

# EXPERT PROFILE

WINTER 2025

MAGAZINE

HAPPY  
*New Year*



## SIMPLY THE BEST

NOT JUST A NEW YEAR, **BUT A LEGACY**

**RM**  
RANATH MEDIA



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## EDITORS NOTE

As we step into the new year, I want to thank every contributor, partner, and reader who continues to be part of the Ranath Media family. The year ahead brings new opportunities, fresh collaborations, and exciting developments across our publications, and I'm genuinely looking forward to what we will achieve together.

This issue also marks a moment of reflection and gratitude, particularly as we celebrate the incredible individuals whose legacy continues to shape our community. I have shared a more extended special note on the importance of collaboration, community, and recognising lifetime achievement on page 11, and I invite you to take a moment to read it.

Here's to a year of shared success, meaningful connections, and continued growth.

**Rany Athwall**  
**Editor & Founder**

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# RANATH MEDIA

DESIGN, PUBLISH & PRINT

SOME OF OUR  
*collection*

## Who Are Ranath Media?

We are a creative publishing house that designs, curates, publishes and prints powerful, purpose-driven magazines and special editions for businesses, celebrities, influencers and institutions.






From concept to completion, we handle every stage of the journey, from editorial design and layout, to content creation and print distribution. Our publications are beautifully crafted, globally distributed, and made to inspire, inform and connect audiences.


Whether you're looking to elevate your brand, celebrate your story, or create meaningful engagement with your audience, Ranath Media transforms ideas into timeless magazines that make an impact across print and digital platforms.





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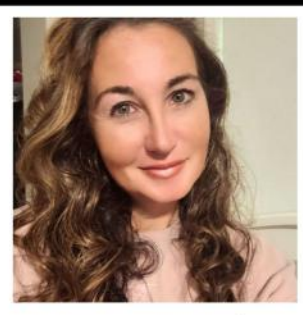
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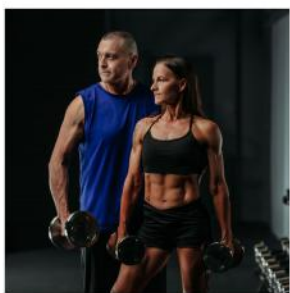
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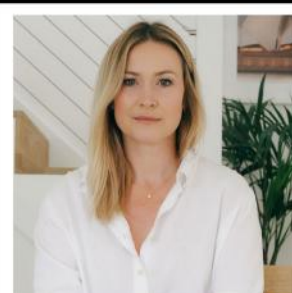
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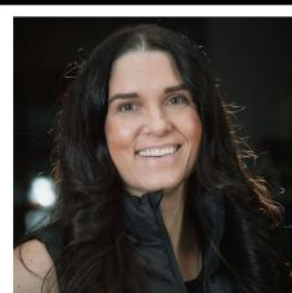
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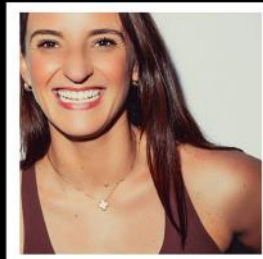

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# WHY COLLABORATION, COMMUNITY, AND LEGACY MATTER MORE THAN EVER

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As we move forward into a new year, I find myself reflecting not only on what Ranath Media has achieved, but on how it has been achieved. At the heart of everything we do is a simple but powerful truth: none of this works without each other. Publishing, storytelling, growth, and impact are never solo pursuits. They are built through collaboration, trust, and a shared belief that when people come together with purpose, something meaningful is created.

Ranath Media was never designed to be a traditional publishing house. From the very beginning, it was built as a platform for people. A space where voices could be heard, stories could be told with integrity, and individuals could be recognised not just for what they do, but for who they are and the journeys they have taken. Over time, this has grown into a family, one that spans industries, experiences, and generations, yet remains united by mutual respect and support.

The importance of collaboration cannot be overstated. In a world that often encourages competition over cooperation, we have chosen a different path. Our magazines thrive because contributors, editors, designers, partners, and readers all play a role in shaping the final outcome. Each article published is the result of trust between the writer and the editorial team. Each issue released represents hours of unseen work carried out with care and commitment. When people feel valued, supported, and fairly represented, the quality of work naturally rises.

This sense of shared purpose is especially evident in the way our community supports one another. Contributors are not treated as one-off voices, but as part of an evolving journey. We encourage growth, variety, and authenticity, allowing individuals to explore different topics, collaborate across publications, and build credibility over time. This approach has created an environment where people champion each other's success, rather than seeing it as a threat.





# 2026....AND BEYOND

One of the most meaningful aspects of our work is recognising legacy. Our Lifetime Achievement Awards are not about titles or popularity. They are about longevity, consistency, and contribution. They honour individuals who have shown up year after year, navigated challenges with grace, and continued to give back through their work and influence. Celebrating legacy reminds us that impact is not measured in moments, but in years of dedication.

This year, we proudly honour our Lifetime Achievement Award recipients: Rachel Pearson, Jacqueline Goncalves, Beverly Johnson, Emma Hull, Mary Scott, Lisa Andrews, Penelope Lazell, Lidia Kuleshnyk, Dr Margit G Muller, Shardia O'Connor, Lorraine Chapman, Celia Conrad, and Nadija Bajrami. Each of these individuals represents a unique journey, yet they are united by resilience, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to their purpose. Their stories inspire others to believe that meaningful work, done consistently, truly matters.

Legacy is not just about looking back; it is about shaping what comes next. By celebrating those who have paved the way, we set a standard for future contributors. We show that collaboration, authenticity, and long-term commitment are valued here. This creates a ripple effect, encouraging others to invest in their own growth while supporting the growth of those around them.

Ranath Media's role extends beyond publishing. We create opportunities. We connect people. We open doors to new conversations, platforms, and collaborations that might not otherwise exist. Whether through internal publications, external partnerships, or digital platforms, our goal remains the same: to amplify voices and create meaningful exposure rooted in trust and professionalism.

What makes this work truly special is the relationships behind it. Many collaborations begin as conversations and grow into long-term partnerships. There is a shared understanding that success is not about extracting value, but about building something sustainable together. This mindset has allowed Ranath Media to grow organically, driven by reputation and word of mouth rather than empty promises.

Looking ahead, the year promises exciting developments, new opportunities, and continued evolution across our publications and platforms. Yet the foundation remains unchanged. We will continue to prioritise people over process, collaboration over competition, and legacy over short-term gain. The future we are building is one where voices are nurtured, achievements are recognised, and community remains at the core of everything we do.

Ultimately, the importance of each other is what defines us. Ranath Media is not just a collection of magazines; it is a reflection of the people within it. Together, we create impact. Together, we grow. And together, we ensure that the work we do today leaves a meaningful legacy for tomorrow.

**Rany Athwall**  
**Founder**  
**Ranath Media**

# THE NEW CURRENCY

## WHY ATTENDING EVENTS WILL SHAPE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND IN 2026



*Visibility is shifting.  
Influence is shifting.*

And the people who rise fastest in 2026 will not be the ones who post the most. They will be the ones who place themselves in the right rooms. Events are no longer a nice-to-have. They have become one of the strongest levers for credibility, network, and brand authority.

As the online space grows louder, in-person spaces are becoming more valuable. They cut through noise. They shift identity. They create context that digital content cannot replicate. And they place you alongside people operating at the level you want to play in.

### **Why events are becoming more important**

The last few years changed the way we connect. Digital spaces expanded, but they also became crowded. Audiences learned to filter quickly. In-person spaces did the opposite.

They became sharper, more intentional, more valuable. Three things are driving this shift:

#### ***Trust builds faster in person.***

One conversation can replace months of “warming up”.

#### ***High-level buyers and leaders want context, not content.***

They want to see how you think, operate, and present yourself when the camera is off.

#### ***Brand authority comes from placement.***

Where you are seen signals who you are.

The rooms you choose tell the industry what level you expect to play at.

In 2026, your personal brand won't be shaped only by what you post. It will be shaped by where you choose to stand.

### **The WE Convention: a real-time example**

I felt this shift sharply at the WE Convention in Dubai. Two thousand attendees. Global founders. Cultural leaders. Serious operators with serious vision. It stretched my thinking because it wasn't my usual industry circle.

It was a room of people who build at scale, including speakers like Anna Wintour and Dr Maky Zanganeh. And it reminded me of something essential: Your next level rarely lives in familiar rooms. It lives in the ones that feel slightly beyond you... until you walk in.

### **Look outside your usual circle**

Most people choose events that feel safe:

They have the same niche.

That lead to the same conversations.

The same figures on stage.

But growth comes from contrast, not repetition.

Dubai reminded me that you expand by exposure:

To new industries.

To new thinking.

To people who see opportunity differently.

When you place yourself in a room where no one knows your background, no one cares about your follower count, and everyone is thinking bigger than your current world, it quickly expands you. Your ideas grow. Your direction sharpens. And your brand gains a depth you cannot create from behind a screen.

### **Not all events are equal.**

As events grow in importance, the question becomes: which rooms deserve your presence?

There are three categories worth considering:

#### **1. Industry events**

Useful and familiar, but often better for lateral growth, as they offer familiarity.

#### **2. Cross-industry events**

These stretch your thinking the fastest.

You hear ideas that are not circulating in your niche.

#### **3. Cultural and global events**

Where business, culture, and influence collide.

These are identity-expanding rooms.

The most valuable events are the ones where you are not the obvious expert, but the emerging peer.

### **Set your intention before you enter any room.**

Most people walk into events with passive hopes, such as meeting interesting people and learning something new.

Some simply have no plan and want to see what happens. Leaders walk in with intention.

Your intention is not a goal.

It is a standard.

Before you go to the next event, ask yourself:

What do I want this room to recognise in me?

***What identity am I wanting to move into?***

***What opportunities am I available for?***

***What energy am I leaving behind?***

***When you decide before you enter the room, it influences what you get out of the space.***

You choose your conversations rather than being pulled into the noise of everyone else's agenda.

### **First impressions still count.**

It's not just the conversations in the room that matter; it's also how you show up for those interactions. Before you speak, you are already telling a story. Your posture, your style, your tone, these signal who you are long before you open your mouth. This is not about dressing to impress. It is about dressing in alignment with who you are and what you want to represent.

Your clothes, your choices, your energy... These are part of your brand.



Events make them visible at scale. In 2026, being aware that first impressions matter more than ever. Because the rooms you step into are filled with potential collaborators, clients, investors, and leaders forming opinions before you ever sit on a panel or post a single slide. Your identity leads the room before your business or job title does.

### **Treat the event as a timeline, not a day**

Events are never about the day or even the one meeting itself. The brands that make the most of events understand the power that sits in:

#### **The build-up**

Your pre-event content.

The signal that you're someone worth meeting.

The anticipation you create.

#### **The in-between**

The coffees and informal chatting around scheduled sessions.

The conversations over breaks and lunch.

The introductions that weren't planned but that change everything.

#### **The follow-up**

Where relationships turn into opportunity.

Where ideas turn into collaboration.

Most people treat events as a spike and place emphasis on the actual event. But, as events become more advanced- with apps detailing who is attending and multiple opportunities to connect outside of the room- make the most of the room that's being curated before, during and after the event.

### **How to network without performance**

How you build relationships is what actually determines your success from an event. The connections matter, but the way you nurture them is what creates long-term impact.

The people who build the strongest relationships at events are not the ones working the room. They are the ones who show up with clarity about who they are and what they stand for.

They don't rush to collect contacts or deliver polished elevator pitches. They stay present. They pay attention. They enter conversations with curiosity rather than an agenda. They let ideas lead instead of selling. And they choose depth over volume. One meaningful exchange will move your world forward more than twenty surface-level introductions.

This is what creates recognition. Not trying to impress everyone, but allowing the right people to understand you, remember you, and want to stay in your orbit after the room empties. Follow-up is where most of the real opportunity sits, but it only works when it feels natural and intentional.

Reaching out within a day or two keeps the conversation warm, and mentioning something specific you discussed shows you were genuinely present. From there, offer something meaningful, whether it's a perspective, a resource, or a thought that builds on what you spoke about.

The point is not to sell. It's to continue the conversation in a way that shows how you think and why staying connected matters. Authority doesn't come from one strong moment at an event. It comes from the steady, thoughtful touchpoints that follow and the way you stay visible to the people who met you in the room.

### **Why this matters for 2026**

Next year will reward people who are deliberate about where they spend their time. The online space will stay noisy, but the rooms you choose will carry more weight than anything you post. Events are becoming places where your thinking is seen, where your identity is shaped, and where the right people can place you instantly.

When you show up with intention, the experience changes. Your conversations get sharper. Your relationships deepen. You leave with clarity that is hard to create alone.

This is why events matter in 2026.

Not as an add-on, but as part of how you build a brand that holds its own in any room. The spaces you walk into will shape how people understand your work, your standard, and the direction you're moving in.

Before you speak, people notice how you carry yourself. Before you pitch, they sense how you think.

And the rooms you choose next year will say as much about your leadership as any piece of content ever could.

**By Rachel Pearson**

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# MOVING BEYOND MINDSET WITH ANCIENT UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES

*"Energy Never Lies. You Can't Fool Mother Nature" Lidia Kuleshnyk ( Lady Apona ) Ancient Universal Principle #2*



Focused Presence. You've felt the energy within yourself and with others; the moments beyond confidence: an inner ease of being grounded in an unshakeable pillar of benevolent discernment that whispers respect, acceptance and release. The inner silence and stillness that flows as support without attachment, grounded in the truth of sacred knowing. This energy never lies. The mind may seek control, but the energy of the Universe flows. You can never fool Mother Nature.

Focused Presence is next-level authenticity in the mastery of your inner power. It is the attention that listens but does not judge. It is the energy that radiates but does not absorb. It is the essence that commands but does not conquer.

Welcome to my 14th column exploring moving beyond mindset with ancient universal principles. The 12 Ancient Universal Principles of my High Performance Wellness Coaching will help you master focused presence . . . the high state of aligned awareness without attachment. When you activate your focused presence, you move beyond the power of mindset into the power of universal consciousness. You become Centered, Connected, Conscious™. You live in your sovereignty . . . and lead.

***"She Is Clothed With Strength and Dignity, and She Laughs Without Fear Of The Future" Proverbs 31:25***

When I read this quote over 30 years ago, I was drawn to its freedom, security and power. The lightness and strength of Taoist non-attachment; the natural flow of Being, regardless of the circumstances. I yearned to embody living each

day "clothed with strength and dignity, and to laugh without fear of the future". Perhaps, at some level, I was always connected to the inner knowing of who I am, even if it once seemed like a distant echo calling to me.

In my relentless quest to feel whole and free, the chronic stress of struggles and burdens dissolved into the ease of being fully present. I forgot what once drained me. When I looked to the future, I had no fear. I stood in my cloak of strength and dignity. At first, it was relief. My mind was free. Then it felt like moving through a crystal-clear river, flowing downstream effortlessly, testing my capacity and mastering my thoughts, emotions, and energy. I could breathe, hold space for priorities and focus from a clear mind liberated from debris.

***"Most Important Was To Remain Focused and Always Have Presence of Mind" Nafisa Joseph***

As I committed to my inner growth, calm replaced anxiety, order replaced overwhelm, and clarity replaced uncertainty. I became more focused and present. It happened naturally, in the flowing river of non-attachment. The freedom of an empty mind, with limitless space to respond and create, was my gateway to embracing my own presence. I became centered in my core energy, connected to my essence and power and conscious of who I am, my beliefs, thoughts, choices and actions. Focus became an expression of freedom, our birthright of free will, not an intention of mental discipline. In focused presence, you access deep insight, intuition and instinct. You make better decisions and create more time. Your priorities, responses



and feelings are clear and grounded. As you master your mindset, energy and stress, you master your state of Being. Circumstances no longer drain or destroy you. You trust in life and no longer fear "what may be".

### **L.O.V.E. Method of Conscious Leadership and Success**

As a high performer, you carry immense responsibility, from navigating constant demands to unexpected challenges. Others look to you to provide trusted leadership and steer a pathway forward that feels sustainable, safe and certain. In a world filled with chaos and distractions, how do you rise above the noise, break through barriers and create lasting success?

