appear to be noticeable.

Utkarsh Amitabh, founder of Network Capital, cited that he tended to his passion project for four years while working his day job. The decision for him to quit his day job came when he decided to take two weeks off from work to focus solely on Network Capital. The result of his two week work session revealed to him he could make bigger strides with his passion project if he could give it his undivided attention. His global peer-to-peer networking hub now has over 100,000 users.

My understanding of the aforementioned concept didn't come until I started reselling clothes exclusively in 2021. Every day I woke up and did something to propel my business forward: whether it was posting on social media and online selling hubs, networking, or finding deals, I was committed to the idea of my business becoming a success. After a year of pounding the pavement daily, I found myself connected with all kinds of resellers from not only my city, but various cities all over the country. My social media following had grown by over 300 followers and I could feel the snowball effect starting to take shape.

Due to its lifestyle, I chose to follow another career path but that one year spent intently focused on a single goal showed me what could happen if I applied that same kind of focus, commitment and daily activity toward what I deemed worthy.

5

Be Sure to Keep the End in Mind

Once you're in the game and can see yourself doing it long term, keep the end in mind. Times will get tough on your journey, so keeping in mind your "why" will save you when you feel ready to jump ship. What the "end" looks like for you is up to you, but I will tell you what motivates me every day: waking up early in the morning to catch the sun rise on the back of my wood deck, overlooking Lake Michigan, enjoying a cup of tea and badly strumming my guitar is what makes any difficulty or setback I encounter worth the trouble.

Conclusion

The most important takeaway from this is to not be intimidated by your new journey. In fact, own it. It won't be easy all the time and there will be days where you wonder if it was worth taking the leap. If you come to the conclusion that it wasn't, return back to your old career or find something new. Either way, follow your intuition and do it with conviction. Whether you believe in a higher power or not, we were given that little voice in our heads for a reason.

Malik Harvey



TIKTOK



MOTIVATION

TikTok, of all places, has given me many ideas to improve my motivation and to live the life I want to live. I know it may sound silly that the social media platform that is full of dances, silly trends, and challenges, and consumes so many of our hours with mindless scrolling has actually helped me find ways to become and stay motivated, but it's true! For example, a while ago I saw a video on TikTok of someone saying her therapist told her to try ironically doing things that are good for her. So, you could decide that tomorrow you aren't going to hit snooze—ironically. Meaning that even though every fiber of your being may want to hit snooze five times, you can do the ironic thing and what goes against your instinct. Get up at the first alarm! Walk yourself to the bathroom and start your day by brushing and flossing your teeth —ironically. It's kind of like a bit or like you're doing all of these things in spite of yourself, but, surprisingly, it actually works. It's important to remember to start with small things like this and work your way up to bigger things slowly so you don't get burned out. Some people also recommend that, if it helps, pretend you're taking care of a loved one.

I also found a little series on TikTok made by Danielle Walter that she called "Delusion Week." During this week, she "hijacked her free will and did what the hottest most successful version of herself would do."

She did this because she wanted to start feeling like her life was a bit more put together. She shares that for her this means going to bed early and waking up early, having a set schedule for the day, planning the whole day the night before at bedtime, and doing various calming activities to wind down at night other than looking at her phone or tv screen. Now let's be honest—this does sound a bit daunting, and she agrees, and what works for her won't work for everyone. That's why she gave herself a goal to do it for just one week and then go from there. And, if a whole entire week still sounds scary, find a good time frame that works for you, and jump in head-first! Remember that getting out of our comfort zone is where we grow.

In doing this challenge, Walter made it a point not to talk explicitly about what she did each day but what she learned; I think this is an important focus. We all live different lives, so the hottest, most successful version of our individual selves will not all do the same thing. This is why it's important to focus on how the things you are doing make you feel and what you're learning in the process. By watching the videos throughout the week, we could see her waking up early, doing her skin care routine,

Sometimes a little tough love is what you need to find the motivation to get your booty up out of bed and get moving. She also says she learned that it feels super accomplishing and fulfilling to have gotten a whole bunch of stuff done before she usually wakes up. Just hearing that makes me feel like I want to get up and start doing things so I can feel accomplished.That sense of accomplishment is something to chase, but it's also important to keep in mind that rest is essential.



Making her bed, going to the gym, getting coffee, walking, and playing with her dog, cooking, doing her nails, doing chores, doing various self-care activities, and lots of other things.

One of the things she says she learned is that you don't have to be a morning person to get up early. That sounds a little obvious, but for our night owls, that's much easier said than done. She also shares "you don't have to like it; you just have to do it."

You cannot get up early and function at your highest potential if you do not prioritize getting enough rest.

Walter also discovered that if you feel like you're just going through the motions of life or if you feel like a robot just doing the same things every day without really thinking about it, then it's definitely time for a change.

Jump start your day and your life by shocking your system and doing something totally different than normal. An influencer I follow, Victoria Browne, says she loves to start her day with a three-minute cold shower, which is something I personally have a visceral reaction to. I'm actually a morning person and I love to wake up before everyone else in my house and move through the kitchen quietly in the presence of my own peace—but you must be crazy if you think I want to start my day being cold and wet. So I must admit that while I have never started my day at 6:00am with a cold shower, I have taken brief cold showers later in the morning sometimes, and I must say those cold showers are surprisingly refreshing and invigorating. I feel brand new after a cold shower. But the point is that finding ways to really bring change to your mundane routine will jar your system and will physically and mentally pull you out of a rut you may find yourself stuck in.

Sometimes, finding motivation is also about surrounding yourself with people, things, and activities that feed your soul. The TikTok algorithm knows me well enough to put this delusion week series on my FYP because that's the kind of content that really speaks to me. Have I tried my hand at the delusion week challenge? No, I have not. Is it hypocritical to be preaching about it right now if I haven't even tried it? Perhaps… And that comes to the next point I have.

It's all fine and dandy to have all these ideas about how to live a better life and be motivated to do the things you know you need to do but don't exactly want to do, but how do you actually implement these ideas into your everyday life? The answer isn't always easy, and it's something you do have to work for you. Everyone is different so the best way to bring motivation into our lives really is not the same for everyone. We must commit to making the effort to bring a change into our lives, and once we have done that it's important to remember that it's okay to start small if that's what you need. Some of us will need to dive head-first into a delusion week, and some of us will need to start slowly implementing little things into our life like journaling every single night, or always flossing before brushing our teeth. Sometimes it's hard to remember to do these little things, and I find it helpful to set an alarm to journal at 9pm every day until it becomes a habit, or to use a habit tracker so I get the satisfaction of crossing things off my list. Again, I will do things like this until the habit I am trying to form becomes ingrained in my routine.

Still, I know, these things can be difficult. Another internet idea that is extremely helpful for me is to romanticize your life. You know how we all romanticize the past, and remember things as being better than they actually were? Apply that to your present life. Romanticize your mornings by waking up early. Romanticize being the it-girl who wears cute outfits and always has her Starbucks coffee. Romanticize home cooked dinners and facetimes with your family or friends. It's all about perspective and finding the best way for you to shift your mindset.

Sally Bessette

COMEDIAN INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES

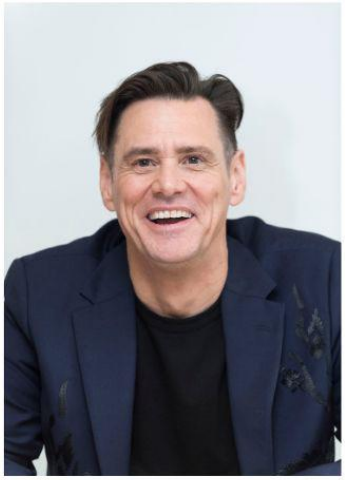


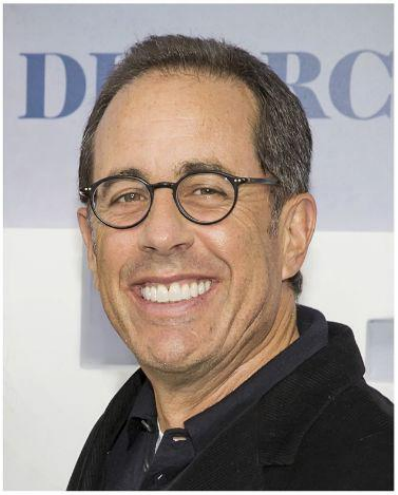
"YOU'RE ONLY GIVEN A LITTLE SPARK OF MADNESS. YOU MUSTN'T LOSE IT."

ROBIN WILLIAM

"FEAR IS GOING TO BE A PLAYER IN YOUR LIFE BUT YOU GET TO DECIDE HOW MUCH. "

JIM CARREY





"YOU HAVE TO MOTIVATE YOURSELF WITH CHALLENGES. THAT'S HOW YOU KNOW YOU'RE STILL ALIVE."

JERRY SEINFELD



"YOU CAN'T BE THAT KID AT THE TOP OF THE WATERSLIDE OVERTHINKING IT. YOU HAVE TO GO DOWN THE CHUTE."

TINA FEY

"EVERYBODY THAT'S LIVING ON THIS EARTH IS LIVING IN A SITUATION. IT'S NOT NARROW-MINDED TO THE POINT WHERE EVERYBODY IS SERIOUS, AND NOBODY HAS A PERSONALITY. I THINK PEOPLE DIE TELLING JOKES."

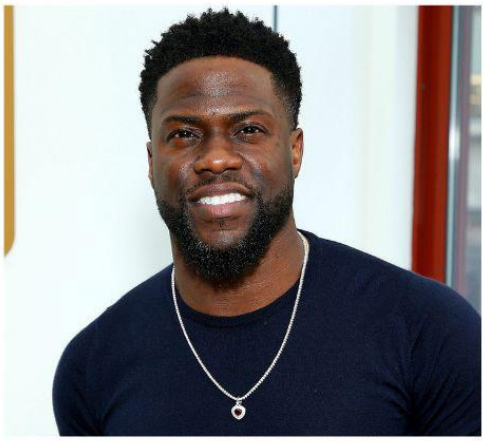
MIKE EPPS





"I FEEL LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING IF YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR IT, THEN STOP WISHING AND JUST DO IT."

WANDA SYKES

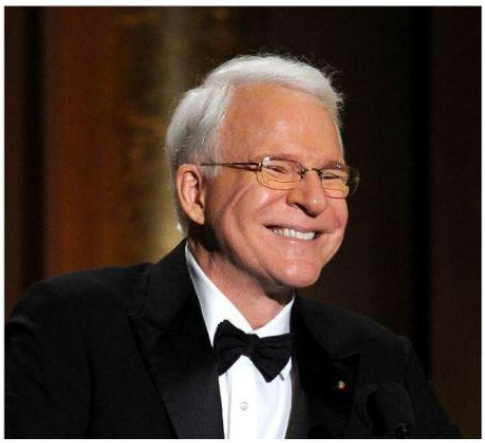


"I FEEL LIKE WHATEVER YOU'VE DONE IN YOUR CAREER, GOOD OR BAD, IT'S NOTHING BUT PREPARATION FOR THE BIG EVENTS TO COME." ~

KEVIN HART

"BE SO GOOD THEY CAN'T IGNORE YOU."

STEVE MARTIN





"REMEMBER THIS: THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF FAILURE IN THIS COUNTRY IS THE FEAR OF FAILURE. FEAR PARALYZES YOU FROM TAKING ACTION."

STEVE HARVEY

Rosa M.S.

Who Motivates You?

Let's face it, this is and can be a negative world we live in. With so much negativity going on, the amount of motivation the world needs is so pivotal to make sure we can live more stress-free lives. For many people, it can mean they would want more motivation when it comes to a new job, taking new classes, or preparing to perform in a play or band. For others, it can mean to simply get out of bed and leave their house. Especially with the rate of depression and how it has increased, any kind of motivation, no matter how small, can help any person out. Many people are also very unaware that they have that sense of motivation. It is so subtle, like when you wake up in the morning or brush your teeth, most of the time, you don't realize that you need it to function. When you realize that you need it, it's when your motivation isn't there anymore. It isn't something you can try to control on a daily basis, but rather using it as a way to guide yourself throughout the day so you can live a more peaceful and organized life. If you feel unmoved and are trying to find something to push you, then you can probably find something in this article.



As simple as the concept of motivation is, it runs deeper as to what kind of motivation you have or need. Depending on who you are, you may be facing one or two types of motivation. It can be either external or internal. External motivation is what you feel on the outside and is based on temporary feelings. It works well for many people that are promised almost instantaneous advantages. Whenever you are externally motivated, you will want to do things that are short lived so you can feel some type of motivation in those brief times. It is not necessarily bad. It can be built for one person to have multiple positive brief times so that it can lead to something better long term. But if done at an unhealthy rate, then it could be a waste of time gaining that motivation. Internal motivation comes from inside you. It means you want to achieve things that will help you pursue your long-term goal. It holds a deeper meaning because internal motivation comes from you wanting to grow and better yourself, especially if you know you deserve to. Having constant inner motivation not only improves who you are, but also, your lifestyle as you will see more of the positives that life has to offer. You will see more of why you want to attain certain goals and your reason why you want to live.

One kind of motivation occurs in social settings where you want to make new friends and have people like you. You care about how others think of you, and you apply public skills, like listening and talking to others, to make sure they're still a part of your life. Another kind is you knowing you have to do what it takes to execute something so you can steer clear of the bad result. This occurs a lot when it comes to homework to avoid a bad grade or working your shift instead of calling out, so you don't lose out on money. It doesn't have to have a negative connotation to it, if implemented correctly. The third type is encouraging motivation.

This means that you can receive physical rewards to push you to achieve something. So, after you work out, you could reward yourself with something delicious to eat or drink. Or after a hard week at work, you can go out for a few drinks with a couple of friends. The last type is impacting motivation, and this conveys that if you feel that you can have a voice and influence others, then you can practice this type of motivation. It can be either good or bad, so if one person feels too much power, then they can inflict a lot of damage onto other people.

A kind of internal motivation is trying to have a positive attitude. It is more than important to try to have it when you start waking up. It can set the tone for your day, and this can motivate you to do the things you need to do optimistically. A positive attitude doesn't just help you, but it also affects the people around you as you interact with them. Another kind is having the freedom to create. When feeling creative, you'd want to have that breathing space to express yourself, and to not feel trapped by someone wanting to limit your creative potential. A different type is having the willingness to learn. Every day we are learning something new, whether we are aware of it or not.

The question is if we want to grow from it. Another one is the feeling of accomplishing something. This focuses more on the journey and finally finishing a goal that's important to you.The question is if we want to grow from it. Another one is the feeling of accomplishing something. This focuses more on the journey and finally finishing a goal that's important to you. It doesn't matter about the winnings but more about the accomplishment itself. The last kind is biological motivation.

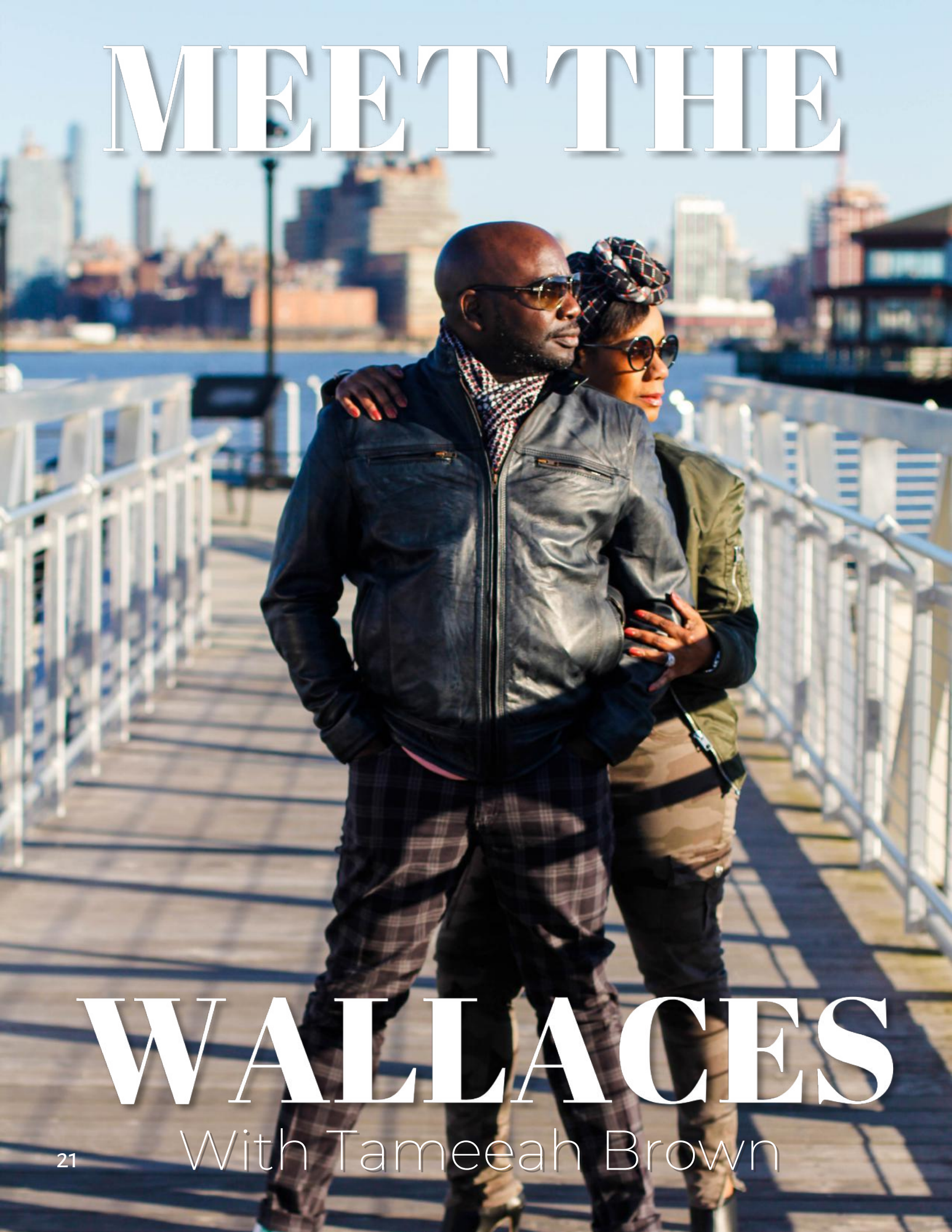
This centers more on survival and having needs like food and water. While it isn't ideal, a lot of people struggle with having basic needs, so they depend their decisions on what they lack vitally.

So, what motivates you? Is it family? Is it friends? Is it your career? What drives you enough to want to achieve your goals?

While having external motivation is beneficial temporarily, make sure you have internal motivation as well. Because if you achieve your goals but not grow as well, then you'll still be stuck in the same place. Narrow it down to your main types of motivation, and then focus on the people that support you enough to get you there. It can be hard enough having dreams but no one to support you, so make sure you know who is in your corner and not make you feel like your dreams aren't achievable enough.

Katherine Hoang

MEET THE



WALLACES

With Tameeah Brown



Husband and wife duo, Carlos Wallace and Liz Faublas-Wallace sat down with SlapStik to talk about their journey to comedy, navigating entrepreneurship, and understanding who they are. Liz takes the stage as a comedian and Carlos makes big moves using his knowledge and experience in the comedy industry. The couple has a plethora of talents between the two of them and they continue to support each other both in marriage and in business.

CHECK OUT THEIR VIDEO INTERVIEW!



What is the biggest challenge you ever FACED?

Life is a bitch, isn't it?



It is the most violent, obnoxious female chihuahua you will ever meet, and it will only cause you challenges and problems. This is just forming a quick list: I have been on the verge of homelessness for a couple months now, I started college amidst the pandemic, I have not had had friends all of my life, I quit using weed as a crutch to numb my emotions for 5 or 6 years, and perhaps the most challenging is that I have had to fight off suicidal thoughts at least weekly sometimes daily for as long as I can remember.

The first fit of suicidal thoughts I can think of when trying is at around the age of 4. I forget what it was over, but I am sure it was something stupid like having to eat ham for dinner (something I absolutely hated when I ate meat) or not getting something that I wanted. All I can remember is that it was something that was ultimately inconsequential. So, what does a little kid who barely knows his ABC's do in this situation—lock himself in the closet, cry, and say that he

is going to starve himself to death? Well... yes. It certainly wasn't my brightest moment in life.

At that point in time I hardly knew about the consequences of death; yet, the more that I grew, the more that I learned, the more infatuated I became with death, wanting it to take a hard grip on my neck and choke the life out of me (not in a kinky way,)—and the ultimate challenge that I am still working on to this day is fighting to overcome it. In honesty, I am unsure if I ever will be able to. Inside me right now are two sides of a coin, one that wants to live and make something out of the misery that life naturally brings with it and that grows with age, and the other is a balls-to-the-walls reckless behavior kind of guy that wants to get me in a grave as soon as possible. To try and balance things more towards the will to make something out of life, I have taken up regular meditation just as a way to clear my mind of anxiety and purge it of thoughts that I do not want to face head on yet. I started to meditate whenever I had started to contemplate suicide during the summer between my junior and senior year of high school.



I think it was around the end of that June, the summer before COVID-19 had taken over all aspects of our lives. I had been working at a Hardee's for a year and a half at that time. I was absolutely infatuated with one of my co-workers at that time, let's call her Jeff for no reason other than it was the first name that came to mind. Jeff was a special lady, twice as punk as my wannabe poser self, had somehow lived several more lifetimes than me despite being a year younger, and, for me at least, was an intoxicating presence to be around. It was love at first sight, meeting her the night she started working there.

For a couple of months, we were talking and getting to know each other, but I never made a move because I knew she had a man already. Still, my crush on Jeff got deeper and deeper. During this time, my suicidal thoughts grew from not having enough money and thus not being able to pursue hobbies and interests, among a slew of other unending bullshit leading to a horrible mental state, but she readily listened to me vent about them because she faced many of the same problems in her life. It was a mutually beneficial relationship for the two of us. Then one week, Jeff told me that her boyfriend was hitting her, I didn't know what to say or do — I just listened. The week after, she told me that she broke it off with him and got together with her best friend. The week after that, she told me in detail about her new boyfriend running a train on her just before coming in to work for the day.

I was distraught, and the other issues began compounding. It got to the point where I attempted suicide using a belt. I didn't succeed, obviously, otherwise I wouldn't be able to write this, and I quit my job a couple months later just not feeling like I had a place in the workplace anymore. After the suicide attempt, I tried to meditate for about 10 minutes a week, just to alleviate any sort of suicidal thoughts that came afterwards. It helped but not enough.

I managed to get through the rest of high school and my freshman year of college without having many issues with my mental health, but when I began feeling like I was losing my social standing in college and that I was an imposter in my studies and just simply that there were people out there who were better versions of me than I could ever be, I fell back into having really bad suicidal ideation that I had to work through throughout the first semester of my sophomore year of college. I would not be able to do assignments because I was so overwhelmed with the thoughts, I would avoid going out and having fun because I was worried about what I would do if I went outside, I would avoid everything because I was so scared of the suicidal thoughts—and I think that was justified seeing as they had lead me to some of the most deadly moments of my life. They were so strong and powerful during this time that I couldn't even muster a lie and say that I was okay whenever someone asked me how I was doing. I went into the doctor to get put on anti-depressants, but they did not help me at all, they numbed all emotions other than the suicidal ones, including fear. One night when my suicidal thoughts had really gotten to me, I emptied my entire pill bottle into my hands and stared at them and couldn't stop crying. So, I mustered up what strength that I had and flushed them down the toilet. I had to avoid being in a situation where every part of me except for one tiny piece was telling me to take the pills and leave my life up to fate. I'm sure that after this the toilet physically could not give a flying fuck about all the piss and shit that it would guzzle down.

After this, I went into therapy and continued mindful practices. While I still will have days or weeks where I battle suicidal thoughts, I finally have gotten to a point where I feel like more days than not, I want to live. I want to be able to laugh at my past self for being such a goof for trying to throw away his life. I want to get to a point where I feel okay —even when everything in the world feels like it is trying to put me down. I find my motivation in trying to never feel like that again. I am motivated to keep finding ways to avoid any sort of unnecessary thoughts that I can and to keep living life.

E. Alexander-Phillips

NILES

ABSTON

Zach Rush had an exciting conversation with Niles Abston about working in the comedy industry and writing for the show called Dave with Lil Dicky. Check out the full interview.



Can I Start Living My Life TOMORROW?



If this weren't a magazine I would tell you, "No. Start living it now. You got this." But that doesn't make for good content so here we are. Though I will get straight to the point.

Many of us fall victim to the idea that changing your life needs to happen because of some sort of special day or event. The cleansing power of the new year in January or the soul crushing sting of a breakup are common idealizations of when someone is prompted to make a change. But what happens if you miss that day or that life-changing experience? Are you just going to wait another year or for a tragedy to strike before you do anything?

This might get you thinking, "Fine! I'll start living my life tomorrow." But here's the thing, every day has a tomorrow. There will always be a tomorrow keeping your goals just out of arm's length. There's even that excuse of people wanting to start a new routine or good habit at the start of the week. And if you miss that Monday, oh well, looks like you gotta wait for the next one. Then that becomes next week, then the next, and then the next. Trust me, I used to do this ALL the time. You have to take action now and not just let that be a Future You problem. Because, for the record, they probably want to do it even less than you do.



Use spite for all I care to motivate yourself if that works. It did for me. I started working out regularly again a few years ago mostly because my mom nagged me about not exercising as much since high school. It was summertime, let me catch a break! That happened on a Tuesday, and I dusted off the old dumbbells that same afternoon just to prove her wrong. See? There was no big spectacle or revelation to live my life, you can just do it on a regular old Tuesday just because you wanna.

Putting off this idea for tomorrow might seem appealing since "Live Your Life" can sound pretty hard and labor intensive. In this economy, you might feel like you don't have time or money to make life-changing decisions either. College student here, I get it. But life-changing decisions don't have to be so intense like finally figuring out who you are or giving up everything that is unhealthy for you in one day. You can start by, I don't know, giving yourself a compliment or eating an apple or something. I started buying 12-grain bread for my peanut butter sandwich lunches. Not sure how much that's helping with anything health-wise. But it still feels good knowing that I'm trying. This sort of stuff really isn't taught in schools, and I'm not qualified to be teaching this. So, it's okay to struggle through the process and not be perfect at it. Just do a thing, today preferably.

It doesn't matter if who you want to be or doing niche healthy habits is seen as "cringe." Live YOUR life, not somebody else's. In reality, nobody else really cares and you're your biggest hater. Turn that around, be your own super fan and start cheering for yourself for everything you want to do. Go reach out to those people in your class or job. Go to the gym and do those embarrassing workouts in public. Go buy and wear that necklace if you think it looks cool. Go write your article that you've been having writer's block on for the past few weeks. In short, live your life.

Jonathan Hernandez


COMEDIANS
Who have stayed motivated

It's easy to look at the successes of icons like John Mulaney, Amy Schumer, or Eddie Murphy and forget the tolls it took to achieve their heights of fame. Ali Wong performed nine standup sets a night before establishing herself in the biz. Aziz Ansari passed out club flyers around Times Square in trade for a performance.

Whether it be fitness, family, career, or a comedy journey, nothing truly worth having comes easy. Rejection, criticism, flailing around without a grasp on anything steady, is typically the path to success. And boy do these comedians understand what that is like. The difference between those that make it and don't: are you willing to fall miserably on your face and get back up? (Hint: if you are face-planted on the pavement, you're probably doing it right). Take it from some of our favorite laughs:

Tyler Perry recalls watching an episode of Oprah in which he became intrigued about how writing difficult experiences can lead to personal breakthroughs. Perry had his fair share of difficulties growing up, where he faced physical abuse from his father and sexual abuse by four adults. He even admits to attempting suicide as a teenager and dropping out of high school. This led to a lineup of unfulfilling jobs, until this episode opened his eyes to his true passion.

Perry began writing a series of letters to himself, capturing themes of child abuse and forgiveness. These raw moments of emotion on paper led to his musical I Know I've Been Changed. Perry saved up $12,000 in order to direct, star, and produce his show for the first time in 1992 at the Atlanta Theater. But despite his vulnerability and efforts, the show's opening weekend only drew around 30 patrons.

Still, Perry reworked the show and supported these efforts working various jobs. He struggled to find cities that would receive his show well, and even lived in his car out of necessity. Six years later, his autobiographical play began selling out crowds at the House of Blues in Atlanta.

"The rest is history."

After graduating with a degree in Asian American Studies from the University of California, performing at the school's theater company, and traveling on scholarship to Vietnam, Ali Wong moved back home with her parents to try stand-up.

She recalls performing at grimy cafes around her hometown of San Francisco. "I mean, there were times where it was an open mike, and I'd be doing my three minutes, and there were maybe three people in the audience. And one of them would just be a homeless guy, and I could see his hand moving underneath his pants", she said to Vanity Fair.

Wong later moved into a SoHo loft with six other people, performing more than a handful of sets per night. With patience and persistence, she booked a slot on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

"The rest is history."