My L.O.V.E. Method is a universal tool that can be utilized for building confidence in oneself and in building personal and professional relationships. This method helps you master communication skills for sustainable growth and limitless success.

I developed my L.O.V.E. Method 30 years ago to not only help me on my journey, but to also help my clients regain confidence and get Centered, Connected, Conscious™ in their daily lives. By learning how to listen with focus in silence and stillness, rather than with assumptions and reactions, the L.O.V.E. Method helps build trust individually and in teams.

**The first step is to Listen:** Listen to your instincts, your intuition. Pause. Breathe. Create inner space for your empty mind. Honour your inner wisdom. This is the art of tuning in to the signals that guide you beyond logic and into clarity. When you listen deeply, you access insight that the logical mind alone cannot provide. You listen without judgement, expectation, or attachment to your ego or desires. Focused listening applies to both you and to others.

**The second step is to Observe:** Become the conscious observer of your life and leadership. When you observe without attachment, you free yourself from the mind's limitations. You create flow where breakthroughs happen with ease and new pathways emerge with alignment, for the highest good of all.

**The third step is to Validate:** Honour and acknowledge your experiences, accomplishments and progress. Do this for others as well. It is human nature to want to feel valued and heard. When you validate another person's experience without judgement, you build trust by honouring and valuing their worth, presence, contribution, and voice. Gratitude is a simple, powerful way to honour yourself and others.

**The fourth step is to Empower:** Once you listen, observe and validate, you affirm your ability to navigate life with confidence and to trust yourself. You know that you can find solutions, take actions, achieve your goals and turn any crisis or situation into success. This same process applies to personal relationships and team-building in the workplace. Feeling empowered not only keeps everyone motivated, it helps them stay energized, focused and open to share, communicate and support each other.

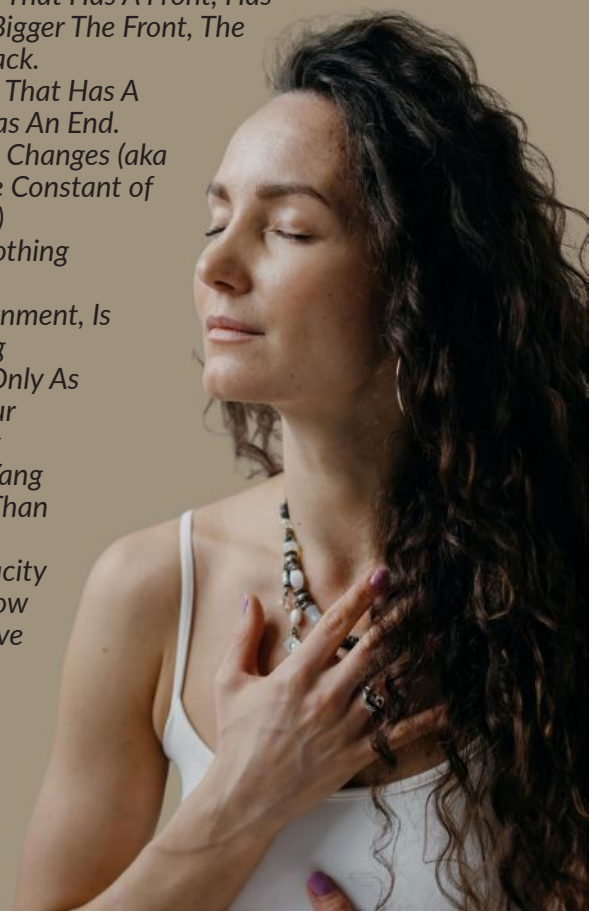
No one exists in isolation. Empowering people is a sustainable pathway to high-performance wellness with limitless potential, possibilities and success.

The L.O.V.E. Method cultivates focused presence. It is a powerful foundation for developing your intuition, preparing you to work more effectively with the 12 Ancient Universal Principles of Conscious Leadership and Success.

When your intuition is more highly developed, then the insights and guidance that you receive when working with these principles are more aligned, immediate and lasting. Each ancient principle is a tuning fork for your focused presence, a catalyst to catapult you to the heights of your ambitions and success.

### **12 Ancient Universal Principles**

1. *Everything is Energy*
2. *Energy Never Lies. You Can't Fool Mother Nature*
3. *For Every Problem, There Is A Solution*
4. *Everything That Happens To You Is What You Lack. All That Is Antagonistic, Unbearable, Is Complementary*
5. *Everything That Has A Front, Has A Back. The Bigger The Front, The Bigger The Back.*
6. *Everything That Has A Beginning, Has An End.*
7. *Everything Changes (aka Change is the Constant of The Universe)*
8. *There Is Nothing Identical*
9. *Divine Alignment, Is Divine Timing*
10. *You Are Only As Strong As Your Weakest Link*
11. *Yin and Yang Are Greater Than Willpower*
12. *The Capacity Principle: Know Your Limit, Live Within It™*





**"Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success." Swami Sivananda**

Success in any endeavor requires commitment, consistency, stability and focus. When you are grounded in your center, and know what you want, you are able to prioritize and adapt to change or crisis without the loss of time and energy from overwhelm. You can "turn on a dime" and hold the space for the next moment.

This ability to navigate rapid change is a high-level balancing act that is beyond mental strategy. It is the natural response of internal strength and resilience that comes from the center of your being. It is a reflection of your self-mastery.

The ancient expression "small saint on the mountain, big saint in the city" refers to the challenge of living with focused presence amid the distractions, stress, and overwhelm of daily life "in the city". To stay grounded, focused and energized in the midst of turbulent times and uncertain circumstances is a powerful accomplishment.

Focused presence is one of the secrets of the top 1% of visionary leaders, a superpower of conscious leadership and success. Recognizing ancient universal principle #1 "Everything Is Energy" in harmony with ancient universal principle #2 "Energy Never Lies, You Can't Fool Mother Nature" creates a powerful connection to the reality that your energy is always felt by others, whether consciously or subconsciously. With these ancient principles as guides, you reinforce the importance of being Centered, Connected, Conscious™ in everything you do.

As you master your focused presence, you become a living example of balance, trust and certainty. You live in the new paradigm of High Performance Wellness. You reclaim your sovereignty and become the conscious leader of your life and the world.

Join me for my next column, where I will continue to explore Moving Beyond Mindset With Ancient Universal Principles.



Lidia Kuleshnyk is a High Performance Wellness Coach, 4 X Best Selling Author and Founder of AponaHealing.com. As a Renaissance Woman and Thought Leader, Lidia offers pathways, for every stage of personal development, to help you reclaim your sovereignty and live a Centered, Connected, Conscious™ Life.

Connect with Lidia Kuleshnyk  
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# Why High-Quality Clients Are No Longer Responding to Most Brands

A quiet frustration is emerging among serious leaders, founders, and professionals. And it has nothing to do with budget, attention spans, or market saturation. High-quality clients are disengaging because most brands are no longer speaking to them. Not intellectually. Not ethically. Not strategically. Instead, they are being spoken at, through diluted messaging, over-familiarity, and a relentless push to be accessible to everyone. And when a brand tries to be for everyone, it quietly signals that it stands for very little.

## The Accessibility Myth

Accessibility has been sold as a virtue. In reality, unfiltered accessibility often erodes trust.

High-calibre clients do not look for:

1. **Constant reassurance**
2. **Over-explaining**
3. **Emotional oversharing**
4. **Performative vulnerability**

They look for:

1. **Discernment**
2. **Boundaries**
3. **Precision**
4. **Confidence without noise**

When a brand collapses too quickly, it doesn't feel relatable; it feels unstable.

## Consumers vs. Clients

One of the most important distinctions brands must make moving into 2026 is this: You are not building an audience. You are selecting a community.

Consumers want ease. Clients want excellence.

Consumers want to be convinced. Clients want to be respected.

Consumers ask, "What can this do for me?" Clients ask, "Is this aligned with how I think and operate?"

If your messaging is optimised for validation, you will attract dependency, not leadership.

## Why "Values-Led" Is Failing

Many brands claim to be values-led. Few are values-governed.

Values without boundaries become branding. Values without consequence become decoration.

High-quality clients are not impressed by statements; they watch behaviour. They listen for coherence. They notice what you tolerate.

Trust is built not through claims, but through consistency.

## Designing for Depth

Brands that attract high-calibre clients do a few things differently:

1. **They say less, but mean more**
2. **They don't over-explain their worth**
3. **They allow friction**
4. **They make standards visible**

Depth is not created by volume; it is created by intention. And intention shows up in who you say no to.

## The Role of Exclusivity

Exclusivity is not elitism. It is ethics. It protects the integrity of the work. It safeguards the community. It ensures alignment rather than accommodation. High-quality clients are not offended by standards; they are relieved by them.

## The 2026 Brand Shift

The brands that will thrive are not chasing attention; they are cultivating trust.

They understand that:

1. Not everyone is ready
  2. Not everyone belongs
  3. Not everyone should have access
- And that is not arrogance, it is leadership.

## Final Thought

If your brand feels exhausted, it may not need more visibility. It may need better boundaries. Because the most credible brands of the future will not shout, they will be recognised.

**By Shardia O'Connor**



[www.shadesofreality.co.uk](http://www.shadesofreality.co.uk)

# Self Care Corner

## The Beauty of Stillness: Practicing Mindfulness in a Hustle Culture

When it rained, my grandmother would tell us to sit down and be still. She'd say, "Calm your nerves."

As children, my sister and I thought she simply wanted quiet so she could enjoy watching the Chicago Cubs play. I remember hearing her lament when her favorite player, Sammy Sosa, would have a mediocre day. You could hear the faint sounds of her saying, "Come on, Sammy, get it together!"

I still remember the "7th Inning Stretch" featuring Harry Caray singing, which is the time-honored dedication to the team: "Take me out to the ball game, take me out with the crowd; Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack, I don't care if I never get back. Let me root, root, root for the home team; if they don't win, it's a shame. For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out, at the old ball game. Let's go, Cubs!" When the clouds gathered and the sky opened, we were told to take a nap and relax. I recall noticing the rhythm of the rain and the gentle hum of the raindrops hitting the windows. That was our moment of presence. Our moment of peace.

Today, when it rains, I still hear her voice — and I sit down and calm my nerves. We live in a world that celebrates being busy. Our worth often feels tied to how much we get done — how many meetings we have, how many emails we send, how quickly we respond. We wear exhaustion like a badge of honor. I had to unlearn that success isn't measured by late nights and pushing myself to the brink. But somewhere along the way, we forgot how to just be.

Stillness — that simple pause between doing and becoming — has become something rare. Even when we try to rest, we fill the quiet with

noise: the endless scrolling on our favorite apps, the news, or another to-do list.

Our bodies weren't built to be in constant motion. Always doing, always thinking, always "on." When we don't slow down, our nervous system stays stuck in survival mode — that fight-or-flight state that keeps us tense and restless. Over time, it can lead to anxiety, fatigue, and burnout.

Stillness is the antidote. It's not about doing nothing — it's about creating space to breathe again. When we slow down, we interrupt the cycle of constant doing and give our minds and bodies permission to rest and reset. Research has shown that even short moments of mindfulness can help lower stress hormones and calm the heart rate (Creswell et al., *Biological Psychology*, 2016). When you take time to be still, you're not being lazy — you're giving your body the care it needs.

When you begin to practice stillness, you'll notice how your body, mind, and spirit start to respond. You become more emotionally aware. Stillness gives you space to feel instead of reacting. Instead of pushing emotions away, you start to understand what they're trying to tell you.

• *You reconnect with your body. Many of us live "neck up," disconnected from what our bodies are feeling. Stillness helps you notice your breath, your heartbeat, your posture — the quiet messages your body sends all day long.*  
• *You awaken creativity and clarity. When your mind isn't racing, your best ideas finally have room to show up. Scientists have found that our brains become more creative when we rest or daydream — those quiet moments help us connect new thoughts and find fresh solutions (Beaty et al., *NeuroImage*, 2015).*

**'Stillness helps us reset. It reminds us that we're human beings — not just human doings.'**

Stillness helps us reset. It reminds us that we're human beings — not just human doings. Stillness isn't easy in a world that's always moving.

We're constantly being told to "grind," "push," and "stay busy." Especially for women in midlife who are juggling careers, family, and personal goals — it can feel like there's no room to stop. But constant motion doesn't always mean progress. Sometimes the most powerful move you can make is to pause. Hustle culture teaches us that rest is a reward. Stillness serves





***'When we don't slow down, our nervous system stays stuck in survival mode, over time, it can lead to anxiety, fatigue, and burnout.'***



as a reminder that everyone deserves to rest. You don't have to earn your peace. You deserve it simply because you exist. Stillness doesn't mean stepping away from ambition — it means staying grounded in who you are while you pursue it. It's about moving with intention rather than under pressure. You don't need a retreat or a yoga mat to practice stillness. You just need moments — little pockets of presence you build into your day.

Here are a few simple ways to start:

- 1. Morning Stillness.** Before you reach for your phone, take a few deep breaths. Sit for a moment, feel your feet on the floor, and take in the quiet before the day begins.
- 2. Mindful Transitions.** Between meetings or tasks, pause for 30 seconds. Close your eyes and ask, "What energy do I want to bring into this next moment?" These small pauses help your brain reset and refocus (Good et al., Journal of Management, 2016).
- 3. Set Digital Boundaries.** Choose one hour a day — or one day a week — to unplug. Step away from screens, notifications, and endless scrolling. Studies show that less screen time improves mood and focus (Twenge & Campbell, Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 2018).
- 4. Get Outside.** Spend a few minutes outdoors — no earbuds, no distractions. Notice the color of the sky, the sound of the wind, the way the air feels on your skin. Even 20 minutes in nature can lower stress hormones (Hunter et al., Frontiers in Psychology, 2019).
- 5. Savor the Little Things.** Mindfulness is simply being present. Sip your tea slowly. Feel the warmth of sunlight. Listen when someone speaks without rushing to respond. These small acts of attention anchor you in the moment.

Stillness can feel uncomfortable at first. You might sit down and immediately start thinking about everything you "should" be doing. That's normal — your mind is used to constant motion. We've been taught that slowing down is unproductive or even lazy. But if you stay with it, you'll realize that stillness isn't empty. It's packed — full of clarity, calm, and quiet truths that surface only when you stop running. When the noise quiets, you begin to see yourself more clearly — your feelings, your needs, your next step. That's where the transformation begins.

Stillness isn't just mental — it's deeply spiritual. It's in the quiet moments that we hear the voice of God, our intuition, or that calm inner knowing that guides us. Stillness reminds us that we're not alone, and that peace isn't something we chase

— it's something we return to. For me, that stillness has become sacred. It's where I breathe before big decisions, reflect after long days, and remember that I'm more than my titles, tasks, or to-do lists.

The world tells us to find balance. But balance doesn't come from doing more — it comes from doing less and listening more. Today, when it rains, I sit down and calm my nerves. It's more than nostalgia — it's a sacred memory. A reminder of what it means to pause. My grandmother's words still echo: Be still.

She knew what science now proves — that our bodies heal in rest, our minds clear in quiet, and our spirits grow stronger in peace. Stillness isn't about escaping life. It's about moving through it with grace. The beauty of stillness is that it doesn't ask you to change who you are. It just invites you to be here. To breathe. To listen. To trust that even in the pause, you are enough. The next time the world tells you to hurry, remember the sound of the rain. Remember the wisdom passed down through generations. And remember that sometimes, the most powerful act of self-care is the simplest one —

***To sit down.  
And be still.***

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# TIME TO HEAL

## TAKING CARE OF YOU THIS SEASON

It's that busy time of year where school activities are in full effect, holidays are around the corner, and daily routines sometimes feel never-ending. The days are becoming shorter, our calendars are becoming fuller, and time for ourselves often gets put on the back burner. It's a time of year that will simultaneously fill us with excitement, stress, joy and overwhelm. Ensuring we have an organized plan for our daily commitments and making preparations for the upcoming holidays, is both helpful and crucial this time of year. By doing so, we avoid an enormous amount of stress and make our holiday season a far more enjoyable and memorable one.

As we prepare our holiday menus, gift ideas, kids' schedules, etc., sometimes we are hit with unexpected curveballs that most of us are not prepared to deal with. These curveballs may feel like they come out of left field, when realistically, there are things that we know are approaching year after year.