Jim Gaffigan majored in finance at Georgetown University, in which he later worked as a litigation consultant. "Well, my father was the first one to go to college in his family. And I was raised to seek security. And security was wearing a coat and tie to work... (I) was horrible at it. And so I was very much lost", he told CBS Sunday Morning.

He initially moved to New York City for a new job in advertising. During this life transition, he took improv classes. With a new confidence in public speaking, he began performing in comedy clubs at night, then full-time, after being fired from his day job.

Still, it took about eight years for his work to receive any traction. "...I would audition for things and the person that I would be auditioning for would literally leave the room."

When Jim landed an appearance on Letterman, he said his career was like "Someone essentially turns on a light switch, and it just changes".

"The rest is history."

Everyone is well acquainted with Larry David's Seinfeld and Curb Your Enthusiasm, but many are not familiar with his trials in the comedy scene prior to these triumphs. Before the big comedy boom of the late 1970s', Larry began stand-up. While others in the community loved him, he struggled to find that same admiration from audiences. Despite finding his footing writing and starring alongside Michael Richards in the sketch show Fridays, Larry's follow-up gig was writing for a crumbling season of SNL, in which only one of his sketches made it onto air.

However, at the age of 42, Larry David landed his success writing a pilot alongside Jerry Seinfeld titled "The Seinfeld Chronicles".

"The rest is history."

After attending the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington D.C., Dave Chapelle was booed off the stage at the Apollo Theater's amateur night in New York City. "I just remember looking out and seeing everyone booing... everybody. Even old people. Who boos a child pursuing his dream? That was the best thing that's ever happened to me because before that I'd never bombed, let alone get booed off the stage."

Instead of letting this failure define his career, he viewed the experience as "liberating".

"After that, I was fearless. To get into the New York comedy circuit. It's a very closed circuit, and I got in all these clubs in like a week, two weeks".

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"The rest is history."

Chris Rock's path to success was anything but comfortable. He attended an all-white school near Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York, but dropped out at 17 due to bullying and racism. "There were pickets with 'N----, GO HOME' signs. Even as late as 1982, there were race riots at my school," he told Oprah Winfrey once during an interview.

He later earned his GED and a busboy gig at Red Lobster. While working and attending community college, he performed at open mic nights around the city. He started placing his foot in the door to the comedy career he wished for. Rock recalls waiting in line to pick up Eddie Murphy tickets for a Radio City Music Hall performance when he spotted an ad for an open mic night at "Catch a Rising Star". He auditioned and became a regular.

"The rest is history."

While Rodney Dangerfield began stand-up comedy as a teenager for a few years, he decided to give it up. "When I quit doing comedy, I was the only one who knew".

Rodney got married, started a family, and became an aluminum siding salesman. However, after a divorce and major life changes, he decided to take another stab at showbiz well into his forties. He took the name Rodney Dangerfield from Jack Benny's radio program and took this persona to stage.

After increased public attention, a comic dropped out of an Ed Sullivan Show booking, and Rodney was up to bat.

"The rest is history."

What do all these famous comedians have in common? They didn't give up. Even if it took years for their feet to face the right direction, they eventually landed.

What does that say for you? The path to success is hardly linear. There's ups, downs, curves, and straight up plummets of doom. But that's what it takes to learn, grow, and discover where you need to be. And that growth doesn't happen overnight. It may not even happen in this decade (i.e. Rodney Dangerfield). As long as you're putting one foot in front of the other and taking a step in the right direction each and every day, you can make history too.

Erin Olver

ARE

Tarot Cards

Witchcraft or Motivational?

Tarot, often associated with psychics and crystal balls, can be considered witchcraft in many people's eyes. But can it also be considered motivation?

A tarot card deck has 78 cards, which are divided into major and minor arcana. There are 56 Minor Arcana cards, with suits of pentacles, swords, cups, and wands. The remaining 22 cards are the Major Arcana that are numbered 0-21, starting with The Fool, and ending with The World. Since The Fool card is at the beginning, it's said that the Major Arcana cards are The Fool's path through life. Symbolizing new beginnings and opportunities, The Fool shows a person looking up wondering what the universe has in store. It's generally a positively viewed card. The World shows The Fool's completed journey. Like completing one phase of life and moving to the next, The World indicates an end and a beginning. It features a circular wreath and a person looking behind to the past with one foot forward, showing that every ending is also a beginning.

The Fool's journey alone can be motivational for the tarot user. Understanding that life has ups and downs is something everyone hears but knowing that an ending is also a beginning can help someone see the bigger picture. Life is a constant journey that builds on the previous ending of a chapter. This can motivate someone when they're feeling discouraged to look forward to better days.

It's a common misconception that these cards are used to predict the future. In reality, they offer advice, whether this be for a situation, choice, or path. To use the cards, ask a question. In return, they'll provide some cards that answer it or clarify the situation. How each card is interpreted is left to the user and each deck comes with a booklet to help explain. When interpreting cards, you take away what you need to hear most. Whether the universe or your subconscious is telling you what you need to hear, what you take away is how you think the card applies to your life.

So, if someone is practicing tarot, it can be motivating. If you ask a question about your job and receive a card such as The Magician, which generally is described as making things happen, embracing your own ideas and magic, it can motivate you in your career. The Magician could motivate you to take initiative in the workplace and have confidence in your ideas. Sometimes hearing advice coming from someone other than yourself can push you to overcome any roadblocks you've put in your way. Tarot cards are like your best friends who want to see you do well.



Another situation where tarot cards can be motivating is if you ask about a relationship in your life. Pulling either the Death card, which signifies rebirth and letting go of an old situation, or The Hanged Man, which emphasizes the need to break old patterns and see things from a new perspective, might motivate someone to release a relationship that's no longer serving them. Sometimes all you need is a push to motivate you to move on.

Many people use tarot cards when they need advice about something. They might be embarrassed to ask their friends or not have anyone who will listen to them.

This is when tarot cards can be motivational just like a friend would. Tarot cards might feel like witchcraft because the cards know what advice you need to hear most, almost scary how relevant they can be to your situation. But could it also just be yourself conscious taking away what you know you need to hear? Maybe tarot cards are witchcraft and motivation? Either way, tarot cards are motivational because they give you a push to become the best version of yourself. They encourage you to understand that everything happens for a reason, reminding you to have trust in the universe.

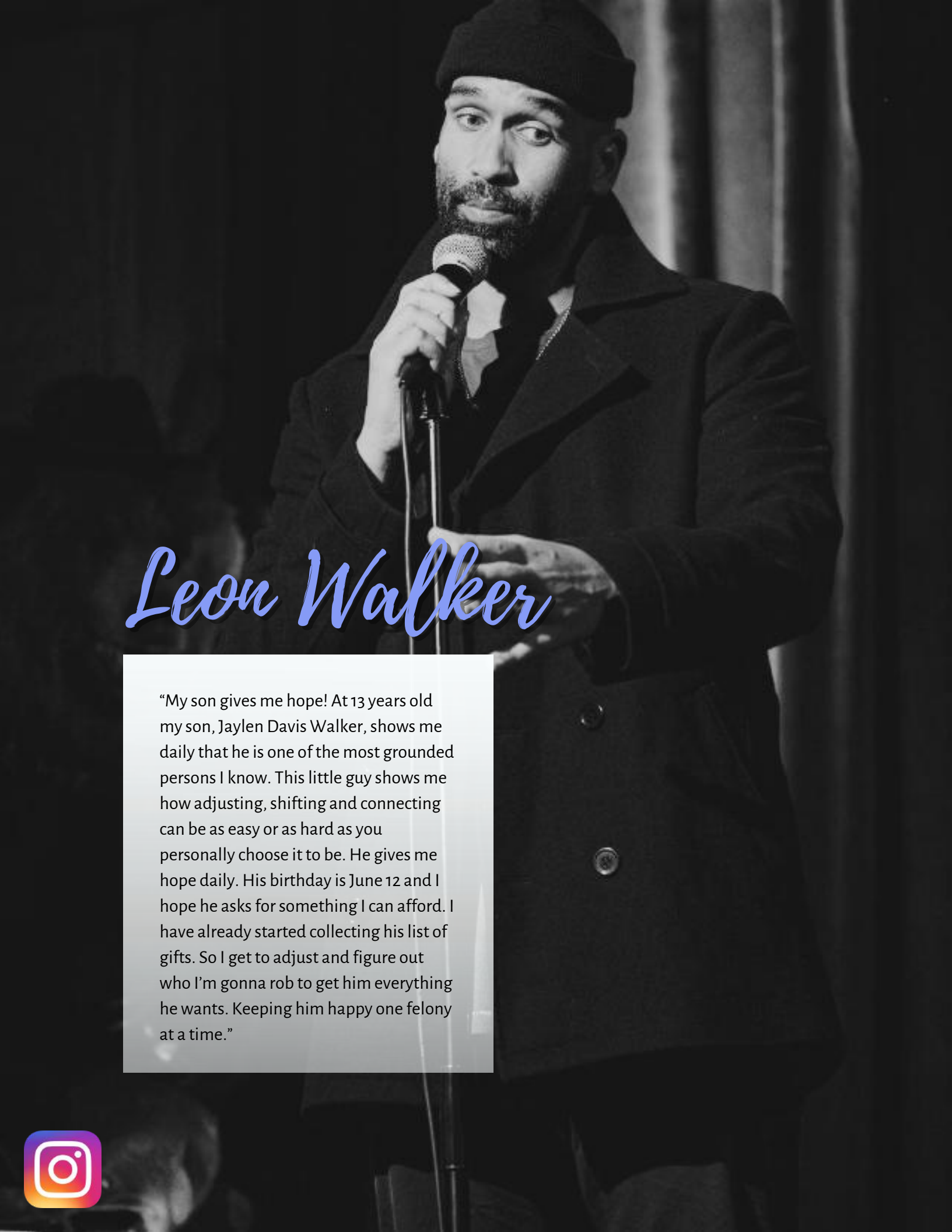
Kaley Richard

Who GIVES YOU Hope?



Megan Hill

"Who gives me hope is my boys. They most definitely show me that believing in yourself is key. They also show me through all the mistakes I made in life and in parenting that you still can be blessed with some of the best children ever. They have shown me what believing in yourself really looks like."



Leon Walker

"My son gives me hope! At 13 years old my son, Jaylen Davis Walker, shows me daily that he is one of the most grounded persons I know. This little guy shows me how adjusting, shifting and connecting can be as easy or as hard as you personally choose it to be. He gives me hope daily. His birthday is June 12 and I hope he asks for something I can afford. I have already started collecting his list of gifts. So I get to adjust and figure out who I'm gonna rob to get him everything he wants. Keeping him happy one felony at a time."



Wyatt Lutz

"The person I have the most hope in would be myself because without staying true to who I am and putting in the work that needs to be done, then I wouldn't be anywhere close to where I am today. We should all have that kind of hope in us. Believe in yourself and let what's meant to happen, happen."



Freddie Simone

The person that gives me hope is my daughter. Yes, I have two children, but my daughter is what I feel like an upgraded mini me. Our birthdays are one day apart, she's smart, witty and very caring. We have a 'friendly' mother/daughter relationship; she catches me up on the high school 'drama' and I reiterate how depressing my 9 to 5 is to her. Listening and witnessing how my child, my babygirl navigates through the world with a confidence that I'm just learning decades later, that's what gives me hope. Watching my daughter develop and grow into a much better version of myself is mind-blowing because it happens so quickly and abruptly, it's a shock! To know she's further ahead of the confidence curve than I was at that age gives me tremendous hope that she'll be more determined to reach her goals. For all the hope she gives me, she and her brother unknowingly keep me accountable. Yeah, I guess my son gives me hope too! Because I'm their immediate role model, they've watched and learned from me. The more I do in life and the more accountable I am, gives me hope that they both will be better versions of me. Some will take this as a self-centered way of saying I give myself hope, and so what if I do? I give myself hope through my kids!"

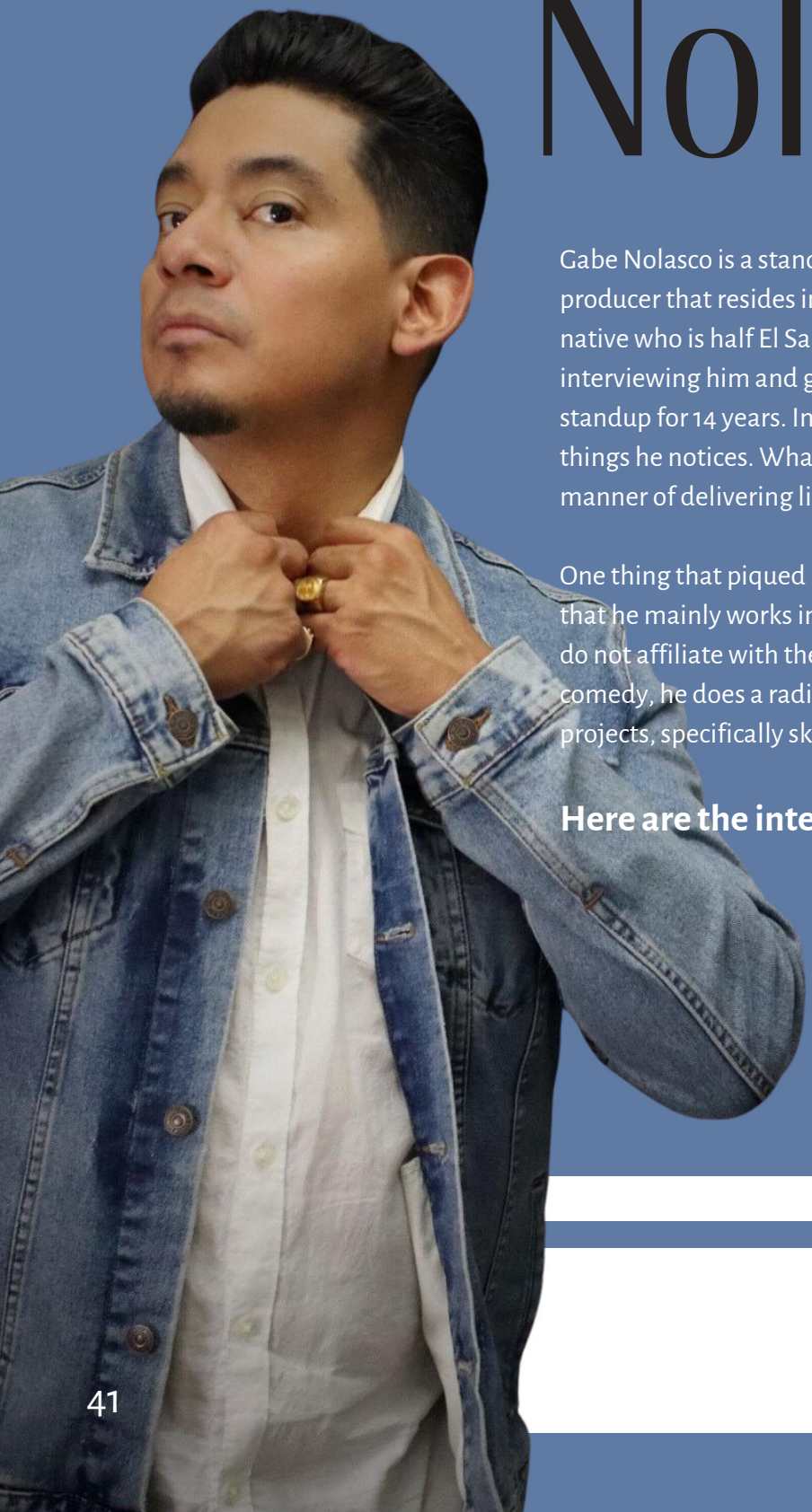


Kiana Dancie

"You asked me who gave me hope and my answer to that question would be my mom. We are extremely close, and she inspires me on all levels. She's thoughtful, loving, enterprising and very funny! She always pushes me to the next level. I don't believe I'd be where I am if she wasn't in my corner. I am beyond blessed to have a mother as supportive as she is. She's attended my shows and helped me build my business. I run jokes past her and literally bounce business ideas off her to see what she thinks about them. She's an amazing sound board and knows a little bit about a lot of things."

Kaley Richard

Gabe Nolasco



Gabe Nolasco is a stand-up comedian, writer, actor, and podcast producer that resides in Las Vegas, Nevada. He is a Richmond, California native who is half El Salvadorian and half Mexican. I had the pleasure of interviewing him and getting to know him. Nolasco has been doing standup for 14 years. In his act, he talks about personal experiences and things he notices. What sets him apart is his witty comments and manner of delivering lines.

One thing that piqued my interest in Gabe Nolasco is simply the fact that he mainly works in Las Vegas, which is a place where most people do not affiliate with the art of stand-up comedy. Besides stand-up comedy, he does a radio show-like podcast and writes for media projects, specifically sketch comedies as well as commercials.

Here are the interview highlights with Gabe Nolasco.

Considering that comedy in San Francisco is bigger, why did you go to Las Vegas?

I moved to Las Vegas maybe in '08. Like, from '08 to 2014, I was out here being a comedian. Being in Los Angeles was not the best place for me to be. I was just getting into a bunch of problems, so I needed a change of pace, a fresh start somewhere else. I just flipped the coin and came to Las Vegas.

I started meeting some great people, so I stayed. I ended up going back to the Bay. I wasn't done; I took comedy seriously, I was like, "Let me go back to San Francisco, comedy is booming out there." I stayed there for another six, seven years. Vegas just started calling me back, man. It's cheaper. A lot of working comedians were coming to Vegas, and it was booming again. There is more club work, we are not far away from LA, we are not far from Arizona. So, I just want to work that belt. So, I'm back in Vegas.

How is Nevada's humor style different from other states, when it comes to the audience and comics? Like, how a New York comic's style is different than one from Boston.

The strip has everyone from the east coast, Midwest, Canada, like from everywhere. So, you get to perform for that mixed crowd—old, young, different races, and whatnot. That kind of makes you try to work in general; you know? If you are in San Francisco, you are doing a bunch of "I take Muni" or "BART" transportation system stuff like that. Nobody knows what that is, unless you live in the Bay Area, right? So, being in Vegas, you kind of just have broad material that is going to touch everybody.

Do you like that challenge? Have you always worked with your material that way?

I have always liked the challenge of being able to change gears. If I'm in New York, I will do some New York-ish stuff, kind of like things that I have seen, while I was there; San Francisco same thing, you know what I mean? When I'm in Vegas I'm doing casino material, gambling, talking about the pool parties—the people out here, the locals, and pretty much everyone else. It gives me the sense of, "Oh right, what do you have for the people here?" What is different that I can bring myself?"

So, what was your thought process when performing in that private event to make the jokes relatable?

Be self-deprecating. One show we did, almost everybody was retired, so I poked fun of them as much as I was poking fun of myself, you know what I mean? I was like, "This is what it looks like when you are struggling." For the people who are sitting like kings, making fun of them and they were loving it. They were drinking wine. I was making fun of them for not having the pinky up like, "This is how much wine you guys drink. You guys just don't have the pinky up anymore?" (Laughs) Like just grabbing the bottle and go, just teasing and being in the room. Asking everyone what they did for a living and making fun of that.

That sounds like a lot of fun.

Yeah, it was a fun time.

So, now that you live on the Strip, do you enjoy being on the road more or do you like staying in one club all the time?

It's both I would say. You can get stagnant being in the same club because of how much wiggle room I have for new material. Being on the road has that feeling that you are bringing something back. So, I'm always keeping it live, so if I'm here, it's good to workout, good to challenge, and there is always a different audience. But, if I'm on the road, it's a different feel of work. I feel different than just being in one place. I'm home now, but it's time to go hit some other cities to see if what I did at home works there. And then if I happen to work on something while on the road, I can bring it back home.

I do feel like one needs to be built to be on the road, don't you think?

Yeah, it definitely has that feel. For instance, when I went to New York a couple of months ago, it was go and go, jump on a train, hit this. And it was like, the whole feeling of excitement of, "You are done with this set, go to the next one," I was jumping around doing seven shows in one night. I felt like I was getting stronger. By the fourth show I was like, "All right, I'm going to do this different." So, you have this set and come back to your hometown and now you have a nice 10-minute chunk to rotate on the weekly or whatever. The shows I have keep it fresh for me.

So, this is something that I have wondered about. How do you keep it fresh for yourself? You have got to make yourself laugh too.





Right, right. I think it's the emotion in that joke. If I'm talking about breaking up with my ex, I want to tap into that, and make it feel like it just happened yesterday even though I have told this joke for years, I'm like, "My ex-girlfriend had everything I ever needed. It sucks we broke up. She had everything I ever needed, that's because when we broke up, she robbed my ass." So, it's telling the joke, and making them feel like I'm still being hurt by it.

I get what you mean. So, I'm guessing that really happened?

Yes. (Both Laughing)

So, on the subject matter of crowd work, I recently found the clip of one of your sets and was able to see your trademark of being witty. In the joke, you talk about the time a lesbian couple approached you…I feel like I'm butchering the joke. (Laughs)

(Laughs) That really did happen one time. I was at a bar and these two girls walked up to me, we were hanging out, talking. "Oh, you are Mexican," and I was like, "Yeah," then she said, "We love what you eat." I always get that, "Oh, you are Mexican?" I'm sure they were trying to relate but I got kind of bothered by it and they realized it bothered me. She then goes, "I'm sorry, did I upset you? Was that rude of me?" I said, "Yeah just a little bit. It was a bit weird," then she goes, "Sorry, my girlfriend and I didn't mean to upset you," and I said "Girlfriend? Like you guys are together?" She was like, "Yes, we are lesbians," then I go, "That is awesome because I love what you eat." Right? It was gold and they laughed too. They were just like, "That was funny, that was good." That was the wittiness coming back with it.

Is this something you were always able to do, even before doing comedy?

Yeah. Being the youngest out of my brother and cousins, they would make fun of me. My siblings would just start bullying me. I was scrawny. I was the littlest one. They would come up and pull my ears and call me big ears. I was forced to come up with something. I would be like, "Look at his shoes," or "What is wrong with that haircut" and whatnot. They would make fun of me, and I'd be like let me come back now. It was something I had to work on. Just to kind of tap into it, if not they would keep messing with me.

So, avoid giving them power. Is that how you handle hecklers? I'm sure you get a lot of hecklers, right?

Yeah, I try not to give them too much power. The way I handle hecklers is that I know they want to say something, but I just shut them down, like, "Oh ok, that is really cool man, thank you," and then go on with my material. If I had more time, like if I was doing an hour set, I'd be like, "What's up with this guy?" Just exercising that banter, in the sense that I have to exercise that, especially on stage. If somebody is going to say something, I have to win. I have the stage, I have the mic, so I have to win. There've been times that I've lost. Early on in my career, I was doing a show and I was going back and forth with some guy. I was a little intimidated. Bigger black dude with a gold tooth. It was in the hood, so my mind was like Uuugh, I'm here by myself, he has all his people here. We were going back and forth, and I was joking about him reading a book or something. I don't remember too much, but I do remember when he started walking up to the stage he goes, "Hey, how about you give me my towel back?" I thought Uh oh what is going to happen? This guy is huge, right? And I go, "What towel?" He said, "The towel I let you borrow when you came to this country so you could dry off your back." And everyone lost it. Everyone went crazy. I was about 4 years into comedy, so I was kind of stuck. The host comes up, grabs the mic, and started roasting him for me. Anyways, fast forward, after the show the guy comes up to me and said, "Hey bro, don't ever let me win." He was like, "I know you were a little intimidated but that doesn't matter, this is comedy. You have to win. You could have come back at me and said something about me getting off the Amistad boat or something." He was giving me stuff. "Tap into it. Don't back off. Just because I was coming onto the stage, it's your stage, it's your area." I realized that was true. Now, you open that door. I have to know you. I'm not going to say anything super-offensive that's going to have the crowd against me. I've gotta have them on my side.

You have a podcast and make your own short films, am I correct?

The Podcast is NOLO RADIO, where I talk for a good 20-30 minutes and that was another thing about COVID. I was not able to perform, so the art and expression had to go somewhere. I started reading and working on how to write scripts and not only that, but I also dusted off my turntable and started getting back to DJ'ing.

> *I have the stage, I have the mic, so I have to win.*

DJ'ing was something that I used to do when I was like 14, just a teen, and then comedy took over. Back to Nola Radio. I talk in a podcast style and then I take a break and play music. "Check it out, here is the mix of the week," and I'm talking and doing shout-outs like the radio. As for the sketch stuff, I have been fortunate enough to link up with this group called Sinner Studios out of Las Vegas and they are as hungry as I am. But they are also really diligent in the sense that they gave us the exercise of writing sketches, making sure they are funny, making sure they make sense, coming to the weekly meetings, and pitching them. It's like they are working with us, "Hey this is what you guys have to do." It's not just, "Hey this week we got some cameras, and start filming something." No, no, no, it needs a structure. That forced me to figure out how to write sketches, figure out how to write a script, and I'm still at it.

I looked at some of the sketches you made and watched this sketch. Did you only act or were you also heavily involved in the writing?

That was before figuring out script writing. That was more, "We have a camera. We are watching *Strange Addictions.*" We would think, "Would it be funny if I was addicted to…. you know?" And then it was, "Yo! We should film it." We have these cameras or whatever and that was the early-early stages of me thinking of sketches or trying to figure it out. I wish I would have kept it going more back then, but it's fine cause now I'm still learning with Sinner Studios. They are pushing me to deliver more stuff.

Well congratulations on that too. I watched this commercial you are in, and how did that come about for you to get that role?

Same thing with the Sinner Studios, they have a contract with a weed dispensary out here in Vegas, which has their own strain of medical marijuana that they are working on. Also, they were looking for people to make content, commercially. So, me and my friend, Chris Clark, who is another strong comedian, were just sitting around and said, "What if we did this" – but we still had to sit down and write the beginning scene. In the interior, we are sitting on a couch playing video games…blah, blah, blah. Chris said, "Yo! Can you roll it up?" and then push the weed tray to roll it up. The camera pans in, and I'm like, "Yo, yo, yo! I can't roll it up because my hand has Cheetos on it." And the whole thing is, "Yo, yo." They liked it so much that they wanted to collab and make a Yo! Pre-Rolls. That was a homerun for us, cause they loved it!"

Being in Vegas, all the weed ads are more like pretty girls and men at the gym. "Come to so-and-so dispensary." Which is kind of, that's cool I get it, it's Vegas, but what about the normality of it? I don't know how to explain, but the people who like to smoke weed here and there – people like us. (Both laugh) I can't relate to the guy with the chic chin. That is not going to make me want to go to that dispensary. All the hot chicks selling edibles and vapes and whatever in so-and-so dispensary is like, "Mmh." That is not going to make you want to go.

You do speak Spanish, right?

Yes, I do.

Have you ever done standup in Spanish before?

No, but I have been invited. There is a show out here every other Sunday, they do Spanish-speaking shows. Sometimes I try to tell jokes in Spanish to see if I can work that muscle. Maybe for starters, I should transfer all of my material to Spanish and see if it delivers. I do want to do more shows (in Spanish). Lately I've been looking at which venues have Latin-based comedians. Before I had thought, "I just want to do comedy. I want to go anywhere, everywhere, I don't care where it is, or who is there. I want to do comedy." Now I'm looking at it like, which show in LA has all Latino-based comedians? Which festivals can I hit to link up and network with more Latino-based comedians? That is a new thing for me. I've been trying to squeeze into that system, trying to work with more Latinos to see how that is. I think we need more of that.

Why the interest in more Latino-centered shows?

I think it's time for me to embrace that. To embrace that scene, to make more noise for us, to put more Latinos on the map. We are there but we would prefer each other even more if we all got together to see how we can work with each other and make things grow.

So, to make a stronger Latino presence?

Correct. To have a stronger Latino presence and to be able to work with more Latinos. Making more noise comically and publicly for more people to come see us. We are all different in a sense. I haven't tapped into talking about how I'm half Salvadorian. There are Salvadorian comedians out there. There are a bunch of comedians talking about their dads who are strong strict Latino Mexican dads. "Vete a trabajar! (Start working!)." My dad wasn't like that, he was more calm, collected, and his humor was witty, so I want to show that not all Latin dads are strict and hard loving. My father is hard loving, but he didn't have that strictness in him like that. He was more passive, or he would make you think. For instance, I had him look at my car because something was wrong with it. And he goes, "Oh, you have one of those cars that don't run on oil. I go, "What do you mean? All cars need oil," and he goes, "Well then, why don't you put any in this car? Because the car has no oil." (Laughs) So, it's a different wit.

So, generally speaking, there aren't that many Latino comedians? Or there just aren't enough venues? What's the climate like?



When I started in San Francisco there was a strong handful, maybe 10 comedians that are Latinos, or maybe less. I came to Vegas, and there were maybe one or two. I'm sure L.A. is where it's at. I should have gone to L.A. to tap into that. But that's what it was in the years of doing comedy. I was wondering, "How would it feel to do a show for all Latinos?" An all-Latino crowd. I'm trying to find that now. I haven't been around that and I think that's why, in my whole career, I have not been around a strong Latin presence. I want to tap into that demographic.

That's crazy, I did not know there was such a small number of Latin comics.