We may not always encounter them, but they are there and will catch us off guard if we do not make time to care for ourselves. The Holiday season isn't the only thing we need to be ready for. This is a time of year when the flu and viruses thrive. When we become sick with the flu or other viruses, it often takes us by surprise, even though we are fully aware of it spreading around us, as it does year after year, like clockwork.

Being infected with a serious virus is unpleasant and can disrupt our lives and health for a long time. It can lead to major health issues and debilitating symptoms that linger long after the virus itself has left the building. The flu will come on very quickly, and there is no pushing through it. It will take anyone down and force us to stop everything until the virus has fully run its course. I recently experienced this myself, and it definitely caught me by surprise. It came at the worst possible moment, when I felt helpless and had no plan or resources to help me overcome it.

As a holistic coach, I do have an arsenal of supplements that can help my body through peak seasons of viruses and lessen the severity of the infection, as well as reduce the time it takes for my body to heal from it. Except, when I unexpectedly became sick with the flu virus this time, I didn't have access to any of my natural support, and truthfully, I wasn't providing myself with the extra boost and protection I usually do, which could have helped me fight off the exposure that caused me to get sick.

I recently traveled to New York to attend a reunion with an organization I was a part of my entire adolescence into adulthood. There was a tremendous amount of planning that went into making this reunion a success. I also had to make arrangements at home so that everything would be taken care of and running smoothly in my absence.

Prior to my trip, life here was busy as usual, and both my younger children were healing from strep throat and another virus they brought home from school. I felt as if I was exposed to some germs, and my doctor gave me an antibiotic before I left for my trip, just in case I needed it.

Normally, when exposed to a virus and/or bacterial infection, I ensure I am taking specific supplements that help boost my immune system, lower my viral load, and strengthen my body's resistance to avoid becoming sick. Last year, my little ones continuously came home from school with various viruses and illnesses that were contagious. I was proactive in taking care of my body, as I am their momma that they snuggle with and lean on to nurse them back to health. In doing so, I remained healthy and every time I was able to fully focus on getting them better.

I look back now realizing that this year, I did not take the steps I did before, and my exposure to their viruses was taking its toll. My viral load was increasing, my stress level was rising, and my immune system was weakening. Meanwhile, as I stated above, I was planning and preparing for my trip to New York. My time in NY was wonderful, seeing so many faces that forever hold a place in my heart, and all at home was well taken care of. As my weekend came to an end, I began to pack my things and was getting ready to head to the airport the next morning to return home.

As I packed, I began feeling off. I felt fatigued, nauseous, and my throat started to hurt a bit. I decided to finish packing in the morning and head to bed for a good night's sleep. I assumed I was simply run down from a long weekend of traveling and running around. I dozed off and was soon awakened by chills. I was so cold and still not feeling right. I went back to bed and fell asleep.

Throughout the night, I kept dreaming of burning up and freezing at the same time. When I awakened in the early morning, I realized I wasn't dreaming at all. I was burning up with a very high temperature, I was unbearably nauseous, and I couldn't take anything for my fever, and my body was so lethargic and achy, I could barely move from the bed!

All the preparation for this trip, down to every last detail, but nothing prepared me for this. I never considered the fact that I would likely be exposed to a lot of viruses and could become this ill while traveling. There was no way I could get to the airport and go home. I could barely get myself out of bed and to the bathroom!

I was in tears, not knowing which way to turn next. I needed my flight changed and my hotel stay extended. I hadn't been this sick in a long time.





***'The average person may take extra vitamins, but isn't otherwise aware of much else they can do to naturally support themselves through the holidays, travel, or any other high-stress time of their lives.'***



I remember feeling this way with identical symptoms six years ago when I caught strain A of the flu on the same day that my father passed away. I was in bad shape to say the least back then, and feeling that way now brought back the same worries, as I had no way to help myself while stuck in a hotel, far away from home.

The flu virus usually hits us hard and quickly; this time was no exception. When I had strain A of the flu six years ago, I became dangerously ill and almost collapsed at my own father's funeral service. It was so severe that I had to lie down in the car at the church, where I fell asleep fast. I missed the burial of my own father and had to be driven home to try and fight it off.

At the time, my health was already compromised with autoimmune diseases and the extremely painful and life-altering experience of losing my dad. I was also completely unaware of how I could support my body, especially through such a traumatic time. My body was overwhelmed and couldn't fight the way it can today. This time around, I was in a much better place, both physically and emotionally, to fight this off. The flu is a respiratory virus, and I could feel it attacking my ability to breathe normally. I felt congested and constricted and too weak to do anything about it.

I know I couldn't have predicted this happening to me, but considering the time of year we are in and the amount of germs we encounter while traveling, I was frustrated with myself because I knew there was so much I could have done to prevent this from happening and or help myself in the moment if it happens.

I had an entire anti-viral, respiratory and immune support system that would give me the relief I needed. Everything anyone would need to support their bodies through this, lower their viral loads and keep their airways open was at my fingertips in my home. But, there was no way of getting me to an airport this way, and there was no way to retrieve the supplement support that would help me fight this because none of it comes from over-the-counter products.

I could have gotten over-the-counter supplies, but I know how poor the quality is, how additives are snuck in and how little our bodies can actually absorb any of them. There are so many reasons why over-the-counter products are a waste of money and do not support our health, but that is another story in itself. I was stuck at this hotel, sick, alone and frustrated. I was becoming consumed with guilt because my little ones wanted me home so badly. I couldn't stop crying for a while, but then paused for a moment and realized that my response to what was happening was just as crucial as any form of medicine I could provide for my body.

I paused and began to observe the situation from the outside in. I could continue to cry, panic and stress over the numerous things that were upsetting me, or I could stop and breathe for a moment, remembering how vital my emotional health and nervous system state is when my body is in need of healing. I was able to regain enough strength to return home soon, and the second I walked in the door, I went straight to my kitchen to gather everything I knew my body would benefit from. It didn't take long before I was fever-free and overcoming the vicious virus that could certainly have detrimental effects.

It would have been ideal to take several of these supplements before exposure, but I couldn't go back and change anything, and there was no point in dwelling on it. I could, though, look back and learn from this situation. Our lives are constantly moving, and when we feel okay, we tend to put off doing things for ourselves and our bodies that help us maintain our health and build strength. Taking extra steps to provide for ourselves is a habit we need to get into year-round, but it's especially important during flu and holiday seasons.

As I write this, I understand that most people aren't sure what they can or should do to help themselves. The average person may take extra vitamins, but isn't otherwise aware of much else they can do to naturally support themselves through the holidays, travel, or any other high-stress time of their lives. Below is a list of supplements I personally use for my family and me as we enter the major flu seasons of the year.

**Disclaimer:** The list is NOT intended to be medical advice, and supplements mentioned will not cure, prevent or treat any disease/illness. Please speak to your doctor before starting any new supplements.

### My Top Supplement Choices for Flu/Virus Seasons:

**1. Oregano Oil:** This is a natural antimicrobial and has anti-viral properties. I take this if I know I have been exposed to any viruses or if I am feeling any type of early symptom. Oregano oil can help lower your viral load and assist in the prevention of viral replication.

**2. Liquid Liposomal Vitamin C:** We all know that Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that is a great boost for our immune system. By taking Liposomal Vitamin C, the liposomal technology allows the vitamin direct access into the cell, unlike other forms of vitamin C, which have little to no impact on our overall well-being because they are made with low-quality, cheap ingredients that our bodies cannot absorb and/or utilize.

**3. Turmeric and Black Pepper liquid supplement:** Turmeric is known for its anti-inflammatory properties that also support our immune system and digestive health. The combination of Turmeric and Black Pepper is a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory combination. By combining the two, we can increase its bioavailability by up to 2000%. Absorption is increased because the black pepper slows down the liver's metabolism of curcumin (Turmeric's active compound). Inflammation is the driving force behind most diseases today, and the symptoms we will face. Lowering inflammation is crucial in everyday life, especially during our most vulnerable seasons.

**4. IgG Supplement by Just Thrive:** When we are exposed to viruses or our bodies detect something that doesn't belong, our body releases antibodies (aka immunoglobulins) as the first defense to ward off these unwanted visitors. Immunoglobulins make up approximately 80% of our immune system's defence. When our bodies are under stress, it begins to make less of the IgG that protects us, which makes us more prone to getting sick. By taking this supplement, especially during high stress times and or busy times of our life, we help our bodies by increasing their ability to fight off unwanted invaders, and give ourselves a boost to prevent and or overcome being sick.

**5. Spore Biotics:** The GUT. I am sure most have seen plenty about the power of our GUT. If you haven't, I urge you to begin researching the numerous reasons why a focus on our gut health is always important. I choose spore biotics because the spores act like beneficial fertilizer and can withstand harsh environments. Meaning, sporebiotics can bypass our stomach acid and get to our intestines,



*'There is no magic cure or one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to our health and well-being.'*



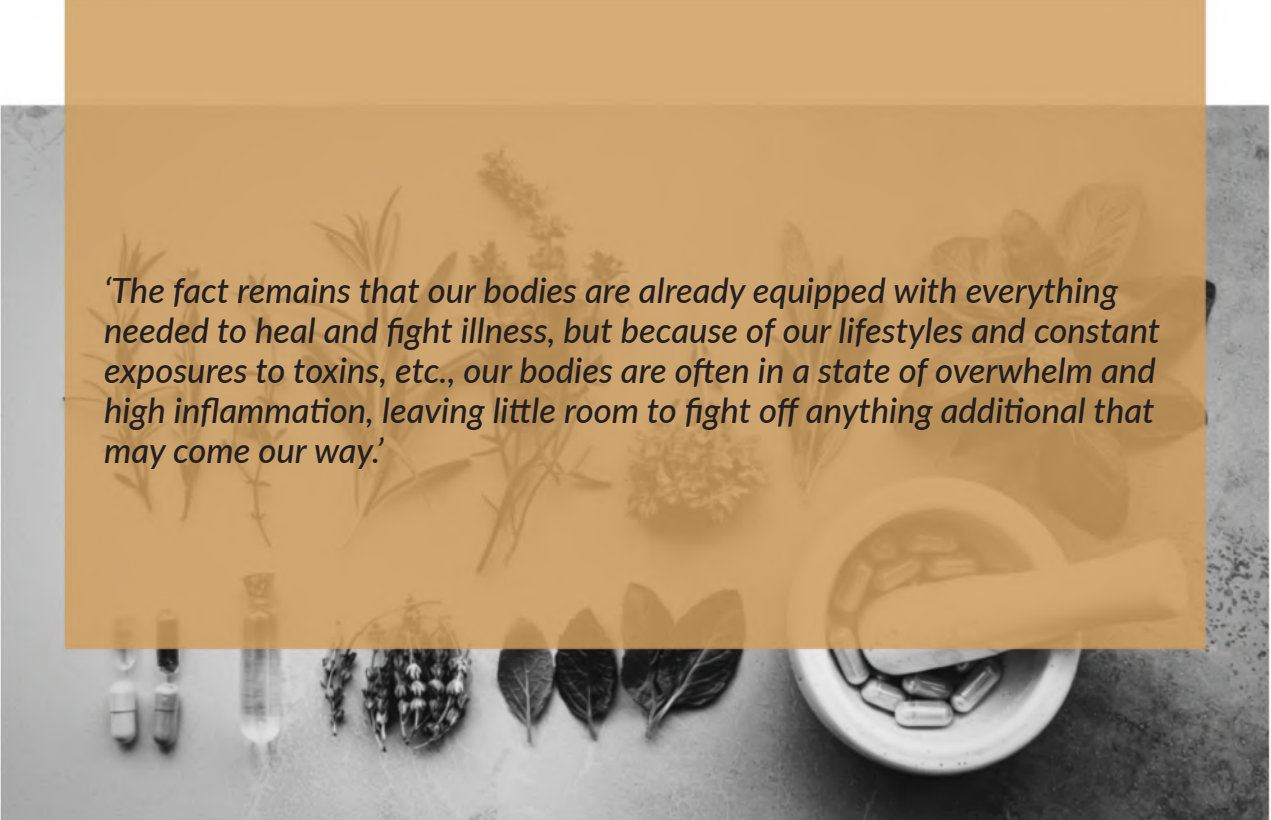
when other probiotics often cannot survive our stomach's environment, thus not providing us with the benefits we expected them to.

**6. Quercetin:** This is a plant-based antioxidant found in many fruits and vegetables. It supports a healthy immune response when dealing with allergies and illness, and is an overall fantastic way to support our health. I personally love its antihistamine effects, as it helps calm down the excessive mucus production when I am sick.

**7. Mullein Leaf:** This is another natural supplement that is an incredible support for our Respiratory Health. You can get this in a tea, but I prefer the liquid form that goes right into 2oz of fluid and is very easy to absorb.

All of the above helps the body and immune system by providing strength, balance and anti-inflammatory support. Along with supplements, I also pay attention to my stress levels, the foods I consume and the environment I am in.





*'The fact remains that our bodies are already equipped with everything needed to heal and fight illness, but because of our lifestyles and constant exposures to toxins, etc., our bodies are often in a state of overwhelm and high inflammation, leaving little room to fight off anything additional that may come our way.'*

As I always say, there is no magic cure or one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to our health and well-being. Never expect to find that one thing that will miraculously heal you. The fact remains that our bodies are already equipped with everything needed to heal and fight illness, but because of our lifestyles and constant exposures to toxins, etc., our bodies are often in a state of overwhelm and high inflammation, leaving little room to fight off anything additional that may come our way.

This time of year, it's inevitable that many different germs and viruses will likely come our way. I didn't consider the risks of illness when I went on my trip to New York, but I was quickly reminded of them. It was certainly a wake-up call and a reminder for me to ensure I am being proactive in supporting my body and immune system all year round, especially during the peak flu and virus seasons.

The holidays are a wonderful and joyous time of year, but also come with high stress and high exposure to viruses. That high stress lessens our ability to remain healthy and fight off the viruses we often encounter. It's perhaps the most wonderful time of year, but also the most vulnerable.

When we are aware of our vulnerabilities, we can then take action and prepare to support ourselves and our bodies. While the holiday shopping and preparations commence, don't forget to prepare your body and mind as well.

Your attention to yourself can make your holiday season beautiful, with a stronger ability to prevent sickness and a line of support if you do become sick.

Wishing you, your families and loved ones a very healthy, happy and peaceful holiday season!

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# 10 ways You're Sabotaging Yourself (and How to Stop It)!

You've been reading all the self-help books, saying your daily affirmations, getting your steps in, but you still feel stuck. It's like you're taking two steps forward and one step back. Every time you think you're making progress, you find yourself caught back in that same spiral. That's because you're repeating the same unconscious behaviours that hold you back. You keep accidentally sabotaging yourself without even realizing it.

It's okay, beautiful, we all do it, even life coaches like me. I see these patterns in my life coaching clients, and I help them to recognize what's happening, so they can make different choices instead, to do things that take them closer to their goals. The great news is you, too, can see how you're sabotaging yourself, learn to stop it, and how to get what you want in life.

## 10 Of the Most Common Ways You're Sabotaging Yourself — And What to Do Instead.



### 1. Putting yourself last on the list

By the end of the day, you're drained and barely have the energy to crawl into bed before doing it all again tomorrow. So many women come to me for coaching because they're burned out from endlessly pouring from an empty cup.

How to stop it: Put at least one thing for you at the very top of your to-do list each day.



### 2. Expecting people to be mind readers

You feel unheard or unseen, but you've never actually said what you need. Before working with me, one of my clients was hoping her partner would know she felt neglected and start making more time if she just kept waiting patiently.

How to stop it: First, get clear on what you actually want. Then ask for it with kindness and compassion.



### 3. Avoiding hard conversations

You're hoping that the troublesome employee will retire soon, so you avoid addressing her toxic behavior. It's eating away at you, and each day you put it off, that conversation feels so much harder.

How to stop it: Stop labelling these conversations as hard. Reframing them as loving conversations makes them easier to step into.



### 4. Being the safety net for everyone else

You're there to babysit the grandkids at the last minute, to work a double when your colleague calls in sick again, to mend the team's kit the night before a tournament. You are always being helpful because you want them to like you. But do they like you for who you are, or what you do for them?

How to stop it: Notice when you're people-pleasing. Practice not volunteering before you're even asked, and saying no when you are.



### 5. Wearing busyness as a badge of honour

I used to be proud that I worked 12-hour days, didn't take lunch breaks, and sent emails during my acupuncture sessions. Until I crashed.

Humans are not designed to run on cortisol and adrenaline long-term. It is essential that you give your central nervous system breaks to reset. How to stop it: Schedule at least 15 minutes of downtime every day where you simply get to be.





### 6. Doing everything yourself

You tell yourself it's quicker if you do it yourself, and so you're up until 1 am assembling packages for the big meeting. You won't let your husband load the dishwasher because he'll do it wrong, so you're slamming things around in the kitchen.

How to stop it: Test your assumption that only you can do it right. Teach someone else the task and empower them — it's far more fulfilling than running yourself ragged.



### 7. Second-guessing yourself

When we first start working together, a lot of my clients want me to tell them what to do. They say they don't know whether to quit the job that's making them cry or leave the relationship that feels hollow. Deep down, they know the answer, but don't trust themselves anymore.

How to stop it: Stop outsourcing your choices for permission. Learn how your intuition speaks to you — notice what feels like a "yes" and what feels like a "no."



### 8. Perfectionism

You're overthinking everything, trying to figure out how to get it exactly right. Maybe you spend days fiddling with the charts and grammar in that big report. Or you're procrastinating with 'research' and leave it until the last minute.

How to stop it: Remember: Cs get degrees. Deliver the minimum viable product and let "done" be enough.



### 9. Waiting for the perfect time

You've always wanted to walk the Camino de Santiago, but waited until the kids were done with school, then COVID hit, and now you're worried you aren't fit enough to do it. It's been 20 years, and your dream feels like it will never happen. And it won't, unless you stop waiting.

How to stop it: Accept that perfect timing doesn't exist. Decide what you want and commit to when you'll start.



### 10. Dismissing your achievements

A client at my retreat said she didn't do anything important. It turns out she was doing plenty, but not counting any of it. Sending the kids to school with lunch, getting them to their sports events, bookkeeping for her husband's business, and organizing her monthly book club are all achievements worth recognizing.

How to stop it: Take a moment to celebrate your wins — no matter how small. Recognizing progress keeps you moving forward.

The truth is, these patterns are sneaky. They show up in the smallest choices — how you talk to yourself, how you fill your time, how you ask for help. But awareness changes everything.

### **You Aren't Failing, You're Learning.**

Likely, you recognize a few of these self-sabotaging behaviours. Don't judge yourself harshly; they are all very common. Self-awareness is the first step on your transformation journey. Now you know how you're sabotaging yourself, you can begin to change your behaviour. Self-sabotage isn't failure; it's an opportunity to learn, adjust your course, and track 1 degree closer to your ultimate destination.

Just as you learned these habits, you can unlearn them. You have the power to redefine your reality, to choose your path, to get the life you want. It all starts with one small step. Start small. Pick one self-sabotaging behaviour and think about how you can change it. Then find the very smallest step towards that change. Commit to making that change for yourself right now. I believe in you, beautiful.

*Emma Hull is a Life Coach, Speaker, and Author of **Your Goddess Era: A Step-by-Step Guide to Reinvention**. She empowers you to take back control of your life, one relationship at a time - starting with you! Sign up for Emma's inspirational emails and find out how to work with her at [www.lifeuntethered.com](http://www.lifeuntethered.com)*

By Emma Hull



# BENEATH THE SNOW, THE SOUL STIRS: WINTER'S QUIET INVITATION TO RETURN TO YOUR SOUL



Winter carries a beauty unlike any other season. The air cools, the days soften, and the world seems to exhale into stillness. Even in places where snow never falls, this time of year brings a natural pause — a moment between the past and the future where life slows just enough for something deeper to be heard.

In the quiet of winter, a subtle inner shift begins. Something softens. Something awakens. Something inside us stirs — gently, insistently — asking to be remembered. This seasonal turning mirrors one of the most powerful truths in emotional and spiritual well-being: the return to the soul begins not with grand transformation, but with quiet recognition. Winter invites us into this recognition. It gives us the space to listen.

And for many, it is the first time all year that the whisper of the soul can finally rise above the noise of everyday life.

## **The Stillness of Winter: A Natural Reset for the Mind and Heart**

While the world often associates winter with celebration and festivity, the season itself carries a much deeper psychological and emotional rhythm.

Research on seasonal cycles shows that winter naturally encourages:

- **Introspection:** shorter days reduce external stimulation and increase internal awareness.
- **Restoration:** the nervous system shifts toward slower, more reflective patterns.
- **Emotional processing:** memories, longings, and unresolved feelings surface more easily.
- **Clarity:** reduced sensory overload allows for greater mental focus.

Across cultures, winter has traditionally been seen as a time for reflection and renewal — a pause before the emergence of spring. Modern wellness research now supports what ancient wisdom already knew: seasonal stillness helps regulate the nervous system, reduce stress, and create space for deeper emotional clarity.

*'When external life becomes quieter, the internal landscape begins to speak.'*

## **Why the Soul Speaks More Clearly in Winter**

In my work as a soul-centered practitioner, I often describe intuition and soul communication as "whispers." The soul does not push, pressure, or demand.

*It invites.*

*It nudges.*

*It breathes through subtleties.*

Winter is the one season that naturally amplifies these subtleties.

The softer light, the slower pace, the quieter evenings — they form the perfect backdrop for the inner voice to emerge. This is not a coincidence. It is coherence. When life slows, the mind loosens its grip. When noise decreases, the heart begins to rise.

Winter creates an emotional environment where people can finally notice:

- *the inner fatigue they have been ignoring*
- *the longing for meaning beneath their routine*
- *the intuition that keeps whispering for change*
- *the parts of themselves they abandoned to keep going*

These are not signs of imbalance.

They are signs of awakening.

As one season closes, another begins — not only outside, but within.

## **The Inner Return: A Journey Many Delay Until They're Forced to Pause**

For much of the year, most of us live outwardly. We move quickly. We make decisions. We fulfill responsibilities. We adapt. We perform.

But in that outward momentum, something subtle often happens: we disconnect from our inner world. We lose sight of the self beneath identity, roles, expectations, and stress.





Winter disrupts that pattern.  
Not harshly — but gently.

*It slows us down.*

*It brings us inward.*

*It invites us to look at what has been overlooked.*

Psychologically, this is a crucial shift. Studies on emotional regulation and mindfulness show that periods of reflection enhance:

- *self-awareness*
- *emotional resilience*
- *decision-making clarity*
- *mental calm*
- *intuitive accuracy*

In soul work, this reflective state marks the beginning of what I call the Path of Soul Remembrance™ — the first step of returning to the truth beneath the layers of life. Winter naturally activates this step.

### **Beneath the Surface, Something Ancient Awakens**

Think of nature in winter.

Trees appear dormant, but in truth, they are preparing.

Seeds lie hidden, but deep within, new life is forming.

Silence settles — yet it is a living silence, full of potential.

Humans are no different.

Underneath our winter quiet, the same stirring happens.

Not towards productivity.

Not towards resolutions.

But towards remembrance.

You may notice:

- *a pull towards journaling or reflection*
- *a desire for solitude*
- *a longing for deeper conversations*
- *an urge to reconnect with your inner truth*
- *a sense that something needs to shift, even if you don't know what*

This is the soul moving — softly, naturally — beneath the surface of your daily life.

Just as snow blankets the earth and protects what is becoming, winter protects the delicate early stages of your inner return. The return to your soul does not begin with certainty. It begins with noticing.

### **Embracing the Inner Light: A Psychological and Spiritual Renewal**

While festive lights illuminate homes and cities, winter also illuminates the unseen light within us — the one that dims when we are overwhelmed, disconnected, or emotionally exhausted.

Multiple studies on human thriving show that inner-balance practices — meditation, breathwork, reflection, and intuitive listening — increase heart-brain coherence and improve emotional health. Winter gives us the ideal environment to activate these practices with greater ease.

In soul-centered language, coherence is the state in which:

- *your mind becomes quiet*
- *your heart becomes open*
- *your body softens*
- *your soul becomes audible*

This is why winter feels like an emotional reset.

It doesn't push you to change.

It prepares you to hear what needs to change.

It restores the quiet confidence that you have not lost yourself — you have simply forgotten where to listen.

### **A Season for Gentle Transformation, Not Perfection**

As the new year approaches, many people focus on external goals: fitness, productivity, career changes, and habits. While these aspirations have value, winter invites a different type of beginning — an inner one.

Instead of asking,

*"What should I achieve?"*

Winter asks,

*"Who am I becoming?"*

Instead of asking,

*"What do I need to fix?"*

Winter whispers,

*"What part of me needs to return?"*

This shift — from pressure to presence — is the heart of emotional and spiritual renewal.

Transformation does not begin with force.

It begins with softness.

It begins with coming home.

### **A Gentle Invitation for Your Own Season of Return**

If this winter feels different — quieter, more reflective, more tender — trust that.

It may be the first sign that your soul is stirring, reaching for you through the stillness.

This season is offering you:

- *space to breathe*
- *permission to slow down*
- *a moment to hear yourself again*
- *an opening to reconnect with your inner wisdom*

Whether you feel a subtle pull or a strong inner longing, consider this your winter invitation:

**Return to your soul.**

**Return to the truth beneath the noise.**

**Return to the part of you that has been waiting.**

Your soul is not asking for perfection.

It is asking for presence.

### **A Warm Closing — and a Path for Those Ready to Begin**

If this article resonated with something deep within you — a whisper, a remembering, a soft turning inward — you are already on the first steps of the inner return.

And if you feel ready to walk this path with support, I invite you to join:

The Path of Soul Remembrance™ — a 4-week online journey back to your soul, designed to help you reconnect with your inner voice, create emotional safety and stillness, understand the language of your soul, gently awaken your intuition, and begin the profound journey of soul remembrance. It is a soft, sacred beginning — the perfect companion for winter's contemplative season. Let this winter be the moment you return to the place within you that never forgot who you are.

Because beneath every layer of life, beneath every winter of the heart, your soul is still stirring — waiting, quietly, to be heard.

**By Dr Margit Gabriele Muller**



# Why Spiritual Awakening Feels Lonely and How to Navigate It

Over the past couple of months, I've noticed a significant shift. An increasing number of people have been reaching out, often expressing feelings of being "off," unsettled, or deeply uncomfortable in themselves. There seems to be a heavy intensity in the air, as if something larger is moving beneath the surface. The recent eclipse stirred collective energies, illuminating what has quietly lingered in the background. The world is subtly yet significantly changing, and many are starting to sense this shift.

At its core, spiritual awakening is about becoming more aware of your inner self, your energy, and the deeper patterns shaping your thoughts, emotions, and choices. It involves noticing things previously unseen, questioning outdated beliefs, and feeling a heightened connection to life. While often portrayed as a clear and purposeful path, the early stages can feel disorienting and lonely.

For centuries, natural ways of perceiving and knowing have been sidelined. We don't question if someone is left- or right-handed; we accept it as natural. However, when it comes to seeing patterns others miss or sensing the invisible, it feels unusual—sometimes even wrong. Our systems tend to value conformity over uniqueness and logic over instinct. Recently, though, more people are awakening, noticing subtle rhythms and undercurrents of energy. This awakening can feel disorienting, but it signifies something larger is unfolding.

As you begin to recognize life's rhythms or question familiar ideas, the world may seem unfamiliar. While friends and colleagues continue their routines, your inner experience stretches in ways they may not recognize. You may start seeing patterns or truths that others don't, making even simple social interactions feel exhausting or isolating.

I understand this well. As a child, I perceived colors and movements around people that others couldn't see, assuming everyone experienced the world similarly

until reactions from adults made me doubt myself. I quickly learned that being different could make others uncomfortable. Years later, after losing a sibling and facing my health challenges, I felt that sense of otherness return. Spiritual awakening often peels back the familiar, leaving spaces that once felt safe feeling small and isolating.

This loneliness isn't a flaw; it's a signal. It's your soul asking you to stop leaning on the familiar and build a deeper relationship with yourself. Awakening encourages you to tune inward, notice what resonates, and question the patterns you've unconsciously adopted. While this process can feel uncomfortable and heavy, think of it like a snake shedding its skin: the outdated version of you is falling away, making room for a new, evolved self. In this light, solitude becomes preparation—a quiet yet powerful stage of growth.

Preparation doesn't necessitate isolation. Part of the journey involves learning to navigate between solitude and connection, remembering that this experience is shared across time and cultures. Spiritual seekers have traversed this distance, from mystics meditating alone to intuitive practitioners navigating busy modern life. Loneliness can be the crucible in which clarity, wisdom, and self-trust are forged.

Connection remains essential. Seek communities that honor inner experience over conformity. Whether through spiritual circles, online communities, mentorship, or workshops, finding individuals who resonate with even a fraction of your experience can be incredibly validating. You don't need everyone to understand you; just a few who truly do.

Integration is another vital step. Awakening is not merely a series of mystical moments; it's about incorporating insights into daily life. Activities like journaling, creative expression, mindful movement, or intuitive practices can help translate inner experiences into practical understanding. As we weave our inner lessons into everyday life, feelings of isolation begin to soften, and solitude becomes fertile rather than empty.

Perhaps most importantly, this journey calls for compassion—for yourself and the world around you. Awakening challenges old identities and expectations, making the familiar uncomfortable while inviting the new. Allowing yourself grace during this transition helps embrace both solitude and connection as natural and necessary parts of the journey.

Awakening may feel lonely, but it opens the door to profound self-knowledge. Becoming fully present with your experiences allows you to navigate this path with greater awareness and authenticity. You are not alone in this process; many are walking similar journeys, seeking understanding and connection. Embracing this collective experience can enrich your path and illuminate the transformative power of both solitude and community.

By Lisa Andrews

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# Intimacy Begins With You:

## How Self Connection Fuels True Empowerment

by Lorraine Chapman



Intimacy is often seen as something that exists only between two people, but the truth is that it begins with the relationship you have with yourself. It is how you listen to your emotions, honour your needs, and show up for yourself even on the days when life feels messy or overwhelming.

When you deepen self-connection, you begin to feel a more natural sense of empowerment that does not rely on achievements or outside approval. It grows from the inside and becomes something steady and reliable that you can always return to.

### Speak to Yourself with Love

The first step in building this intimacy is becoming aware of the way you speak to yourself. Your inner voice can be supportive or the biggest drain on your confidence. Many people walk through life with an internal critic that comments on everything they do.

Learning to soften this voice is a powerful act of self-love. When you catch yourself using criticism or pressure, pause and offer a kinder message. Try something like, "I am learning," "I am doing my best," or "I understand why this feels difficult." These simple shifts create space inside you where compassion can grow. Over time, that compassion becomes a foundation of strength.

### Listen to Your Body

Another beautiful part of self-intimacy is reconnecting with your body. Your body speaks constantly through sensation. It tells you when you are tired, hungry, anxious, excited, or overwhelmed. It gives you signals long before your mind understands what is happening. Many people learn to ignore these signals because they were trained to keep pushing, keep pleasing, or keep performing.

A gentle way to rebuild this connection is to pause during the day and notice how your body feels. Check your breath. Notice tension. Notice warmth. Notice if your stomach feels tight or relaxed. This awareness brings you back into your physical self and helps you make choices that support your wellbeing.

### Let Boundaries Support You

Healthy boundaries also grow naturally when you feel connected to yourself. Boundaries can feel uncomfortable when you are unsure of your needs or when you fear disappointing others. But when you have a clear sense of what feels right and what does not, boundaries become expressions of self-respect. You begin to say no without guilt and yes without resentment. You create space in your relationships where honesty can flourish. Boundaries are not barriers. They are loving invitations that show people how to meet you in a way that feels good for both of you.

### Honour Your Desires

Desire is another important part of self-intimacy. Desire is not only about sensuality or physical pleasure. It is also about creativity, rest, joy, curiosity, adventure, and emotional connection. Desire shows you what brings life to your spirit.

Many people push away their desires because they fear judgement or believe they should be satisfied with less. Spend some time exploring what you truly long for. Ask yourself what you want more of. Ask yourself what you miss. Ask yourself what lights you up. Even acknowledging your desires is an act of empowerment because it tells your inner world that your truth matters.