Yeah. The comedians of the Bay Area said, "Oh, we need to do a show together," and there were only around six of us that thought that we should. I'm sure there were more, but San Francisco is a big scene. The people I was around that were working heavy were like, "Yeah we gotta do the show." Unfortunately, it never happened, because everyone is busy, everyone is doing their own thing. That doesn't mean it can't happen.

Why do you think that is? My guess is that part of it has to do with the culture where a lot of people don't see a career in the arts.

Yeah definitely. The benefit of the doubt. When people come from a different country, a hard-working country, they come to this country to work and that's the mentality. We have to work to survive, we have to make money, so how are you going to make money?

Unfortunately, some of the jobs we take are back-breaking jobs, so the generation above us tend to start pushing that on us. They are always told, "Oh, you have to work. You have to work hard." For the men, they really are machistas, so they are like, "Oh! Look at your hands. Your hands are so soft. Go grab a hammer boy." That's why they motivate us to be strong because that's how they grew up. Now, things have changed. It's interesting how when you are following your passion or doing something artistic, the same uncles and relatives that were telling you to go work construction or go do something start telling you, "You know what? I used to like playing the guitar." And they see that you are progressing on something, so they are like, "Don't stop what you are doing." It's hard for them to understand cause they are like, "Is that how you make a living? Telling jokes?" They don't get it. "Where is the pension? Where is the money? How are you paying rent?" They don't understand you can live off your art.

So, I'm guessing your family was not completely supportive? Or they were?

Not entirely supportive. Just recently one of the older cousins was like, "So, how is your hobby?" No, it's not a hobby. I mean it started as a hobby, but now it's actually a career that I'm making a living out of. I can't blame them for not understanding because all they understand is to wake up, shut up, go to work, clock in, and clock out. They made that comfortable for themselves. For us, it's like we are artists, and I don't expect you to understand my art. It's equally hard to get up on stage and write your stuff to follow your passion as much as it is for them to get up and go to a 9 to 5. In that sense, it's still work.

So, what is the plan for Gabe Nolasco in 2023?

Oh man, I'm right now writing at least three sketches a week. I'm always working on something. The plan is more sketches, more work, more clubs, more festivals. Just keep it moving. I'm working on more material. Just keeping fresh, keeping alive.

Again, congrats on all three. Thank you for the interview.

Thank you, thank you. 

Karlos G













BUCKET LIST

When I was in high school one of the teachers said something that really stuck with me. He said, "You all will one day graduate and you will put your head on a pillow, wake up, and before you know it you are 25." Someone in the class called him an "old ass man" Everyone laughed, and class and life went on. His phrase stuck with me and now that I am 22, I get what he was saying, life comes at you fast. So, I have curated a bucket list of 20 things for people, like me, whose social age clock is ticking to that sneaky 25. This list is geared toward young people. However, older people (anyone, not 25) who are trying to fan the flames of youth can follow this list as well.

- [ ] **Master anything with Wheels**
  This does not include your ozone-destroying car. You need to have a skate era, Bike era, penny board, rip stick, rollerblades., etc. It begins to consume and become a lifestyle until you wipe it out really and never pick it up again. Riding around usually leads to you finding a community in which you can find cool people.

- [ ] **Get a Tattoo**
  Getting a tattoo is the ultimate gateway drug into the most annoying question ever: "What does your tattoo mean". Disgruntled old people will talk about you behind your back no matter your age with one. Tattoos are a must-have before 25 so you can immortalize your youth. You don't want to be 30 with no tattoos.

- [ ] **Travel up and away from your place of origin:**
  Nothing breaks my heart more than someone who has never been outside of their City Limits. Traveling is a way to get away and recharge. It also makes you appreciate home way more.

- [ ] **Experiment with Narcotics:**
The Weed you puffed on in high school doesn't count. You can try some psychedelics and become enlightened by the universe. Try some rave drugs like Molly and ecstasy and go crazy in the club. Just don't do meth, that's a dark path and you will lose all your teeth. Whatever you decide to do MAKE SURE you do drug research, it's important. Curiosity does not have to kill the cat if the cat is taking the right dosage, be safe.



- [ ] **Build something from scratch:**
Our Grandfathers before us did not have IKEA. They had to cut the wood with nothing but a jigsaw and sweat. Whether it be a chair or a shed your mom wants for Mother's Day out of the blue, YouTube and a few Saturdays are all you need.



- [ ] **Get Insurance/ Get Off Your Parent's Insurance:**
Unfortunately, Jay-Z is a liar, and we are not forever young. Although it's part of the boring part of being an adult, you should have insurance of some form before 25. If you are on your parent's insurance, most policies don't go past 26 allowing kids on their parent's insurance so now is a good time to take care of that.



- [ ] **Go to a sporting event:**
The closest thing to the Roman Colosseum. Sporting events are a marvel to be at even if you aren't a fan. Monument structures housing adults and children screaming and cheering is an infectious vibe that sucks you in. If you're a fan it helps to experience the heartbreak of Losing next to your people.



- [ ] **Attend a Lantern Festival:**
Pollution is cool sometimes. Lantern festivals are beautiful displays across the backdrop of the night sky.

- [ ] **Go to a Live Concert:**
The sensation you feel when you see your favorite artist whom you have low-key worshiped in your ear for years live is cathartic and should be experienced for the soul. Trust me, I have seen SZA live.













- [ ] **Fall in Love:**
This one is dedicated to my girlfriend. Falling in love is a delusion everyone should take part in. It doesn't even have to be another person; Love is love.

- [ ] **Go to a Stand-up Show:**
Laughter is the best medicine and like opioids, it's being given out in unregulated amounts at stand-ups and open mics. There is always someone performing bound to warm your soul. Most venues also have food if comedy is not entirely your thing.

- [ ] **Learn a Different Language:**
It's a cool party trick and you can sound cool when ordering foreign food in front of people. The world is big so learning another language will usually come in handy.

- [ ] **Attend a Protest:**
The Mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell and young people are the heartbeat of a protest. They are becoming more frequent as the world begins so go out there and get that Revolution Music Poppin

- [ ] **Go on a nature Hike:**
Everyone should experience the beauty of nature. National parks are recommended because they are the safest. Make sure to back supplies and drink water while doing so as well.

- [ ] **Learn How to do your taxes:**
You must pay them, so you might as well understand them. There are lots of tricks and hidden ways to master taxes and get more money back. Skip-paying people and just do it yourself. Then you can scoff at people who wait until the last minute (Me).

- [ ] **Own and Take care of a pet:**
Having a little one around is great. Not only does it make you love and care for something other than yourself. They have no choice but to love you because you feed them.



- [ ] **Live outside your country:**
Living in a different country shows you just how big a difference the world is and how it operates. Perspective can be limited to just living in the same place forever. Go and experience a different part of the world while you're young and without too many obligations.



- [ ] **Watch all of Grey's Anatomy:**
It's long and Meredith Grey is a character but once you get into it, you're stuck. Also, when someone asks "Is anyone a doctor" you can raise your hand. This show prepares you for every situation imaginable.



- [ ] **Learn Self-Defense:**
It's a crazy world we live in, and you should learn how to defend yourself. Whether it be a physical weapon or a firearm, make sure you can successfully get out of a situation.



- [ ] **Find Happiness:**
Sometimes it can feel like the world is bleak. Headlines are constantly depressing with news of mass murder, corrupt politicians, lack of jobs etc. To get yourself sane through it all, find something that makes you happy. Once you find that thing nurture it and grow it so that you will always have that happiness whenever the world gets tough. Take my advice as the wisest 22-year-old to ever live, it gets very tough. So, it's better to face it with a smile.

Justin Colebrooke



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JOSH BLUE

INTERVIEW WITH BENNETT PERSONIUS

Design Elements by Geoff Tice





Josh Blue is a comedian's comedian, a renaissance man, and a hero to most people with a pulse. He has spent years establishing himself as a talent and comedic powerhouse, drawing crowds, winning "Last Comic Standing," and placing third in "America's Got Talent" in the process. He was recently featured on the "All Stars" competition of AGT and was kind enough to sit down and talk to us.

Bennett Personius: How are you? How's your day going so far?

Josh Blue: Good! Just got done doing another interview.

BP: Hopefully they didn't ask you all the good questions.

Josh: Yeah, I'm assuming these are just gonna be shitty.

BP: That's pretty much what I shoot for: low expectations. It gives a different flavor. Everyone else tries to ask good, insightful questions. Mine are more just, like—

Josh: "You got any chewing gum?"

BP: Exactly. Thanks for squeezing us in. I assume things have probably been crazier since AGT.

Josh: Oh man it's been awesome, but definitely going in all directions, all the time.

BP: I can only imagine. Was there a bigger jump in business after the "All Star" or was it similar?

Josh: Oh man it's been awesome, but definitely going in all directions, all the time.

BP: Having seen your career from an outside perspective, it seems that you've had kind of a steady climb. Obviously, there were hurdles, but you were winning competitions early on. What was one of the bigger or scarier leaps as far as stages and growth?

Josh: Well, every step of the way is growth. Sometimes there's big growth spurts and sometimes there's little growth spurts. Doing shows and opening for big names, it's exciting and it's intimidating when you're starting, but then you learn from that, and all of the sudden you get an opportunity like the "Last Comic Standing." That's a big growth spurt for sure. You learn pretty quickly. By the time I got to AGT, I'd been doing this for 20 years, and it's like, "I'm ready for whatever you present me."

BP: And I can feel that watching your sets on AGT. You just have a sense of confidence. And that's reassuring to watch, it's part of what makes your standup cool and special. There's a kind of "Seinfeld" sort of familiarity.

Josh: Well, I'm trying to make you feel like we're just having a conversation one-on-one. We're just talking, and I happen to be saying funny things.

BP: Was that confidence something that was built by success, or was that something that you had early on?

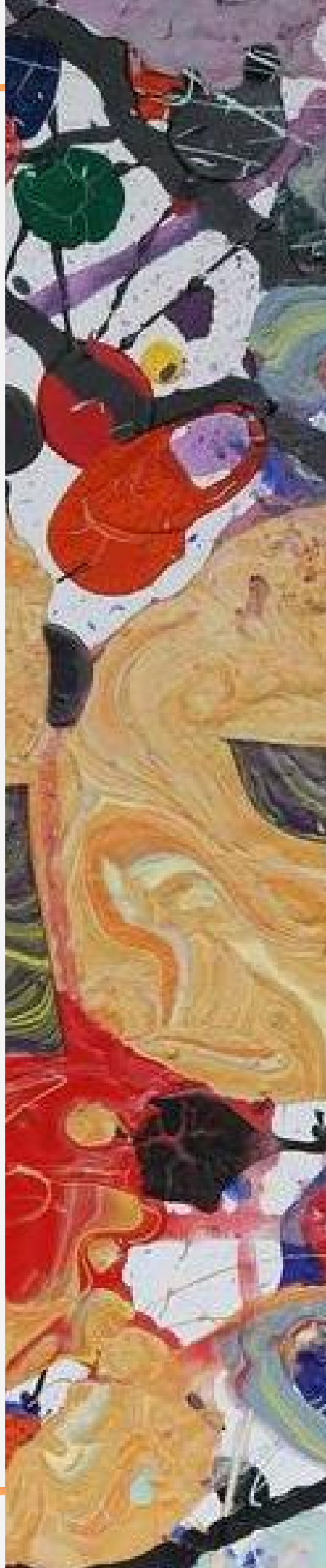
Josh: I've been told that I've always looked very comfortable onstage and very confident. But when I first started, I was fucking terrified man. For whatever reason, my body — the way it moves — looks like it's doing what it's supposed to be doing instead of worrying. But now I have this skill that I've built over the years. If I do a big show like "The Tonight Show," I try not to get worried with the idea of messing up because of those thousands of shows that I've done. That doesn't really happen. I'm like, "why would tonight be the night that I fuck it up?" I'm not even worried about it. I'm at the point where I can eat shit on a joke or two in a row and still know that I can come back from that. I can take a chance and say something that might not be funny because I know I have something funny to say after that.

BP: I was reading an interview where you talked about when you first tried to quit and spent a year and a half not doing comedy. And it reminded me of an E.E. Cummings essay where he talked about being a "capital A Artist," and that being different than people who want to be an artist, or copy other artists, or want to be successful. And he says it comes from a certain temperament that you can't escape and describes it as being a sort of agony. You just have to do it. Like you were saying, quitting was not really an option.

Josh: I can't imagine a life of not doing this. I have a very strange gift that is much beyond the effort that I put into it. I don't really try to be an amazing standup. But I just happen to be that. It's weird. I'm usually a very humble guy, so it's hard to say positive things like that, but whatever I'm doing, it's beyond me. I have a strange ability to just be comfortable onstage and make you comfortable with my disability and who I am. I don't think that's something you can learn. It's just a weird thing that's built into me.

BP: One of the things that from my perspective you excel at is that jokes don't have to make sense to be funny. I don't even know where these things come from or where they're going, but they're just funny.

Josh: It's an overactive imagination. I can just create funny scenarios out of nothing. Then when you tie it into other things, it builds this image or idea that becomes a joke!





BP: I find that for me, humor isn't just a coping mechanism. I think it shows me that there's a bigger picture behind momentary discomfort.

Josh: And who gives a fuck if it is a coping mechanism? How great is humor to disarm a hard or awkward situation? I think it's the best tool that you could possibly have. I look back at my schooling, and the teachers that I learned the most from had a little sense of humor where it kept your attention. You learn a lot more from that. "I better listen to what that guy's saying because he might say something good."

BP: I've noticed you have quite a few artistic gifts. You're a standup, you're an artist, an athlete, and a writer as well.

Josh: I've done a lot of stuff. I've got a big art show coming up, which is pretty exciting. It'll be my fifth. I've been doing a lot of painting, and I've got a big new sculpture that I'm really proud of. I do big wood carvings.

BP: That's interesting to me because for painting you can go to the store and buy some watercolors. Sculpting is something that you really have to set out upon. How did you start sculpting?

Josh: I was born in Cameroon, West Africa. I used to live in Senegal, and there's a lot of amazing wood carvings there, and that was the beginning of my interest and love of it. And then I just started to fuck around with a knife and cutting things and loved it ever since. And I've gotten more successful and can buy more tools, so I'm doing shit on a bigger scale. I'm also a pyromaniac, so I incorporate a lot of fire into my wood carving. I actually carve with fire.

BP: You're basically the true definition of a renaissance man.

Josh: I've done a lot of shit. I speak three languages, been to 44 countries — I'm a busy boy. As a kid I used to draw a lot. I haven't studied any of this, it just feels right when I do it. It's how it's supposed to be done. I just like stuff and I go and figure out how to do it myself.

BP: A lot of the behind-the-scenes footage they shot between your set on AGT — a lot of it was your story, but there was a certain dramatic element to it. Was that something that you wanted to tell, or was that something that was played up for that show?

Josh: I mean, it's a reality show. They're gonna try to make drama or pull at the heartstrings. I just look at it as a vessel for my craft. I got to be on the biggest stage in the world and do what I love to do, but I had to play by their rules. But also, by that rationale they would always try to make my story about being a struggle and having to overcome stuff, and I was like, "that ain't who I fucking am. I'm here to rule the world." So, to a certain extent I'm gonna give them what they want, but I'm not gonna give them exactly what they want.

BP: Was there something specifically that you pushed back on?

Josh: They just always wanted to hear how hard it is for me to do what I do because of my disability. And the truth of the matter is, I don't even see it like that. I really don't. This is a hard job for anybody. There is a really small group of good standups in the world. But I'm also very proud of being athletic.

I'm an old man now, but I used to love to beat able-bodied people in races. How fun is it for a guy with palsy to smoke somebody? I'm always trying to be the best in the room no matter what we're doing. If we're playing backgammon or fucking fishing.

BP: That's how I am too; it's a blessing and a curse because on one hand it makes you learn to get better at stuff and on the other hand it's like "why can't I lose at chess? Does that really matter?

Josh: Yeah, my son killed me at chess the other day and I almost — I was so mad. It really hurt my feelings. But when it's your son beating you it's really hurtful. But also, there's a sense of pride where you taught him to surpass what you know. But the other thing is my son plays, like, 30 games on his phone a day. And then I make a move and he's like, "oh you're making this move." And I'm like, "I don't like that you know the names to this shit. I'm gonna lose this game!"

BP: You mentioned this desire to be great at everything. Do you have any kind of life philosophy?

Josh: I think it's a call. I feel a call to do things. Like, "you gotta paint today." And then I just don't feel right unless I paint. But also, the one thing I told myself is that if I don't ever achieve anything, it's not because of palsy, it's just because of being lazy. Seriously. Everything I've done is because I did it. If you don't even get up and try to do it, then it's definitely never gonna happen.


JASONTETLAK

BP: It's easy to think of only the hurdle that you have to get past rather than have an idea that this is possible.

Josh: That's exactly it. I get so many messages on social media like, "you're so inspiring! I've never been able to do what I want to do. I want to be a painter but I just never…." Well buy some fucking paints and paint something. Now you're a painter. Good job, what's next? I always see these excuses: this is in the way or that's in the way. No, you're in the way. I have this example about some of my painting. I do these abstract color paintings, throwing paint on canvas and mixing it all together. I had somebody one time: "I could do that." Well, the difference is, I've already done it. You could, but you won't, and you'll never sell your thing, and I already have an art show doing it. I have a lust for life. A drive to be living. Having cerebral palsy, people don't expect me to use a chainsaw to carve a giant tree. So, I like making people have wonder.

BP: Wrapping up here because I know you're a busy man, [I] just wanted to ask a couple fun questions. Is there a favorite bit that you've heard recently?

Josh: There's so many funny people I get to be around. My friend Janae — she opens for me a lot — she said her feet are ugly. Let's just say, she looks like she could run fast barefoot.

BP: Is there anything you've been watching or an album you've been listening to recently that you really like?

Josh: Yeah, I've really been enjoying the Parquet Courts. It's rock, a little punk. I've really been pleasantly surprised with their stuff. You should check 'em out, man. I'm buddies with Nathaniel Rateliff — he's one of my favorites right now. Good dude, but his music is fucking great.

BP: One last one: what's a small thing in your life that makes you happy?

Josh: Smoke weed every dayy. That does definitely do it, that'll do it for sure. Some people need Adderall or Prozac, just give me a bowl, and we're good.

BP: Anything specific you wanna plug?

Josh: My social media has been going pretty good. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, it's all Josh Blue Comedy. I'm also on Tik Tok. And I have my own YouTube channel, it's Josh Blue Tube. And you can always check out my specials on Amazon Prime.

Bennett Personius

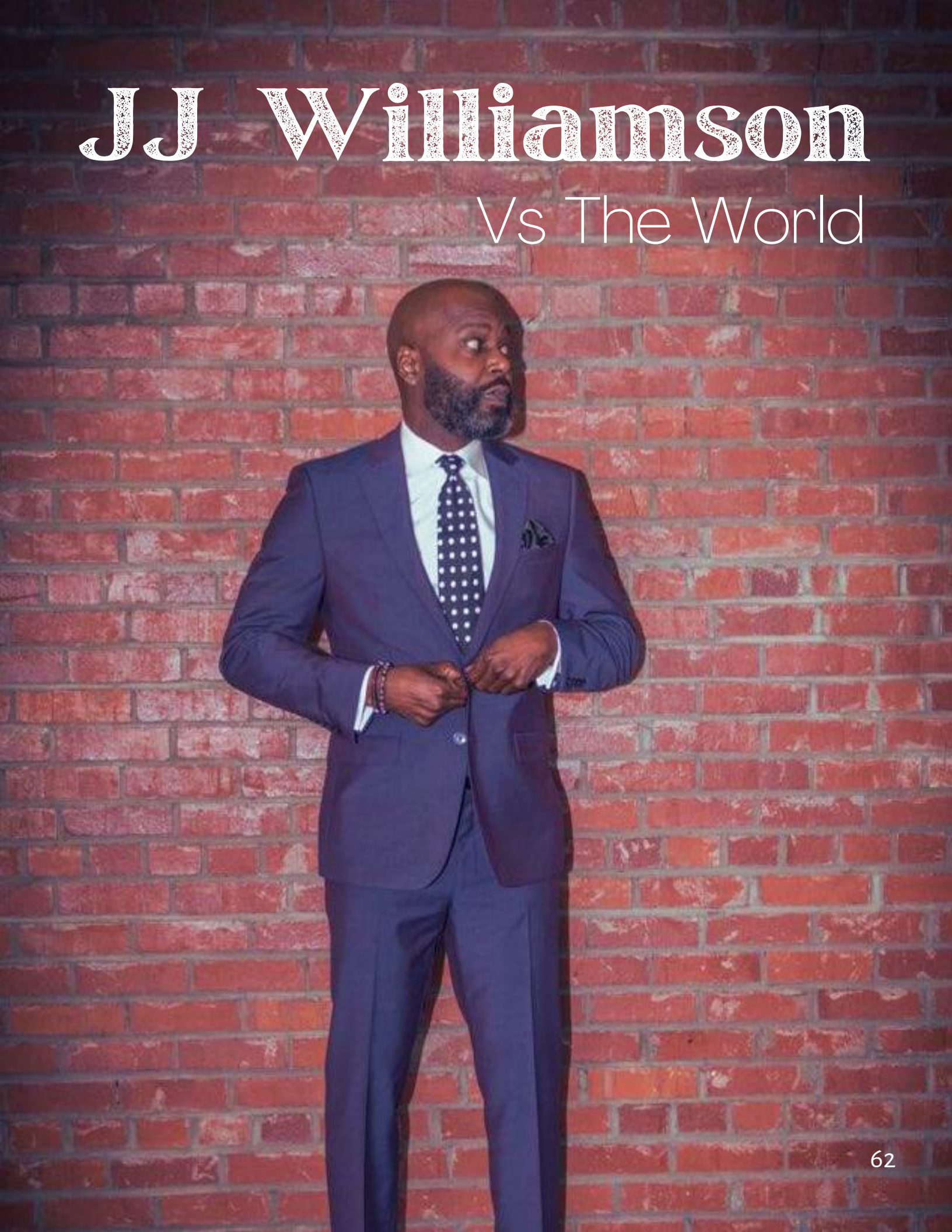
CHECK OUT JOSH'S SOCIAL MEDIA

CHECK OUT JOSH'S TOUR SCHEDULE!

CLICK HERE

JJ Williamson

Vs The World



Recently, I had the pleasure of speaking with comedian JJ Williamson and connecting with him through many topics such as motivation, the thrill of having big dreams, and figuring out life's purpose and what that can look like. Growing up in Jackson, Mississippi, Williamson discusses how he was always a class-clown-kind of character and enjoyed the momentum of making other people laugh. "I never told anyone I wanted to do standup comedy. I never told my parents, never told my friends, I didn't even tell God, but I knew He knew," Williamson said. When recalling his first night going up on stage, he discussed what it felt like to get a standing ovation, "It was such a beautiful adrenaline rush," he stated, "It was an amazing feeling!" Though this was the first-time stepping foot onto the stage, Williamson knew this was the journey he was meant to go on. It only took one time of getting up on stage to know that he was hooked, baited, and breaded. Even now with all of his years of experience, he is still able to enjoy the electrifying sensation of making a crowd bust a gut!

But alas, with every journey we embark on, there will always be challenges to overcome. Williamson opened up about the challenges he faced getting into the entertainment business. "Being in the entertainment business is definitely a journey, it's definitely a challenging business to be in." he followed it up by expressing some of the thoughts he and other people in entertainment face by saying, "you may sometimes have those setbacks where you know, you wonder, are you really going to get discovered? Are you really going to be able to take it to another level?" Ultimately, he mentions that this is a form of business in which you have to have confidence and continue to work hard. "It's a process. You definitely have to take your time. Again, you have to continue to believe in it."

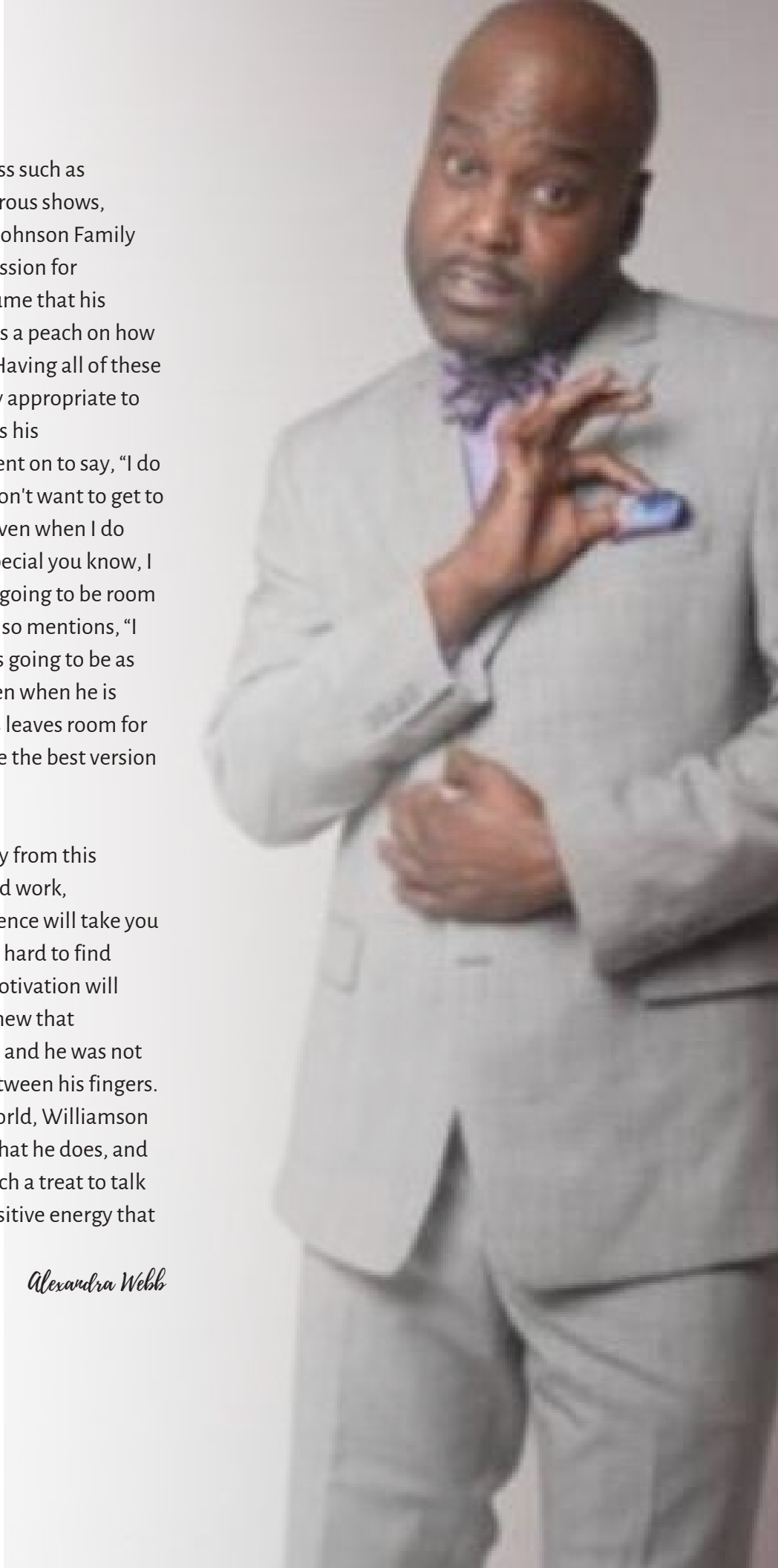
The conversation opened the floor to what it's like to stay motivated in the entertainment business. "I'm 29 years into standup comedy now," Williamson stated, "I motivate myself just continuing to believe. I feel like I do have what it takes." Williamson also mentions that staying motivated comes naturally when you truly have a love for what you do. "I never felt like this was a job, I truly love what I do so it's no problem getting up and trying to write down different jokes or different scenes." Williamson's jolly disposition and positive attitude shined bright throughout the entirety of his interview. He also mentioned what kind of support the other comedians give, "We are like a fraternity you know; we cheer each other on and people continue to cheer me on and vice versa." It was a wonderful sight to see of comedians supporting other comedians in their craft. Having a good support system is such a wonderful thing to have. It was truly apparent that the positivity that Williamson had was shining inside and out.

With now having almost 30 years under his belt, the question of all questions was dropped; what advice would you tell your younger self? "I would just say, believe in yourself. Step out there on faith and you know, you'll never get nowhere unless you try." As he mentioned this advice to his younger self, he also mentioned that this is some of the same advice he gives his son.

With all of Williamson's success such as performing standup for numerous shows, acting as Cousin Bodie in The Johnson Family Vacation, and following his passion for entertainment, one could assume that his younger self would be proud as a peach on how far he has come in his career. Having all of these successes in his life, it was only appropriate to ask Williamson if he celebrates his achievements and how? He went on to say, "I do [celebrate] sometimes, but I don't want to get to the point where I'm settling. Even when I do some HBO Def Jam or I do a special you know, I always feel like there's always going to be room for me to grow." Williamson also mentions, "I am my hardest critic. No one is going to be as hard on my talent as I am." Even when he is celebrating himself, he always leaves room for improvement so that he can be the best version of himself.