### Make Space for Presence

Presence is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to deepen intimacy with yourself. You do not need long meditation practices or complicated rituals. Tiny daily moments can make an enormous difference. Take a few breaths before you start your morning. Sit quietly for a minute when you feel overwhelmed.

Enjoy a warm drink without rushing. Place a hand on your heart when emotions rise. Stretch before bed. These small rituals bring you back into the moment and remind you that you deserve your own attention. Presence is a kindness you offer yourself again and again.

### Empowerment Starts Within

As you deepen your self-connection, you might notice that your relationships with others begin to change. You communicate more clearly. You express your needs without apology. You listen with more openness because you are not running on emotional empty.

You make choices that feel aligned with your well-being rather than those based solely on habit or expectation. This is what empowerment feels like. It is not loud. It is not forceful. It is a calm sense of knowing who you are and what you need.

The beauty of self-intimacy is that it always grows. You do not need perfection. You need presence, honesty, and compassion. Every time you listen to your body, soften your self-talk, honour your desires, or protect your energy, you strengthen your relationship with yourself. You become someone you can trust. You become someone you can rely on. And that inner relationship becomes the foundation for a more empowered and authentic life.

You deserve to feel connected. You deserve to feel supported. You deserve to feel at home within yourself. And every small moment of self-intimacy brings you closer to that loving and empowered place.



# The Magic of Hip

## The Power of Real Connection

When a friend suggested a guided holiday earlier this year, my first thought was, Ugh. I imagined trailing behind someone waving a tiny flag, being told when to eat, what to see, and when to get back on the bus. Not my idea of fun. But then it struck me — I hadn't had a real holiday in over 30 years. Not the kind where you truly switch off, explore, and let yourself be. My so-called "holidays" were usually tied to work. I'd seen the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Bahamas — but I was always on duty. I was there, but not present. This time, I said yes. My intention was simple: rest, fun, and freedom.

### Enter Hip

She introduced herself with a grin: "Hip — like hip-hop." From that moment, I knew she was special. Vibrant, warm, funny — she radiated life. Hip was the conductor, and we were the orchestra. She guided us for just four days of a 17-day Vietnam adventure, yet her presence transformed the journey.

She brought together travellers from the Philippines, Colombia, Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Australia — complete strangers who soon felt like lifelong friends. Her leadership wasn't about control or authority. It was her openness, her laughter, her way of making everyone feel seen. She had us hanging on her every word — even the ones she spoke at 7 a.m. as we stumbled sleepily onto the bus.

### The Power of Vulnerability

One morning, Hip shared her story. She told us she had three children — and that she'd kicked her husband out. She explained how, during Vietnam's long school holidays, she often had to work. With no childcare available, she sometimes had to lock her children inside her house to keep them safe.

### *You could have heard a pin drop.*

For a moment, judgment flickered — you can't do that! — but it quickly dissolved. Her courage, her honesty, and her unflinching warmth disarmed us. Vulnerability does that. It opens a door that judgment can't walk through. Because Hip spoke so authentically — without apology or shame — something shifted in the group. We were no longer tourists. We were connected humans, united by compassion and respect.

That night at dinner, the conversation turned to her story. People said they felt moved, inspired, and strangely lighter — as though her honesty had freed something in them, too.

### Moments That Stay

Later in the trip, we took the world's longest cable car up to Ba Na Hills. Ours was the yellow one, gliding high above a lush, green valley that looked almost enchanted. When we reached the top, the famous Golden Bridge shimmered in the mist. Only a few of us continued the steep path to the 27-metre white marble Buddha overlooking Da Nang. Standing at his base, I tilted my head back, completely in awe of his presence. And once again, I thought of Hip. What if we all lived like that — open, brave, willing to share not just the polished parts, but the messy truths too?

### Leading with Heart

When we show up authentically, we give others permission to do the same. When we lead with vulnerability, we create a sense of belonging. And when we choose joy — even in the face of challenge — we make the kind of magic that lingers long after the moment passes. What stays with me most from that 17-day trip isn't the scenery, the food, or even the serenity of the Buddha. It's Hip. She was raw, honest, funny, and full of heart — a living reminder that leadership doesn't always come from a title. Sometimes, it comes from a story, a smile, and the courage to be fully yourself.

### The World Needs More Hips

What began as resistance — my reluctance to join a guided tour, to travel with strangers, to step outside my comfort zone — became something deeply human. The truth is that the world needs more Hips.

People who remind us that even across divides — of culture, gender, or circumstance — we can always find our way back to each other.

*Bless you, Hip, for making a difference.*

**By Mary Scott**





# THE FEAR OF FRICTION LEARNING TO LIVE WITH CONFLICT

From an early age, we're taught to avoid conflict. We're told it's better to stay quiet and keep the peace, or not to raise our voice, even though deep down we know certain situations demand that we do. The reality is that healthy debate and discussion are the foundation of good relationships. We don't have to agree with everyone all the time, but if we feel we can never express our opinion for fear of conflict, this means we end up suppressing who we are. When we cannot be our authentic selves, it leads to resentment and is very destructive to our relationships, which, after all, are built on honesty and trust. We can become conflict-avoidant, people-pleasers, tending to have weaker boundaries and be more easily manoeuvred by others.

This is a recurring pattern in my work with clients navigating relationship break-down, loss, and life transitions. After spending years acting submissively in their relationship and putting everyone else's needs before their own, they feel resentful and downtrodden from having to conceal their true feelings. But you can't build an authentic connection on suppressed truth.

Psychologically, our brains are wired to avoid threat, and social tension activates the same stress pathways as physical danger. Many of us also grew up equating disagreement with rejection. How many of us were told not to say anything if we could not find something nice to say? This means we started suppressing our true thoughts, which can ultimately lead to a loss of self if we constantly compromise how we feel to make others feel better.

How we communicate with others impacts how they communicate with us. If we are passive and stay quiet, the issue may go away in the short term, but we are likely to feel resentment, and that builds over the longer term, the more we behave this way. Some may be seen as passive-aggressive, not speaking out directly but making sarcastic remarks or little jibes to get their point across, which does not benefit them or others.

Then there are those who are aggressive and communicate with others in a way that can be dismissive and totally disrespectful of the other person's needs, and trample all over them. People who are assertive can express their views clearly and directly and are respectful of another person's view, while all the time maintaining their stance. Assertiveness may be the preferred communication style, but there are situations where it isn't safe or appropriate to engage. In abusive relationships, especially those involving narcissists or sociopaths, direct confrontation is not recommended, as being assertive in these cases can escalate the situation.

Our boundaries represent what we will and won't tolerate. Assertiveness is the way we communicate our boundaries. Having good boundaries means being able to say "No" to something without feeling bad about it and not being persuaded otherwise. Setting boundaries is essential for all of us.



By Celia Conrad

Are all people who are confrontational aggressive? No. Often, confrontational behaviour is a mask. It could be out of fear of being perceived as weak, or for self-protection to avoid appearing vulnerable. It could be down to a lack of self-confidence and not wanting anyone to get too close to find out their weaknesses.

We talk about "picking our battles", and sometimes it's better to let things go and focus our energies on what serves us best. And that will depend on the scenario. For example, is it something that would compromise our integrity or well-being, or impact an ongoing relationship in which honest dialogue could lead to clarity and understanding?

If you need to have a difficult conversation, wait until you are feeling less angry or reactive. Use "I" statements so the focus is on how you feel about the situation rather than on how the other person makes you feel. And listen to what they say. Be curious. It diffuses defensiveness. You can hold your boundary firmly while still being respectful. All relationships at some point will have conflict. The art is being able to navigate that friction with integrity and compassion and appreciating that sometimes the best thing we can do is to speak out and at other times not to...

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# BEYOND DEGREES

## WHY SKILLS-BASED HIRING IS REDEFINING RECRUITMENT



*The shift from qualifications to capabilities is changing how we find and grow talent.*

For decades, a degree has been the default ticket to employment. It sat proudly at the top of CVs and served as an easy filter for recruiters and hiring managers alike. But in today's world of rapid technological change and evolving work demands, that single credential feels like it is losing its power. Skills — not titles or certificates — are becoming the new currency of recruitment.

### The Great Reassessment of Talent

Employers across every sector are rethinking what “qualified” really means. The pandemic accelerated a shift that was already underway: as businesses faced disruption, they needed adaptability, creativity, and problem-solving more than specific academic credentials. Now, with AI reshaping how we work and new roles emerging faster than universities can update their courses, it's clear that learning doesn't stop with a degree. What matters most is the ability to learn, apply, and evolve.

A growing number of organisations — from global corporations to SMEs — are removing degree requirements from job descriptions altogether. Instead, they're focusing on skills portfolios and practical assessments to evaluate capability. This isn't about lowering standards. It's about widening the lens.

### The Business Case for Skills-Based Hiring

Hiring based on skills rather than education expands the talent pool dramatically. It opens doors to candidates who have developed expertise through experience, apprenticeships, bootcamps, or self-directed learning — people who might have been overlooked under traditional criteria.

It also supports diversity and inclusion goals. When we remove degree barriers, we remove a filter that disproportionately excludes capable individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The result is richer thinking, greater innovation, and teams that more accurately reflect the world they serve. There's a clear performance benefit, too. Research consistently shows that employees hired for specific skills ramp up faster, perform better, and stay longer when their strengths closely align with their roles.

### How Employers Are Making the Shift

Transitioning to skills-based hiring requires more than rewriting job adverts. It means redesigning the recruitment process around evidence of ability rather than assumptions based on education.

**Identify core skills:** Start by defining what success really looks like in each role — technical abilities, behavioural competencies, and soft skills.

**Build fair assessments:** Replace degree requirements with practical tasks, case studies, or scenario-based interviews that reflect real work challenges. Use data and tools wisely: Emerging AI-powered platforms can help map transferable skills, but human judgment must remain central to interpreting the results.

**Rethink progression:** Once hired, employees need clear pathways to grow and reskill. Skills-based hiring works best when it's part of a culture of continuous learning.

### The Role of Recruiters: From Gatekeepers to Talent Translators

For recruiters, this shift represents both a challenge and an opportunity. It's no longer about matching job titles or scanning for familiar degree names — it's about understanding the nuances of capability and potential.

Recruiters are becoming talent translators, helping clients see the value in non-traditional backgrounds and supporting candidates to articulate their skills effectively.

It requires deeper conversations, better questioning, and a willingness to look beyond the surface. This is where the human side of recruitment becomes critical. Technology can screen for keywords, but it can't spot potential, attitude, or cultural fit. That's still the recruiter's art.

### Looking Ahead: A More Inclusive, Agile Workforce

As the world of work continues to evolve, skills-based hiring isn't just a trend — it's a transformation. It reflects a new social contract between employers and employees, built on mutual growth and adaptability rather than static credentials.

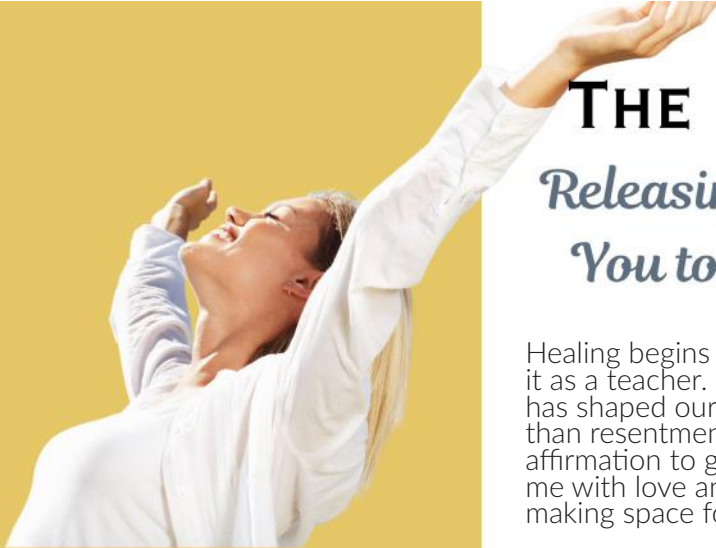
The organisations that thrive in this new era will be those that recognise talent in all its forms — those who hire not just for what's printed on paper, but for what people can actually do.

Because when we look beyond degrees, we don't just find new skills — we find new possibilities.

**By Penelope Layzell**







# THE ART OF LETTING GO

## *Releasing What No Longer Serves You to Create Space for Miracles*

There comes a time in every soul's journey when holding on becomes heavier than letting go. We cling to old stories, outdated versions of ourselves, and relationships that once felt like home but now only echo with the past. We hold tight — to what was, to what could have been — believing that control is safety. Yet in truth, clinging keeps us from expanding into the miracles waiting on the other side of surrender.

Letting go is not about losing; it is about creating sacred space for something new, aligned, and miraculous to flow in.

### **The weight of holding on**

Energy is everything. Every thought, emotion, and memory carries a vibration. The more we hold onto what no longer serves us, the heavier our energetic field becomes. Imagine walking through life carrying bags filled with regret, fear, and "what ifs." It is no wonder we feel exhausted or stuck — our spirit cannot soar while burdened by yesterday's weight.

Often, we stay attached out of fear of the unknown or loyalty to who we once were. But growth requires release. Healing asks us to loosen our grip and trust that what is meant for us cannot be lost. The moment we choose to release, even gently, we shift from resistance to receptivity — and that is where transformation begins.

### **Surrender: the gateway to healing**

Letting go is an act of surrender — not weakness. It is a sacred declaration: "I trust the universe. I trust myself. I am ready to be guided toward what is meant for me." Surrender does not mean giving up; it means giving over — releasing control and allowing divine wisdom to unfold. When we surrender, we stop replaying old narratives and start writing new ones.

Healing begins when we acknowledge the pain, honour it, and bless it as a teacher. Every experience, even the ones that broke us open, has shaped our growth. When we release with gratitude rather than resentment, we transmute our wounds into wisdom. A simple affirmation to guide this process: "I release what no longer serves me with love and gratitude. I trust that everything leaving my life is making space for miracles."

### **The alchemy of space**

When you clear what is heavy, stale, or misaligned, you make room for new opportunities, aligned relationships, and deeper joy. Think of it as energetic feng shui for your soul. When you declutter your inner world — releasing limiting beliefs, attachments, or self-doubt — you invite flow. Inspiration returns. Synchronicities appear. You begin attracting people and experiences that mirror your healed energy. This is the art of allowing. You are no longer pushing against life but moving in rhythm with it.

A simple ritual to begin:

**Reflect:** Identify what feels heavy or misaligned — a thought, habit, or relationship.

**Acknowledge:** Thank it for the lessons it brought.

**Release:** Through breath, journaling, meditation, or a symbolic act like burning a note, let it go with love.

**Receive:** Open your heart and affirm, "I am ready for new blessings to flow into my life."

The moment you release, you create energetic space — and miracles love space.

### **From resistance to radiance**

As you let go, you feel lighter. You reconnect with your intuition, joy, and sense of purpose. You realise that abundance is not something you chase — it is something you allow.

Miracles are not random; they are natural outcomes of alignment. When you clear the energetic clutter, you become a vibrational match for love, freedom, and abundance. The universe rushes in to fill the space you've opened — with divine timing, grace, and blessings beyond imagination.

You may notice subtle signs: unexpected opportunities, meaningful encounters, or a deep peace whispering, "I am exactly where I am meant to be." This is the magic of surrender.

### **Trust the unfolding**

Letting go is not a one-time event; it is a sacred practice. Life will always invite us to release — to shed layers, beliefs, and attachments that no longer resonate with our evolving truth. Each time we surrender, we rise to a higher level of consciousness.

So, breathe deeply. Trust that you are safe to let go. You are not losing; you are expanding. You are not breaking; you are awakening. The universe is already conspiring to fill the space you are clearing — with love, purpose, abundance, and peace.

All you need to do is release... and receive.

Letting go is not the end of your story — it is the beginning of your rebirth. Create space for miracles and watch how beautifully life unfolds in your favour.

**By Nadija Bajrami**

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# There's More to Obesity and Weight Management Than Just Losing Weight

## Why Longevity Should Be Your Real Goal

When most people think about weight management, their first thought is usually weight loss, how much they can lose, how fast they can lose it, and what diet or training method will get them there. But here's the truth: focusing purely on the scales misses the bigger picture.

Because when it comes to your health, it's not just about how much you weigh, it's about how well you live and how long you live to enjoy it.

Longevity is the science and practice of living longer and better. It is fast becoming the new frontier of fitness and health. And it's not reserved for biohackers or high-performance athletes. It's for all of us. Whether you're a 30-year-old professional trying to feel sharper and stronger, or a 60-year-old wanting to move without pain and stay independent, your focus should go beyond aesthetics. It should be on building the foundations for a longer, higher-quality life.

Let's break this down through three significant longevity lenses: body composition, cardiorespiratory fitness, and strength.

### 1. Obesity and Longevity

Obesity is more than a number on a scale; it's one of the strongest indicators of reduced lifespan and quality of life. According to Dr Guy Benison-Horner, a specialist in longevity, "having a BMI greater than 30 is associated with a 120–200% increase in all-cause mortality." In plain terms, that means someone living with obesity is up to twice as likely to die prematurely compared to someone in a healthy BMI range.

Research consistently shows that individuals with obesity lose an estimated 3 to 10 years of life compared to those with a healthy BMI, depending on the degree of obesity and related metabolic complications such as insulin resistance, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. But it's not just about how long you live, it's also about how well you live those years.

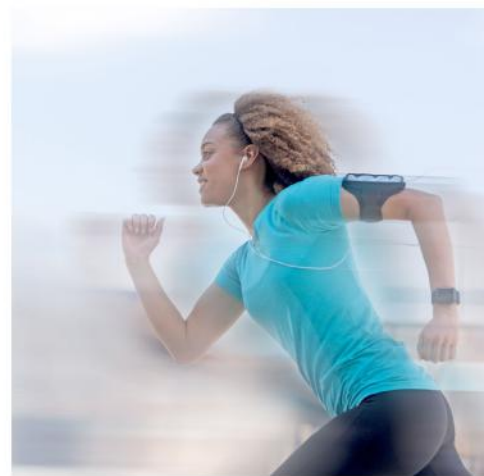
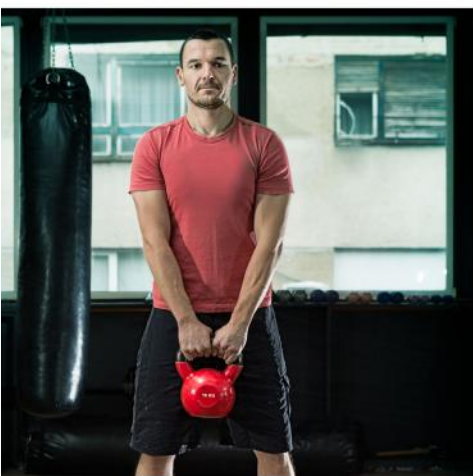
Obesity increases the risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, and cognitive decline. It also impacts health span, the years you live free from disease or disability. Excess fat, particularly visceral fat (the fat stored around your organs), acts as a metabolic disruptor, driving inflammation and hormonal imbalances that accelerate ageing from the inside out.

The solution isn't simply to chase a smaller number on the scale. The goal should be to improve metabolic health through resistance training, balanced nutrition, and building lean muscle mass. Weight loss without strength and muscle retention can actually make longevity worse, as muscle plays a vital role in blood sugar regulation, bone density, and mobility.

So yes, losing excess fat matters, but what matters even more is maintaining strength, building functional fitness, and supporting your long-term health markers.

### 2. VO<sub>2</sub> Max – The Fitness Metric That Predicts How Long You'll Live

You've probably heard of VO<sub>2</sub> max in the context of elite athletes; it's the measure of how much oxygen your body can use during intense exercise. But you



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don't need to be training for the Olympics for it to matter. VO<sub>2</sub> max is one of the strongest predictors of longevity and health span for everyone.

Dr Guy Benison-Horner highlights a staggering statistic: "There is a 400–500% increased risk of death being in the bottom 25% for VO<sub>2</sub> max compared to the top 2.5% for the same age range." That means your capacity to take in and use oxygen effectively is more important for predicting how long you'll live than many traditional health markers—even cholesterol or blood pressure.

Low VO<sub>2</sub> max indicates poor cardiorespiratory fitness, which is linked to increased risks of heart disease, metabolic syndrome, and cognitive decline. On the other hand, maintaining or improving your VO<sub>2</sub> max supports brain health, heart function, recovery, and energy levels.

### **How to Improve VO<sub>2</sub> Max (Without Becoming a Marathon Runner)**

You don't need to spend hours on a treadmill or cycle your way through endless endurance sessions. Small, consistent efforts can yield big improvements:

- **Interval Training:** Short bursts of higher intensity work followed by recovery. For example, 30 seconds of fast-paced rowing or running followed by 90 seconds of walking or light cycling.
- **Zone 2 Training:** Low-to-moderate effort cardio where you can still hold a conversation (about 60–70% of max heart rate). This trains your aerobic base and supports fat metabolism.
- **Active Recovery and Consistency:** Incorporate walking, swimming, or cycling regularly. VO<sub>2</sub> max improves with regular movement, not just structured training.

Your goal isn't to perform like an athlete; it's to move like a human built for longevity. Think of VO<sub>2</sub> max as your engine capacity; the stronger it is, the longer and smoother your body runs.

### **3. Grip Strength – A Simple Test with Powerful Insights**

Here's one you might not expect: grip strength. It's a surprisingly accurate indicator of your overall strength and health. Dr Guy Benison-Horner explains that low grip strength is associated with a 140–200% increase in death (all-cause mortality).

Why? Grip strength isn't just about your hands; it's a proxy for overall muscular strength and nervous system function. Research links a stronger grip to better mobility, reduced risk of falls, and even lower risk of heart disease and dementia.

#### **How Grip Strength is Tested**

The most common tool is a hand dynamometer, which measures how much force you can exert while squeezing. It's quick, objective, and repeatable, often

used in research and health screenings. But even without lab equipment, you can get a sense of your grip strength from your gym performance. Exercises like farmer's carries, pull-ups, deadlifts, and kettlebell swings all demand strong grip endurance.

#### **How to Improve Grip Strength**

Improving grip strength doesn't require hours of forearm work; it's about smart integration into your existing routine:

- **Farmer's Carries:** Walk holding heavy dumbbells or kettlebells, keeping posture tall and shoulders stable.
- **Deadlifts and Pulling Movements:** Focus on holding onto the bar or weight rather than relying on straps.
- **Hanging Holds:** Simply hang from a pull-up bar for time. This challenge grips the grip, shoulders, and core simultaneously.
- **Towel Pull-Ups or Rows:** Wrapping a towel around a bar adds an extra challenge for grip and forearm strength.

Improving grip strength pays off in every aspect of daily life, from opening jars to carrying shopping bags to maintaining independence as you age.

#### **Longevity: The True Goal of Fitness**

The pursuit of health and fitness isn't about chasing short-term results; it's about investing in a future where you can live well, move well, and feel strong for life.

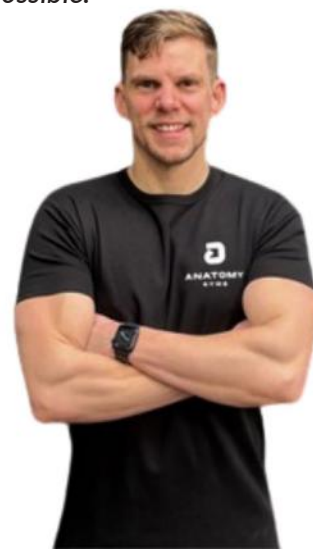
Longevity isn't a luxury; it's a responsibility. It's about making choices today that your future self will thank you for, prioritising sleep, nutrition, training, stress management, and connection. The goal isn't to simply extend your lifespan; it's to extend your health span, the years you live with energy, mobility, and purpose.

Because what good is living to 90 if you spend the last 20 years unable to do the things you love?

So yes, lose weight if you need to, but do it the right way. Build strength. Improve your VO<sub>2</sub> max. Challenge your grip. Move daily. Eat for health, not just for calories. And think of every training session not as a punishment, but as an investment in your future self.

***In the end, longevity isn't about living forever. It's about living fully, for as long as possible.***

**By Craig Alexander**





## THE POWER OF CONSISTENCY AND PATIENCE

### BY MARSHA PARCOU

In a world obsessed with fast results, I've come to appreciate the slow, steady, sacred rhythm of consistency — not just for myself, but for those I lead. As a coach and guide, I've walked alongside people in their most defining seasons — some filled with vision and momentum, others marked by silence and delay. And through all of it, I've learned: transformation doesn't arrive in dramatic moments. It takes root in daily choices. In commitment. In quiet faithfulness. It is shaped in the unseen.

The real breakthroughs don't come from the highlight reel. They're born with the repetition, the discipline, and the grace to stay, especially when results don't come quickly. We live in an age that thrives on speed. Social media scrolls. One-click orders. Instant everything. We can book vacations, buy groceries, or stream a movie with almost no delay. But the shadow of this convenience is a creeping impatience — one that affects how we treat ourselves, our goals and even the people we love.

We grow restless when things don't move quickly. We abandon plans at the first sign of resistance. We delay progress with subtle excuses: "Next week. Next month. When I feel ready." But life doesn't wait for perfect conditions. Growth doesn't happen on demand. And success — the meaningful kind — doesn't come overnight.

As a coach, I see this cultural impatience show up everywhere. People long for change, but few are willing to stay the course. That's why I believe consistency is a revolutionary act. It's not just a skill — it's a mindset. It's the foundation of how I lead, serve and support others. In a world that glorifies instant gratification, I've learnt to value delayed fulfilment. Not as punishment, but as preparation. Not as failure, but as formation.

I've experienced my share of slow seasons — when progress was invisible, prayers felt unanswered, and momentum stalled. But over time, I began to see these delays differently. They weren't signs that I was off course. They were invitations to go deeper. A delayed promise doesn't mean it was never real. It's often a test of character. A stretch of the soul. Consider who you are in seasons of momentum and success.

Now ask: Who are you when the outcome is still unfolding? Who are you when it's quiet? When nothing seems to be working? The truest test of leadership isn't when everything flows — it's when nothing does. These seasons ask us to lead from a deeper place, not rooted in outcome, but in identity. They become catalysts for transformation, redirection, and even spiritual

purification. Sometimes they're the mercy that keeps us from running ahead before we're truly ready. Consistency isn't glamorous. It's often quiet, unseen, and uncelebrated.

But for those who lead in families, communities, or careers, it's everything.

It teaches:

- Self-leadership before public leadership.
- Stability when storms come.
- Credibility that can't be faked.

Each time I showed up when no one was watching... Each time I honoured my word when it was inconvenient... Each time I stayed, instead of sprinting for a shortcut...

I became the kind of leader others could trust. Not because I had all the answers, but because I walked in alignment. The journey of consistency has shaped my life more than any breakthrough.

I've learned that:

- Setbacks reveal strength.
- Plateaus build perspective.
- Delays deepen discernment.

These seasons stripped away the superficial and brought me back to what matters: Integrity, alignment, patience and presence. Consistency is not about chasing perfection. It's about becoming someone who can sustain the dream when it arrives. It's one thing to want success. It's another to be prepared to carry it with grace, humility and strength.

This is the gift of slow growth. It makes you capable of holding what once would've crushed you. "A delayed promise is not a contradiction; it's often a sacred recalibration."

If you're in a stretch of slow progress, I want to remind you:

- You are not forgotten.
- You are not failing.
- You are being formed.

Lead yourself with grace. Stay present in the process. And let your consistency become a legacy that speaks louder than any quick win. Because the way you lead yourself will shape how you lead others. Let it be with patience. Let it be with presence. Let it be with quiet power.



# Fat Loss After 40 Evidence-Based Strategies That Deliver Results



Many people in their 40s and beyond find that the same diet and exercise strategies that once worked no longer deliver the same results. You are not imagining it. The truth is, weight loss after 40 comes with unique challenges — but the good news is that with the right approach, fat loss is absolutely achievable. In this article, I will explore the changes in your 40s and share the best fat loss tips for over-40s that are backed by science.

## Why Fat Loss is Harder After 40 A Slower Metabolism

Your metabolism naturally slows with age, meaning your body burns fewer calories at rest because muscle burns more calories at rest than fat does. Research confirms that as adults age, there is an involuntary loss of muscle mass, strength, and function that contributes to this decline.<sup>1</sup> If your eating habits don't change, it's easier to store fat — especially around the midsection.

## Hormonal Shifts

Women often notice changes during perimenopause and menopause. During perimenopause and menopause, hormone levels, mainly estrogen, fluctuate and decline. Lower estrogen encourages fat storage around the belly. Research has shown that the menopausal transition is associated with an increase in obesity and an increase in abdominal and visceral fat.<sup>2</sup>

Men also experience a gradual decline in testosterone, which can affect muscle mass, energy levels, and fat distribution. Studies have demonstrated that serum testosterone levels begin to gradually decline from age 35, with a more marked decline after 80 years of age.<sup>3</sup> A study also found that in men, there is a relationship between low testosterone and an increased incidence of visceral and abdominal subcutaneous fat, that is, the layer of fat located just beneath your skin.<sup>4</sup>

## Loss of Muscle Mass

After age 30, your body naturally starts to lose muscle mass, a condition called sarcopenia. Studies have shown that you can lose 3-8% of your muscle per decade, and this rate of decline is even higher after age 60 if strength training isn't part of your routine.<sup>5</sup> Since muscle burns more calories than fat, less muscle means a slower metabolism.

## Lifestyle factors

A busy career, family life, stress, and poor sleep often take priority over health in your 40s — all of which can make fat loss more difficult. Studies show that behavioral factors such as poor diet, decreased physical activity and poor sleep quality may also influence weight status in women undergoing menopause.<sup>6</sup>

## The Best Fat Loss Tips for Over 40s

While your body changes with age, the fundamentals of fat loss still apply. Here are strategies that work best in your 40s and beyond:

### Prioritise Strength Training

Lifting weights or doing bodyweight exercises helps preserve and even build muscle, which keeps your metabolism higher. Studies show that combining strength training with adequate protein intake is one of the most effective ways to combat age-related muscle loss.<sup>7</sup>

Aim for at least 2-3 strength workouts per week, focusing on all major muscle groups.

### Focus on Nutrition, Not Restriction

No crash diets — especially after 40. Instead, focus on sustainable, nutrient-dense eating:

**Protein:** Prioritize good quality protein. The current body of evidence indicates that consuming 1.6 grams of protein per kg of body weight daily preserves optimal muscle function.<sup>8</sup>

**Fibre:** Vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, seeds and wholegrains are rich in fibre, which can keep you full and support gut health.

**Healthy fats:** Omega-3s (oily fish) and monounsaturated fats (avocados and olive oil) reduce inflammation.

**Complex carbs:** Wholegrains (oats, brown rice). These take longer to digest. Timed round exercise fuel workouts without spiking blood sugar

A Mediterranean-style diet has been shown to reduce visceral fat (deep abdominal fat around the organs) by about 11% over 1 year when combined with exercise.<sup>9</sup>

### Get Serious About Sleep and Stress

Poor sleep and chronic stress elevate cortisol, a hormone that encourages fat storage — particularly belly fat. Prioritizing sleep can make a big difference.

- Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep.
- Create a bedtime routine (no screen, dim lights, calming activities).
- Manage stress with walking, meditation, deep breathing or yoga.

### Move More Every Day

Structured workouts are key, but daily activity makes a huge difference in weight loss after 40. Hitting 7,000-10,000 steps per day, cycling, gardening, or even regular stretching can add up to big calorie burn over time.

### Try Smart Eating Windows

Research suggests that eating earlier in the day (and avoiding late-night snacking) may improve insulin sensitivity and fat metabolism. For example, an 8 am – 6 pm eating window has been linked to greater visceral fat reduction and improved blood sugar control (10).

### The Bottom Line

Fat loss after 40 is achievable when you understand your body and apply the right strategies. It doesn't require extreme diets or endless cardio — it requires a smarter, more tailored approach. By prioritizing strength training, focusing on protein, fibre, healthy fats and whole foods, improving sleep and stress management, and staying consistent with daily movement, you can achieve sustainable results.