If there is one thing I took away from this interview, it would be that hard work, dedication, and having confidence will take you far in life. Sometimes it can be hard to find motivation and other times motivation will come naturally. Williamson knew that entertainment was his calling, and he was not going to let his passion slip between his fingers. As a veteran to the comedic world, Williamson still wakes up full of love for what he does, and it shows! JJ Williamson was such a treat to talk to and was beaming with a positive energy that was truly contagious.

Alexandra Webb





HIGH TIMES WITH THE MARIJUANA MOOSE:

Laugh Your Stress Away with a Little Help from Mary Jane

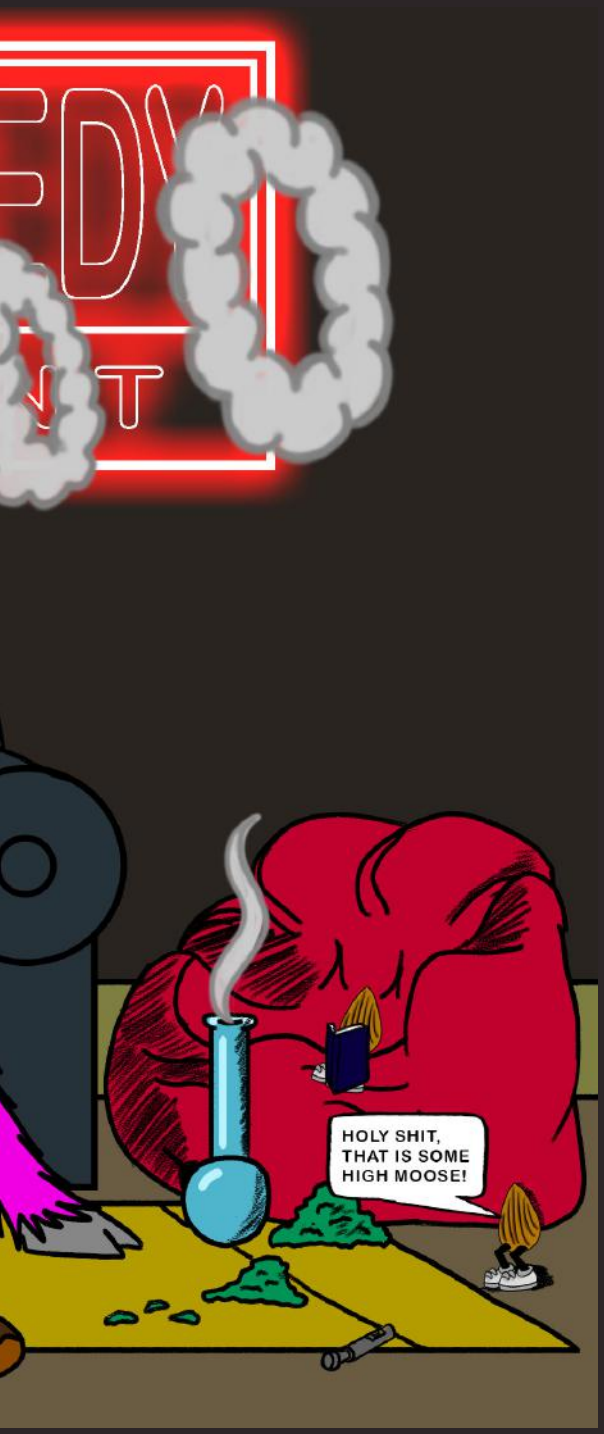


Illustration by Ben Orcena

As summer approaches, why not take a moment to unwind with the Marijuana Moose? This beloved cartoon character is a weed connoisseur who can guide you on your journey towards a stress-free life. Think of him as your cannabis sherpa, leading you to a world of relaxation and tranquility. With the Marijuana Moose by your side, we'll explore the many ways that marijuana can help you let go of stress and find inner peace. With his hilarious and lovable personality, you're sure to have a great time while doing it. So, grab your favorite strain, kick back, and let the Marijuana Moose show you the way to a more relaxed and carefree life.

Meet the Marijuana Moose

The Marijuana Moose is a fun-loving, carefree cartoon character who embodies the spirit of marijuana culture. With his goofy antics and contagious laughter, he's the perfect partner to guide you through the world of weed.

Moose was stressed-out and always on the go. He spent his days running around, gathering food, and trying to keep his family safe. But no matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't seem to unwind and let go of his worries.

One day, while out foraging for food, Moose stumbled upon a bag of cannabis in the woods. At first, he was hesitant to try it, but as he started to experiment with the substance, he found that it helped him relax and let go of his stress.

With his newfound love for cannabis, Moose underwent a transformation. He went from a stressed-out deer to a chill and carefree companion. He started spending more time with his family, enjoying the simple pleasures of life, and laughing more than ever before.

As Moose continued to spread the word about the benefits of cannabis, he gained a following of like-minded animals who were looking for a way to unwind and let go of their stress. And thus, the legend of the Marijuana Moose was born.

The Benefits of Marijuana



Marijuana has long been touted as a stress reliever, and for good reason. The compounds in marijuana can help to reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, making it a great tool for those who are feeling overwhelmed by the demands of daily life. Whether you prefer to smoke, vape, or consume edibles, cannabis can be a great way to kick back and relax.

Reduces Anxiety

Another benefit of cannabis is its ability to reduce anxiety. Many people turn to cannabis when they are feeling stressed or anxious, as it can help to calm the mind and alleviate feelings of worry or fear. This can be especially helpful for those who suffer from anxiety disorders or other mental health conditions.

Helps You Sleep

Another benefit of cannabis is its ability to help you sleep. Many people who suffer from stress or anxiety also struggle with insomnia, making it difficult to get the restful sleep they need. Cannabis can help to promote relaxation and reduce anxiety, which can make it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Enhances Mood

In addition to promoting relaxation and reducing anxiety, cannabis can also enhance your mood. The compounds in cannabis can help to boost the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that is associated with feelings of pleasure and happiness. This can help to improve your overall mood and make you feel more positive and upbeat.

Promotes Positive Vibes

One of the main benefits of cannabis is its ability to promote positive vibes. The compounds in cannabis can help to boost your mood, making it easier to feel happy and carefree. This can be especially helpful for those who are feeling stressed or anxious, as it can help to alleviate negative feelings and replace them with positivity.

Enhances Creativity

Another benefit of cannabis is its ability to enhance creativity. Many artists and writers turn to cannabis to tap into their creative side and find inspiration. This can be a great way to take your mind off your stressors and focus on something that brings you joy.

Laughter is Contagious

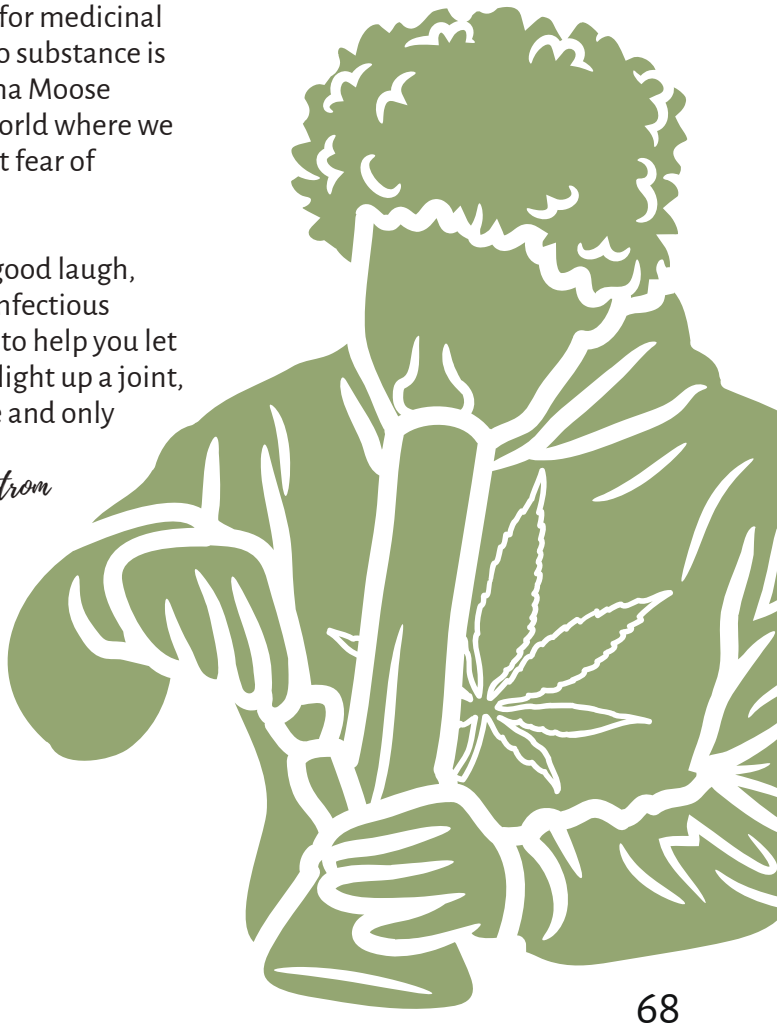
As we all know, laughter is contagious. When you're laughing with others, it can be easy to forget about your worries and just enjoy the moment. Whether you're watching a funny movie or spending time with friends, cannabis can help to enhance your sense of humor and make it easier to let go and have a good time.

The Future of Marijuana

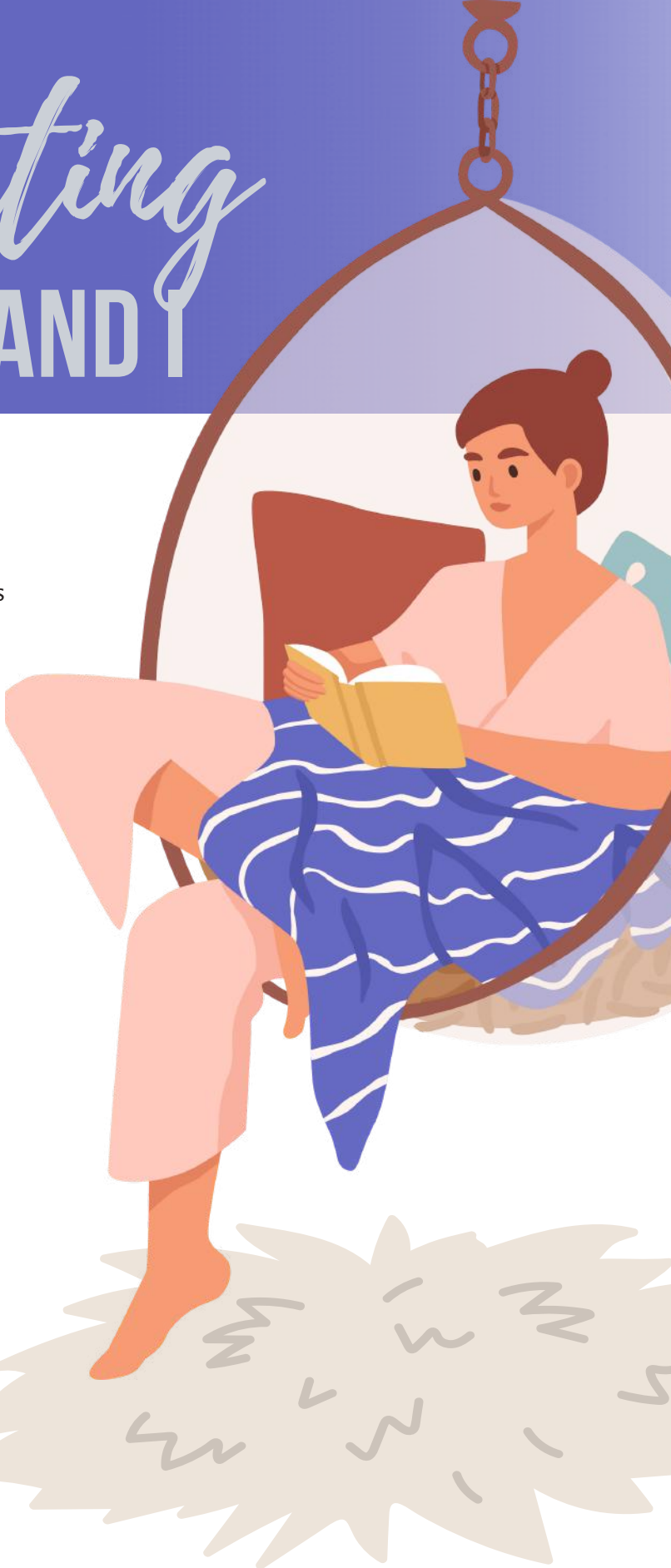
With more and more states legalizing marijuana for medicinal and recreational use, the future of this once-taboo substance is looking brighter than ever. And with the Marijuana Moose leading the charge, we can all look forward to a world where we can enjoy the many benefits of marijuana without fear of judgment or stigma.

So, if you're feeling stressed out and in need of a good laugh, why not live like the Marijuana Moose? With his infectious personality and love for all things weed, he's sure to help you let go of your worries and enjoy life to the fullest. So light up a joint, kick back, and let the good times roll with the one and only Marijuana Moose.

Leah Jo Wickstrom



Celebrating ME, MYSELF, AND I



It's no surprise that we constantly celebrate the people we love. We celebrate birthdays, weddings, marriages, and everything in between. Oftentimes, the person who ceases to celebrate us is…well, us! Day-to-day, we complete tasks, big or small, that go unrecognized by ourselves. There is so much that we, as individuals, can celebrate for ourselves but we never do. There is no such thing as a small accomplishment whether it's getting out of bed in the morning or getting a promotion at your job. These are both accomplishments that deserve to be celebrated, because let's be honest, life isn't easy.

The great thing about celebrating yourself is that you have free range to celebrate any way you want. Some people light candles, have a drink, or buy a new outfit! Sometimes it can be difficult to know how or when to celebrate yourself. Some ways to know how to celebrate yourself include doing things that you like. If you like to celebrate yourself by relaxing, then perhaps consider setting yourself up a movie night or taking a bubble bath. If you're someone who likes to go wild, consider treating yourself by going out with some friends or trying something new.

If you're someone who prefers material gratification, treat yourself to a new outfit, a coffee, or any kind of treat that will make your day.



Some of the ways we celebrate ourselves can even be unconscious. We celebrate ourselves by taking care of ourselves in terms of eating food, drinking water, and overall treating our body and mind with kindness.