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# Navigating the Tempest

## Cultivating Inner Peace in a Disordered World

In a world that seems to spin faster every day, it's easy to feel swept up in chaos. Whether it's the relentless news cycle or the pressures of daily life, I know this feeling intimately. During my breast cancer treatment through the uncertainty of the COVID pandemic, I found myself searching for something solid to hold onto. What I discovered was that learning to control my mind, focusing on what I could influence and letting go of what I couldn't, was not just helpful, but absolutely essential.

### The Power of Mindfulness When Life Gets Hard

Mindfulness, simply put, is the practice of being present with what's happening right now, without judgment. It's not about ignoring reality or pretending everything is fine; it's about meeting each moment as it is. For me, this meant acknowledging my fear and anxiety, but also choosing not to let them run the show. Research backs this up: studies show that mindfulness can reduce stress, sharpen focus, and help us regulate our emotions.

As Jon Kabat-Zinn says, 'Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different.' That perspective became a lifeline for me. Positive psychology also played a huge role. It's about nurturing gratitude, optimism, and resilience—even when things are tough. Dr Martin Seligman, a leader in this field, reminds us that 'Authentic happiness is not about

happening without being swept away by it.' Staying informed doesn't mean drowning in negativity.

### 3. Focus on What You Can Control

There were so many things I couldn't change—my diagnosis, the pandemic, the world's problems. But I could choose kindness, support my community, and take care of myself. That sense of agency made all the difference.

### 4. Practice Daily Gratitude

Every night, I'd jot down three things I was grateful for. Sometimes it was something big, sometimes just the comfort of my favorite blanket. Over time, this rewired my brain to notice the good, even on hard days.

### 5. Move Your Body

Whether it was gentle yoga, a walk outside, or dancing in my living room, movement helped me release stress and reconnect with myself. Harvard Medical School recommends regular exercise for boosting mood, and I found that to be true firsthand.

### Why Positivity and Resilience Matter

Science shows that cultivating optimism and resilience can help us feel less helpless, even during tough times. A 2021 study found that people who practised mindfulness and gratitude reported lower levels of depression and stress, even amid societal upheaval. For me, these practices didn't erase my problems, but they gave me the clarity and strength to face them.

### Moving Forward

Mindfulness isn't about ignoring life's hardships. It's about staying grounded while facing them head-on. By weaving together small, intentional habits like gratitude, mindful media breaks, and movement, you can create an inner sanctuary of calm. The Dalai Lama said, 'Do not let the behavior of others destroy your inner peace.' I'd add, "Don't let fear or uncertainty steal your spirit."

the absence of problems but the ability to find solutions and the strength to face challenges head-on.' During treatment and lockdowns, I leaned into gratitude for small things ... a good cup of coffee, a kind word from a friend, the strength to get through another day.

### Practical Ways to Find Calm in the Storm

#### 1. Start Each Day with Intention

Before diving into emails or news, I'd spend five minutes breathing and asking myself, 'How do I want to feel today?' This simple ritual helped me shift from reacting to everything around me to choosing how I wanted to show up.

#### 2. Set Boundaries with Media

It's easy to get lost in doomscrolling, especially when the world feels uncertain. I learned to limit my news intake to specific times and stick to reliable sources. Tara Brach says, 'Awareness is the first step. Recognizing what is

If you're going through your own storm, know that you're not alone. You have an inner strength and resilience that may surprise you. Take a deep breath. You're ready for this journey.

*By Laila Morcos Zissis*

*Professional Certified Coach*

*Executive Producer & Host of Breast Cancer Unleashed Podcast & Founder & President LikeMinded Ladies*







# As a Spiritual Leader you create Human Magic

Like almost nothing else, wonder fosters greater performance, productivity, and motivation in teams – because it opens up thinking, breaks rigid patterns, and promotes creative solutions. Researchers at the University of California have also demonstrated that wonder lowers stress levels. And Stanford University has shown that it measurably reduces cortisol levels.

Wonder also promotes collaboration: Team cohesion increases, and it becomes easier to work together toward company goals.

**The explanation:** When we wonder, our focus shifts from everyday problems to the present moment. The feeling of awe and fascination triggers positive biological reactions, similar to those triggered by meditation. But while children still wonder at the world every day, adults often lose this ability. As a spiritual leader, however, you can create precisely this – Human Magic: the quiet astonishment that arises when we are truly connected – to ourselves, to others, to something larger.

There are wonderful tools to create connection – the core of spirituality – within a team. Successful companies like Google already benefit from the creativity that Human Magic brings. One way to spark it is through Tarot. Tarot? Esotericism? Well, maybe a little. But if I mentioned art therapy, you'd probably say, 'Yes, I've heard of it. I think it makes sense.' Essentially, Tarot does the same. Through the images on the cards, we tap into our creative side, moving beyond analytical, logical thinking. The latter remains, of course, indispensable and important. But we all know those moments when overthinking gets us nowhere, and the best ideas come while showering or exercising. Tarot simply shortens that process.

When facing a problem, ask the Tarot for insight. Not a yes or no answer. Ask an open question. We want to remain open and receptive to new impulses that may lead us to possible answers.

Draw a card and explore: How does it affect you? What comes to mind first when you look at the image? Are there any symbols you recognise that hold meaning for you? How might the card's message relate to your question? You don't need prior knowledge of Tarot; intuition is enough. If you are somewhat familiar with Tarot, you have even more options: Knowing the background, the original meaning of the card, makes it even more concrete. You can directly connect it to your question.

At Google, for example, teams use the cards to initiate new ideas in management, customer relations, or project work. Imagine starting a project and drawing 'The Fool.' This card represents new beginnings, light-heartedness, and curiosity – the willingness to embark on a new journey. Now ask your team: 'What would change if we approached this project with total openness?', 'What am I curious about?' or 'If there were no conventions – what would we do differently?'

Because it's 'just' a game, a safe space emerges: people feel free to speak honestly and creatively, without fear of mistakes. With every session, trust grows – along with innovation and motivation. Can you sense the potential of such tools? And how can you, as a Spiritual Leader, benefit from them? In tangible terms, Human Magic translates to better team performance and improved goal achievement. Personally, as a Spiritual Leader, it means less stress, a better work environment, and more free time for yourself and your family.

Intrigued? Let me tell you about another tool – Geomancy. This ancient form of intuitive mapping uses patterns of dots drawn in sand or on paper. Robert Fludd, an English natural philosopher and physician, used a system of 16 figures, each with a specific meaning. Beautiful examples can be found in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Similar to Tarot, it's playful, visual, and surprisingly precise. By working with simple dots and symbols, participants enter a creative, intuitive flow.

Whatever tool you choose, people wonder and are fascinated by what emerges – they engage, they want to take part. They connect with you as a leader, with the project and with the company's goals. And that's what I understand as Human Magic within your Spiritual Leadership: to amaze, surprise, and empower people.

**By Andrea Huber**

***'Wonder also promotes collaboration: Team cohesion increases, and it becomes easier to work together toward company goals.'***



# NEURO-NUTRITION AND MENTAL HEALTH

## AN INTEGRATIVE EXPLORATION

The relationship between nutrition and brain function has become one of the most significant developments in contemporary mental health research. Neuro-nutrition, an interdisciplinary field bridging neuroscience, nutritional biochemistry and psychology, aims to understand how dietary components shape the neural mechanisms that govern mood, cognition, behaviour and emotional resilience. Far from operating as a secondary lifestyle concern, nutrition is now recognised as a central determinant of mental wellbeing across the lifespan.

### The Metabolic Demands of the Brain

The brain is the body's most metabolically demanding organ, consuming approximately 20% of the body's total energy despite comprising only 2% of body mass. It requires a constant supply of micronutrients, amino acids, fatty acids and glucose to sustain neurotransmission and synaptic plasticity. When these resources are inconsistent or inadequate, neurochemical imbalances begin to emerge, which can manifest as low mood, impaired concentration, irritability or heightened stress responses.

### Essential Nutrients and Neural Function

Several nutrient classes have demonstrated particular relevance to mental health through their direct influence on neurochemical systems. Omega-3 fatty acids, specifically EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), serve as structural components of neuronal membranes. These molecules enhance membrane fluidity, support serotonin and dopamine pathways and reduce neuro-inflammatory processes through the modulation of cytokine production. Low omega-3 status is associated with greater susceptibility to mood disorders, while higher intake correlates with improved emotional regulation. Research suggests that EPA may be particularly relevant for mood regulation, while DHA plays a more prominent role in structural brain integrity and cognitive function.

The B vitamins, particularly B6 (pyridoxine), B12 (cobalamin) and folate (B9), support one-carbon methylation cycles and neurotransmitter synthesis. These vitamins serve as cofactors in the production of serotonin, dopamine, noradrenaline and GABA. Deficiencies have been linked to depressive symptoms, cognitive decline

and compromised stress responses, partly through elevated homocysteine levels that may contribute to vascular and neuroinflammatory processes. Conversely, diets rich in leafy greens, legumes, whole grains and lean proteins help maintain the neurochemical architecture that supports psychological stability.

Iron, zinc, magnesium and vitamin D also play foundational roles in mental health. Iron is essential for dopamine synthesis and myelin formation. Zinc modulates NMDA receptor function and supports neurogenesis in the hippocampus. Magnesium regulates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and NMDA receptors. Vitamin D influences neurotrophic factor expression and inflammatory pathways, both of which directly affect mood and cognitive resilience. The convergence of these micronutrients in supporting neural function underscores the importance of dietary diversity and adequacy.

Iron plays a crucial role in dopamine synthesis, and this matters because dopamine shapes everyday motivation, focus, reward, and the ability to initiate tasks. When dopamine synthesis is disrupted by low iron, people often find themselves wanting to act but feeling unable to mobilise mentally. Simple tasks such as replying to a message, preparing lunch, or starting work feel disproportionately difficult.

This is not a personality flaw; it is a biochemical limitation that interferes with the brain's drive system. Iron is also essential for myelin formation, the process that creates the insulation around nerve fibres. Myelin allows brain signals to travel quickly and smoothly. When myelin formation is compromised, thinking feels slower, less sharp, or more effortful. A person may lose their train of thought, struggle to find the right word, or feel unusually mentally tired after reading or concentrating. Healthy myelin formation is therefore fundamental to clear thinking, efficient communication between neurons, and overall cognitive stamina.

Zinc supports the activity of the NMDA receptor, which stands for the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor. Despite the complex name, its role is very practical: it helps the brain learn, remember, and regulate emotions. You



can think of the NMDA receptor as a “learning and adaptability switch.” When it is balanced, you can pick up new information, remember conversations, and stay steady during everyday stress. If zinc is low, the NMDA receptor may become either overactive or underactive. Overactivity can lead to irritability, anxiety, and sensitivity to noise or busy environments; underactivity can make learning slower and emotional responses dull or inconsistent.

Zinc also contributes to neurogenesis in the hippocampus, meaning it supports the growth of new neurons in a region heavily involved in memory formation and stress regulation. When hippocampal neurogenesis is healthy, people cope better with pressure. For example, if work becomes challenging, someone with healthy hippocampal function can think clearly, retain information, and avoid spiralling into overwhelm. When zinc is insufficient, the hippocampus struggles to form and organise memories, stress feels heavier than it should, and focus becomes unreliable.

Magnesium plays a major role in regulating the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis, the body’s central stress-response system. With adequate magnesium, this axis activates briefly in response to stress and then settles, allowing the mind and body to recover naturally. When magnesium is low, the axis can remain activated for too long. This leads to prolonged tension, difficulty calming down, restless sleep, and a persistent sense of being mentally “on alert.” The individual may feel wired, easily overwhelmed, or unusually reactive to minor frustrations.

Magnesium also influences the NMDA receptor, acting as a natural stabiliser that prevents overstimulation. When this regulation is weakened, everyday experiences—such as loud environments, multitasking, or emotional challenges—can feel overwhelming. Concentration becomes difficult because the brain lacks the mineral that typically helps keep stimulation at a manageable level.

Together, these terms—dopamine synthesis, myelin formation, NMDA receptor function, hippocampal neurogenesis, and regulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis—describe essential biological processes that profoundly shape motivation, memory, emotional steadiness, and the capacity to handle stress in everyday life.

### The Gut-Brain Axis

A transformative area of neuro-nutrition research concerns the gut-brain axis, a bidirectional communication network linking the enteric nervous system with the central nervous system. The gut microbiome communicates with the brain via multiple pathways. Neural pathways involve direct signalling through the vagus nerve. Immune pathways modulate systemic inflammation through microbial

metabolites. Endocrine pathways include the production of neurotransmitter precursors, with approximately 90% of the body’s serotonin produced in the gut. Metabolic pathways generate short-chain fatty acids such as butyrate, which support intestinal barrier integrity and possess neuroactive properties.

Diets rich in fibre, fermented foods and diverse plant compounds encourage a robust microbiome characterised by greater species diversity and metabolic flexibility. This microbial robustness has been linked to lower stress reactivity and improved emotional wellbeing. In contrast, highly processed diets low in fibre and high in refined sugars and saturated fats disrupt microbial diversity, compromise intestinal barrier function and promote systemic inflammation. These dietary patterns are associated with elevated rates of depression and anxiety.

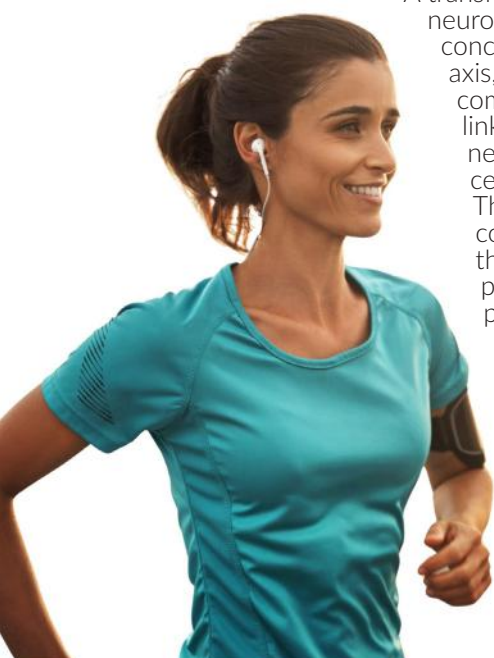
### Inflammation as a Central Mechanism

Inflammation itself has emerged as a pivotal mediator between diet and mental health. Chronic low-grade inflammation, characterised by elevated pro-inflammatory cytokines such as interleukin-6, tumour necrosis factor-alpha and C-reactive protein, interferes with hippocampal neurogenesis, disrupts dopaminergic reward pathways and contributes to oxidative stress. All of these processes play roles in the pathophysiology of mood disorders. This inflammatory hypothesis of depression has gained substantial empirical support and helps explain why individuals with inflammatory conditions show higher rates of depression.

Dietary patterns such as the Mediterranean diet or MIND diet, characterised by high intakes of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, olive oil and fish, with moderate wine consumption and limited red meat and processed foods, demonstrate consistent associations with reduced depressive symptoms, lower cognitive decline and improved overall mental health outcomes. These diets are rich in antioxidants such as vitamins C and E and carotenoids, polyphenols including flavonoids and resveratrol, and healthy fats that collectively reduce oxidative stress and inflammatory burden. This reinforces the view that nutritional interventions are not merely supportive but potentially therapeutic adjuncts to conventional mental health treatment.

### Integration Within a Holistic Framework

Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise that neuro-nutrition does not replace psychological, social or pharmacological interventions. Mental health is multi-determined, arising from complex interactions between genetic predisposition, early life experiences, ongoing





psychosocial stressors, cognitive patterns and biological factors. Nutrition forms only one dimension of a holistic framework, but it is a uniquely accessible and modifiable factor that can enhance resilience, stabilise mood and strengthen the biological foundation upon which therapeutic work takes place.

For counsellors, coaches and health practitioners, integrating nutritional insight into support plans can amplify therapeutic outcomes and foster longer-term wellbeing. This integration is particularly valuable, given that dietary interventions have a minimal side-effect profile compared to pharmacological approaches and can be implemented alongside any form of psychological support. The evidence base continues to strengthen, suggesting that attention to nutritional status should be considered a standard component of comprehensive mental health care.