Now that I have given some tips on how to celebrate, let's dive into when to celebrate. A lot of times, people won't celebrate until they are completely and utterly exhausted from their job or whatever it is that renders them successful. This mindset enforces the toxic idea that we only deserve to be celebrated when we are physically and emotionally drained. While it's good to recognize when you need a break, it's important to give yourself the space to realize that you need downtime to recharge before you hit exhaustion. You do not have to solve the world's mysteries or win an Oscar to deserve to celebrate yourself, you have to give yourself grace and recognize that you are human. There are no small successes and that is the most important thing to remember. You've been having a hard day and you made it to the grocery store? You deserve to treat yourself. You could even incorporate these celebrations into your daily routine! Incorporating these celebrations into your daily routine can help your mental health and give you something to look forward to. When you care for yourself, you shine a little differently!

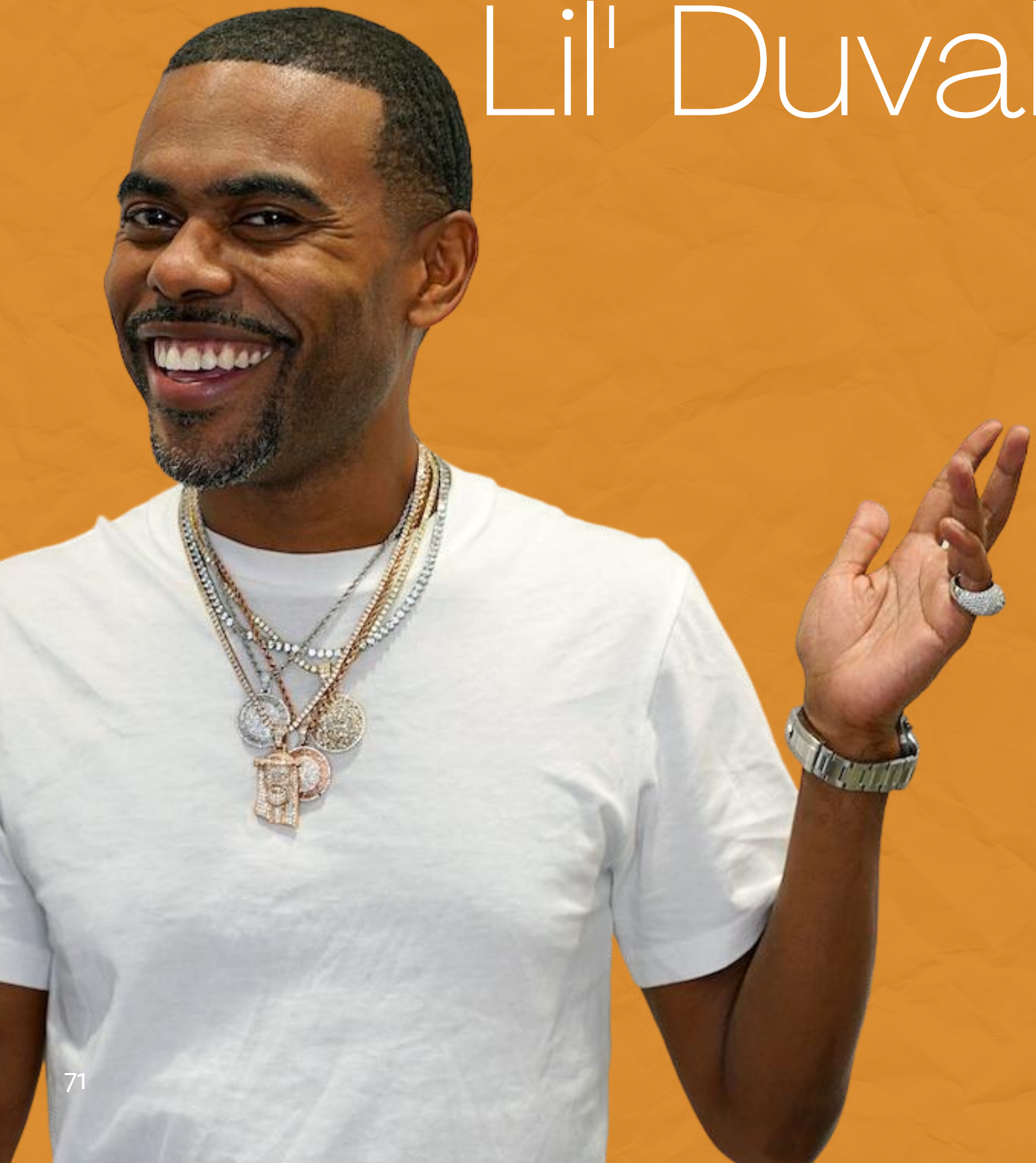
Though it is good to recognize other people's successes and celebrate them, it is also important to show yourself the same kind of love and appreciation. After all, we have known ourselves for a very long time!

The good thing about celebrating yourself is you know yourself best and will be able to relax exactly the way you want.Life can be incredibly hectic, but it is important to value your time and energy. You do your best when you feel your best! Ultimately, celebrating yourself is a nice way to show that you care about your well-being, and it can also serve as a form of motivation. In that I mean, if you are having a bad day at work and you need a little something to look forward to, you can think about something that would help you to unwind like being excited to finish the quilt you have been working on or to cook.

There will never be "the perfect moment" to celebrate yourself, as individuals, do not have to wait until we are exhausted from work to reward ourselves. We deserve to reward ourselves for all the things in life. Anything that is done to help an individual emotionally, physically, or mentally is productive. If you can't remember the last time you celebrated yourself, take a breath and go do something that relaxes you or makes you happy. After all, you deserve it!

Alexandra Webb

Living Your Best Life According to Lil' Duval



I knew whenever I heard "we gone start this thing off right!" during my opening brunch shifts, I was in for a fun day full of laughter and dancing. Who knew a quick and simple song would have such an impact on the general outlook of living life?! Apparently, Lil Duval. Living your best life doesn't mean ignoring the bad things going on during your season. However, giving a big embrace to some brighter moments can lead to happier times.

According to Instagram, the phrase means taking selfies while traveling (chronicling a highlight of something positive) or sharing motivational quotes that currently apply to an acted-out solution to a problem. Well, Lil Duval (along with Snoop Dogg and Ball Greezy) pointed out some thoughtful tips to living your best life.

1. Accentuate the positive.

Even when it may not feel like life is going great, find a reason why it could feel like it actually is going great. Snoop kicks off the song by saying "you got a lot to be smiling for, so wtf you be wildin' for?!"

2. As the season changes, so will your circle.

This song does wonders with motivating folks to let go of the past. Take a look at this reel and think about people and seasons that were stressful and toxic. "My ex-b*tch, you can have that there." Look at this lesson in letting go of what hurt you yet not forgetting that it happened!

3. Show yourself kindness, regardless of what another person thinks!

Now, we all make mistakes. As humans we must use our own tools to learn from our setbacks and move differently – and definitely not get caught up in how others perceive us! Ball Greezy and Lil' Duval do a great job of reminding us of that, from the hook to Greezy's verse. (If you know the words to the hook, feel free.)

4. Take joy in the little things happening to you.

This is a bit different than accentuating the positive, because when there's a moment that nothing devastating is going on with you, yet something pleasant pops up – like, finding a $2 bill or getting extra oxtail gravy at the Jamaican restaurant, or like the bridge says "if you know you ain't going to work tomorrow?! Smile bitch! Smile bitch!" – spend a little extra joy on those moments.

5. Embrace your smile.

Whether you have big lips, a gap, baby teeth, chipmunk cheeks, or a big ol' head, embrace the smile your creator has made for you. Even better, switch up the thought that any of those things are flaws because they're what made you YOU, and we love you! So, you should love you the way we love you too.

Starletta Watson

TAROT



There have been several articles in this issue thus far about Tarot and similar practices, but I have some different ideas to bring to the table in this discussion. I personally do not believe that Tarot can divine the future or past, but regardless, I see potential for its use as a tool for self-reflection to help in personal growth and development. My opinion on horoscopes is very similar. Everything in this general area of using magic for personality tests or future divination is left open enough so that you can use them as tools to keep moving forward in your life.

Tarot comes from old Kabbalistic tradition (Jewish Mysticism) (if you wish to learn more about this connection please check here so I do think it is a tad bit ignorant and ill-informed to think that Tarot is an afront to the Abrahamic God since it is used in reverence and respect of that higher being and at its core, Tarot relates to how I believe that we see "God" or, in our everyday lives. Of God, Brahmin, luck, the force, or whichever external force on life that one might believe in, most operate beyond human control, with unknowable motives that present in seemingly random ways. So, I would suppose from the perspective of someone who believes in these forces of the universe, Tarot or any other divination technique, the use of an element of seeming randomness at its core would make sense. But as I already said earlier, I do not quite believe this as the case due to the vagueness in which these cards can be used in interpretation. Whenever someone is reading your tarot, they will either be your friends so that they can read deeper into it, or it will be a mystic who will give you the gist of the meaning of the card then you have to fill in the blank yourself.

I think of Tarot in much the same way I think of Rorschach tests; they can say a lot about what is on your mind and your thinking process, and in walking through that process with a trained individual, whether a Tarot mystic or a psychologist with a Rorschach, you might begin to travel through some of your conscious and subconscious processes to reveal what it is that is bothering you at that time or through your life. The same thing can be said about horoscopes.

Horoscopes tend to be written vaguely so that they can be used as a reflection of your day, week, month, or year. Though this structure is often an object of critique, and fairly so, I think that it can allow for a healthy reflection on your activities throughout the year and give insights as to how one should move forward with their life, which is only a good thing that can have positive impacts on you. Just because I thought this might be a little bit controversial, I decided to get a second opinion and ask a friend of mine about their opinion about Tarot and things in that same vein. He said that he does not particularly believe in taking Tarot or horoscopes seriously but believes that they can be fun things to do and are helpful to those who find it helpful.

He said that he does not particularly believe in taking Tarot or horoscopes seriously but believes that they can be fun things to do and are helpful to those who find it helpful. It should not take major precedence in one's life over all other factors in decision-making, but it can be something fun to look at and can be used as the last crux in making a decision, however, it shouldn't be the primary factor.

Take everything I said as you will! I do not control your life, but I also believe that Tarot also does not hold that power over you. I do believe that tarot has a use and does have a place in the world. However, it should not be the be all or end all of your life.

E. Alexander Phillips-Hedge



STRESS *Relief*

It will come as no surprise to our readership that I believe stress to be one of the most prevalent emotional states in modern U.S. society. With our nation's constant go go go attitude, it is easy to lose sight of what really matters and live your life rather than just go through the motions of work and other obligations. As a result of this pressure, it's becoming increasingly important to slow down, relax and get in touch with yourself again. Throwing off some of the shackles of society, even if only for a moment, is essential to health and happiness, especially for those in stressful or busy careers.

There are almost more ways to relax than there are people in the U.S. and even just contemplating it can get overwhelming quickly. While I would like to list off all of these, we'd be here till the end of the century if I did, and I'm sure none of you are actually interested in that. So, I'm going to narrow my focus to five good ways to relax.



1 A tried and true method for relaxation is a hot bath. It will soothe sore muscles and calm your mind. Especially good after an intense workout, which is itself relaxing, a hot bath will do wonders for relaxing your mind and body. Hot baths are also especially helpful for relaxing you before bed so you're sure to sleep well. If I'm feeling restless, I take a hot bath before bed. The sound of the water running is also quite relaxing. But by far my favorite activity is one I'm quite lucky to have access to. There are bathhouses fed by natural hot springs about an hour away from me. They're very relaxing and perfect for a weekend getaway. It's not too expensive, and while the bathhouses are public, everyone is respectful and it's quite an enjoyable experience. And if you're able to shell out more money, there are private spa treatments at most of the bathhouses. It's one of my favorite spots to hang out in my state.





2

Number two on my list is sitting in a really comfortable chair and reading a favorite book, watching a beloved TV show, or playing a relaxing video game. It just so happened that as I was writing this piece, my mom's neighbors were moving and getting rid of many things, including a very comfortable chair that I snagged. I plan on creating a reading nook with it, and I may also play some video games in it. I'm reminded of how Animal Crossing: New Horizons took the world by storm when it was released soon after the Covid-19 pandemic began. Lots of people, stressed out by the pandemic, turned to the game as a way to relax. They would chill out and build their island and get away from all the stresses of life for a little bit. While I would personally prefer to read a nice book, with Lirael by Garth Nix as my go-to, there's no denying the appeal of a slow and relaxing video game like the Animal Crossing series. And of course, a comfortable chair like the one I just picked up makes everything better.

3 Third on my list is going for a relaxing walk in the cool morning air. One of my most vivid moments of relaxation is from a time when I woke up around 5:00 AM and just couldn't get back to sleep. So I got dressed and wandered over to a trail near my dad's apartment, where I was staying at the time. The trail leads to the Big Dam Bridge, crossing the Arkansas River. I didn't walk that far but instead stopped at a stone bench that looks as if it was carved straight from a mountainside. I lay down on it and stared at the sky as the sun rose. The sunrise was a beautiful shade of crimson, and once the sun had fully risen, the sky was the bluest I have ever seen it. The temperature was also perfect, not too hot, and not too cold. I lay on that bench for hours just staring at the sky, feeling more at peace than ever. It was very meditative and restful.



4 Next, we have cooking and eating good food. Most people have a few comfort foods that they eat to relax after a stressful day. Delicious and nostalgic food does wonders for the body and mind. And while cooking can require a significant amount of energy, it also lets you put your focus on something productive and with immediate benefits rather than stewing in your own stress. I often go and cook something when feeling exhausted and anxious. The physical activity helps me feel more alert and shifting my focus helps me get away from any negativity that may be spiraling around in my head. And of course, as I mentioned earlier, eating good food always helps you feel better.





5 Last but certainly not least is spending time cuddled up with a pet. This is soothing and restful for reasons similar to curling up in a comfy chair with a good book with the added benefit of the warmth of another living creature. For me, petting a cat while it sits on my lap is especially pleasant. And it's a bonus because you can also do this when curled up in a comfy chair. One of my favorite pastimes is sitting and reading a book while my cat purrs in my lap. There's truly no other experience like it.

I also want to draw attention to the term hygge, a word used in Denmark to describe a feeling of comfort, or actions that lead to said feeling. This term is a bit difficult to translate, as the literal translations don't capture all the different shades of meaning, so it's somewhat hard for an American to understand. Nevertheless, all the examples of relaxing activities I mentioned earlier would contribute to a feeling of hygge and the concept is absolutely worth exploring. About a year ago, I went to the library and picked up the book The Little Book of Hygge by Meik Wiking. It blew my mind with how he discusses the concept of hygge and relaxation in general. I highly recommend it. Maybe curl up with a cat on your lap and read it?

Sable Hawkins





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