### **What We Do at Synaptic Fit Fusion Pros**

At Synaptic Fit Fusion Pros, we operationalise the principles of neuro-nutrition by integrating brain-based coaching, evidence-informed nutrition and strength-driven movement into a holistic model of wellbeing. Our flagship programme, the Fat Loss Reset Pathway™, supports clients in transforming metabolic health while

simultaneously addressing the cognitive, emotional and behavioural drivers behind stress-eating, low energy, self-sabotage and inconsistent habits.

Our approach is built upon three core pillars. The first is Neuro Synergy, through which we work with the brain's natural neuroplasticity to reshape mental patterns, limiting beliefs and emotional triggers that influence eating behaviour, motivation and self-perception. Through targeted psychoeducation and coaching dialogue, clients develop greater metacognitive awareness and emotional regulation capacity.

The second pillar is Nutritional Wellness. We promote balanced, sustainable nutrition that supports hormonal regulation, metabolic efficiency and mental clarity. Our approach is grounded in the principles of neuro-nutrition, emphasising whole foods, adequate protein, healthy fats including omega-3s, micronutrient density and gut health optimisation through fibre and fermented foods.

The third pillar is Kinetic Movement. We implement progressive, strength-based training that enhances energy, confidence and long-term physical resilience. Resistance training supports not only body composition changes but also improves insulin sensitivity, enhances mitochondrial function and contributes to improved mood through endorphin release and self-efficacy building.

By recognising the inseparable relationship between mind, body and nutrition, Synaptic Fit Fusion Pros provides a comprehensive pathway toward sustainable change. We support not only physical transformation but improved mental health, emotional stability and overall quality of life.

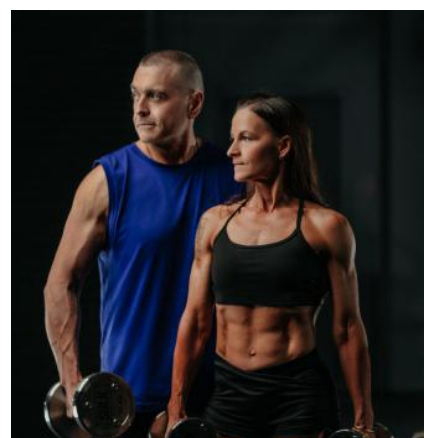
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# LAYER UP, LEVEL UP: YOUR MOST STYLISH WINTER YET

## *Smart, intentional layering for a season of confidence and personal style*

Winter brings a natural shift - not only in the air, but in how we dress and care for ourselves. As temperatures drop, our wardrobes are asked to do more than look good. We need outfits that flatter, feel effortless to assemble, adapt through the day, and support the way we want to show up.

Layering is often framed as a seasonal necessity. This winter, it becomes a styling opportunity. When approached intentionally, layered dressing adds depth, structure, comfort, and polish - creating outfits that feel purposeful, harmonious, and distinctly personal. At its best, winter style serves both sides of the equation: looking good and feeling good all at the same time.

### **The Core Principles of Elevated Layering**

Successful layering relies on a few simple but powerful principles.

**Begin with flattering lines.** A well-fitted foundation layer creates balance and prevents outfits from feeling bulky or shapeless.

**Choose structure over volume.** Layering isn't about adding more—it's about adding better. Thoughtful proportions and textural contrast create dimension without visual weight.

**Let accessories refine the story.** Accessories should enhance, not overpower. They bring cohesion, warmth, individuality, and a polished finish. Together, these principles ensure each layer enhances the next, resulting in outfits that look composed rather than overworked.

### **3. The Outer Layer – The Seasonal Signature**

Your coat is often the most visible piece, setting the tone for the entire look.

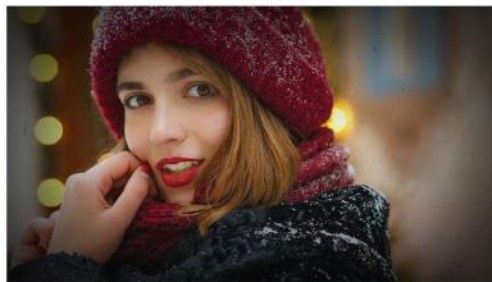
- Trench coats offer softness and elegance
- Wool coats bring timeless polish
- Puffer jackets deliver modern practicality
- Leather or faux leather adds a sleek edge
- Wrap coats create a gentle shape without tailoring

Every coat should complement your silhouette rather than conceal it. Belting or wrap styles subtly restore shape and create an elevated finish. The outer layer protects you from the elements—but it also completes your look.

### **4. Accessories – The Quiet Power of Personal Style**

Accessories add emotional resonance while refining the outfit. Choose thoughtfully and allow one piece to lead. Consider a soft wool scarf for warmth and face-framing, a leather or suede bag in a warm tone, minimal gold or brushed-metal jewellery for light, or a structured hat for a polished finish. Boots should complete the look while elevating it.

Because accessories sit close to the skin, prioritise comfort: soft, non-itch fabrics and clean, hypoallergenic metals where needed. Well-cared-for accessories extend both style and wearability.



### **Your Seasonal Styling Formula**

#### **1. The Base Layer – Where Confidence Begins**

Your base layer is the anchor of every outfit. Think fitted long sleeves, sleek tees, thin ribbed knits, and soft layering tops that provide clean lines without restricting movement. Turtlenecks remain a winter staple, framing the face and creating a smooth transition into scarves, shirts, and coats. If high necklines aren't your preference, crew or gentle scoop necks offer the same streamlined effect. Winter welcomes richness—but personal style invites the right richness. Warm terracotta, burgundy, chocolate brown, spiced neutrals, muted greens, and light camel tones feel grounding and refined, while adding warmth near the face. Fit matters most here: the smoother the base, the stronger the layers work together.

#### **2. The Mid Layer – Your Defining Piece**

This is where dimension and shape come into play. Tailored shirts add definition when worn open, while knitted vests introduce depth without bulk. Structured cardigans elevate basics, cropped knits define the waist, and longer knits or lightweight coats add movement and vertical line.

#### **As a guide:**

Longer base layers pair well with cropped or structured mid layers. Fitted bases balance relaxed mids. Closed necklines work beautifully with open layering. Texture should contrast rather than compete, for example, ribbed knits with smooth wool, or soft tailoring with clean denim. This layer gives your outfit intention.

### **Three Refined Layered Looks to Try**

**The Morning Look.** Fitted base layer, tailored shirt or cropped knit, straight-leg denim or tailored trousers, wool or trench coat.

**Hero accessory:** soft scarf and leather bag. Polished without feeling formal.

**The Daytime Look.** Fitted turtleneck, structured cardigan or puffer vest, A-line skirt or relaxed trousers, clean boots.

**Hero accessory:** minimal jewellery or tote bag. Practical yet confident.

#### **The Evening Layer Remix**

Keep the base and coat; swap the mid layer for a textured knit or a refined jacket; switch to a smaller bag or subtle earrings.

**Hero accessory:** one simple statement piece.

Small changes, strong impact.

### **Personal Style for a Season of Transition**

Winter style doesn't ask you to disappear under layers. It rewards intention. When you begin with flattering lines, choose structured mid layers, finish with a harmonious coat, and refine with thoughtful accessories, you create outfits that feel elevated, comfortable, and personal.

As seasons shift, personal style grounds us - reminding us that confidence, comfort, and intentional dressing can exist together, beautifully.



**By Angela Haynes-Ranger**

**Style Coach & Award Winning Mentor**  
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# Legacy in Motion

## The Ripple Effect of Authentic Leadership

Legacy isn't built in a single moment of success. It's built in the quiet consistency of how you show up, in your work, your relationships, and the impact you leave on others long after the meeting ends, or the project closes.

True legacy isn't about titles or recognition. It's about influence, the kind that transforms teams, inspires confidence, and reminds others of what's possible when we lead with authenticity.

### From Personal Growth to Shared Impact

Each season of growth teaches us something new about ourselves. Early in our careers, we focus on proving our capability. Later, we learn to sustain our energy and set boundaries that protect our purpose.

Eventually, we reach a point where the question shifts from "How can I succeed?" to "How can I help others succeed?"

That shift marks the beginning of legacy. It's no longer about mastering your craft. It's about using your experience to guide others through theirs. Leadership becomes less about personal milestones and more about creating pathways for others to walk confidently in their own direction.

*"Legacy isn't what you leave behind. It's what you build within others while you're still here."*

### Redefining Leadership Through Influence

The most memorable leaders aren't the ones who had all the answers. They're the ones who listened, empowered, and trusted others to grow. Influence, at its core, is a transfer of belief, helping others see in themselves what they can't yet see alone.

When I stepped into my first leadership role, I thought credibility came from expertise. But over time, I realised that lasting impact comes from connection. It's built through empathy, curiosity, and genuine investment in the people around you.



If you want to leave a legacy that lasts, focus less on being impressive and more on being intentional. Your consistency, your integrity, and your presence will always speak louder than your position.

*"Influence is built on empathy and trust, not authority."*

### Passing the Torch

Mentorship is one of the most powerful ways to turn experience into legacy. Each conversation, piece of advice, or example you set becomes part of someone else's story. When you lead by example, especially through vulnerability and authenticity, you give others permission to do the same. Leadership isn't about being at the top; it's about creating ladders for others to climb beside you.

### Ask yourself:

Who has helped me grow into who I am today?

Who can I empower now to take their next step?

What values do I want my leadership to reflect long after I've moved on?



### Sustaining Legacy Through Self-Leadership

Leaving a legacy doesn't mean burning out in the process. It means leading sustainably, with grounded purpose and clear boundaries. When your leadership is rooted in alignment, not approval, your impact naturally expands. People don't remember the busiest version of you; they remember the grounded one who modelled calm in chaos, grace in growth, and strength in uncertainty.

Your example becomes the blueprint others follow, not because you told them how, but because you showed them what's possible.

*"Your greatest influence comes not from what you achieve, but from how you lead others to believe in themselves."*

### Final Thoughts: Keep the Momentum Moving

Legacy isn't a finish line. It's a ripple that keeps moving through every interaction, decision, and act of leadership. The projects you complete will fade, but the confidence, courage, and clarity you instil in others will endure. Keep building. Keep mentoring. Keep showing others that success can be both ambitious and sustainable.

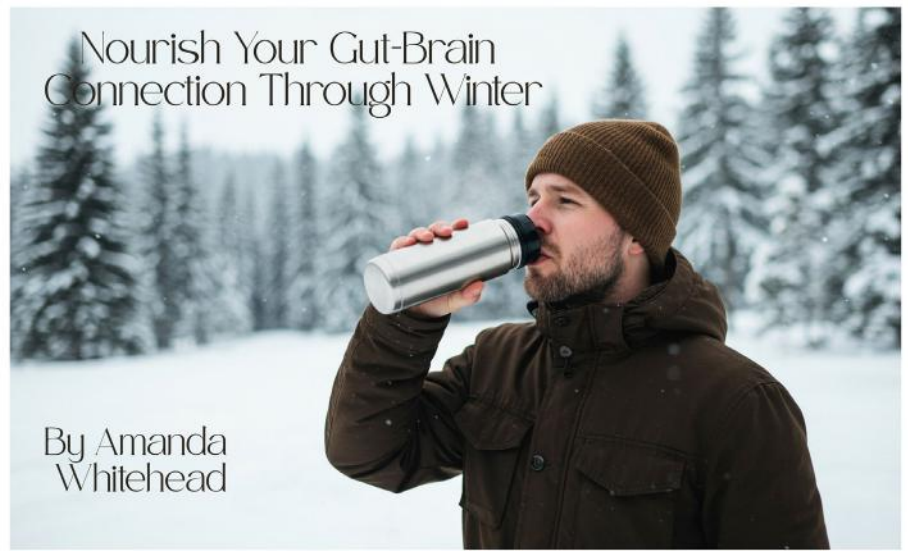
Because the most significant measure of your leadership isn't what you accomplish, it's the growth you inspire in those who come next.

*"Leadership that lasts is leadership that lifts others."*

By Emily Apell







As winter sets in, many of us crave warmth, comfort, and stillness. I know I do. I also love the lessons nature brings, slowing down, shedding or letting go of what no longer serves us, and preparing for the warmer seasons ahead, where we can really flourish and grow. However, the darker months can also challenge our mood, digestion and energy. The secret to staying balanced, I believe, lies in supporting the gut-brain connection, a vital communication pathway between our digestive and nervous systems.

I talk about this a lot, because understanding when our nervous system is dysregulated and how to support and regulate it, really can make a huge impact on our overall health and wellbeing, mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. We are one being, totally connected, and this is where the gut-brain connection plays a huge role.

#### **Why the Gut-Brain Connection Matters**

Our gut is often called our “second brain.” It produces around 90% of our serotonin, the happy hormone; 90% of dopamine, the motivation hormone that also impacts our flexibility; and finally GABA, another hormone that helps with relaxation and sleep. These are all neurotransmitters that help regulate mood, sleep, and play a part in our emotional health.

When stress, poor diet, or seasonal changes disrupt the gut, we can feel it emotionally and mentally — through anxiety, fatigue, or low mood. By nourishing the gut and soothing the nervous system, we create stability and resilience from within.

#### **Here are a few ways you can do this Feed Your Microbiome**

Winter comfort foods don't have to mean sacrificing fibre. Prebiotic-rich vegetables like carrots, leeks, onions, and parsnips feed beneficial gut bacteria, while fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kefir, miso, and kimchi help maintain microbial balance.

These foods not only support digestion but also promote neurotransmitter production. Dishes like soups and stews are great for supporting digestion, whilst giving us that warm, comforting feeling.

#### **Choose Healthy Fats for a Calm Nervous System**

Healthy fats are essential for nerve function, mood regulation, supporting joints, ligaments and our overall brain health. Include omega-3-rich foods like wild salmon, sardines, walnuts, chia, and flaxseed. These fats support cognitive health, reduce inflammation, and stabilise emotional well-being during the darker months. You can add nuts and seeds to dishes like porridge and soups, or smoothie bowls and shakes, or sprinkle them on yoghurt with some berries. They are also a great source of magnesium, which can help reduce tiredness and fatigue.

#### **Eat Warming, Nourishing Meals**

Winter digestion benefits from warmth. Swap raw salads for soups, stews, and broths — easy to digest and hydrating. Add warming spices such as ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, and cumin to stimulate circulation and metabolism. These will also help with blood sugar regulation and help to prevent inflammation, too.

#### **Hydrate in Harmony**

We often underestimate the importance of hydration in cold weather. Dry air and indoor heating can deplete moisture, affecting gut function, energy and focus. I always find warm water refreshing, sometimes adding a slice of lemon, which is also a great electrolyte to help support my liver & kidney health. Sipping on herbal teas (chamomile, lemon balm, ginger and peppermint) and mineral-rich broths, and eating water-containing foods like citrus, apples, celery and cooked greens can all contribute to. I get asked all the time, How much should I be drinking? For me personally, I always say 2 to 3 litres a day. Yes, you visit the loo a lot; however, that is the point. We want to be flushing toxins consistently. The last thing you want is toxic overload. Believe me, it is really not pleasant.

#### **Support Your Nervous System Through Gentle Habits** *Your nervous system thrives on routine, rhythm, and calm.*

- Begin your day with natural light exposure to regulate mood and circadian rhythms. If you can, it's great to get outside first thing. Maybe go for a walk, do some yoga, tai chi or Qi gong. Moving the body really helps with boosting energy, and I personally find it great for connecting body and mind. It's a fabulous way to ground yourself, too. Mother Nature really is beautiful to be surrounded by.

- Practice deep breathing or meditation before meals to activate your “rest and digest” response. I find this really helpful, first thing in the morning to start my day and in the evening too. You can focus on your breath throughout the day, too, even taking two minutes to check in with how you're feeling and taking three deep breaths, then asking that question again, really can help lower stress levels and support your nervous system.

- Practicing gratitude when you first wake in the morning and before going to sleep at night. You can not possibly feel anxious when you are practicing gratitude, so you go to sleep and wake with a grateful heart. This changes the energy you will feel, lifting your mood and helping you to stay in that “rest and digest” side of your nervous system.

#### **Live Seasonally**

Seasonal living keeps us connected and calm. Choose local winter produce, and create tech-free evenings with candlelight. I always recommend stepping away from screens at least an hour before bed to help your brain switch off and relax. Lean into connection — shared meals, slow conversations and community. We are not meant to be alone. As humans, we need others around us. These small rituals help the gut-brain axis thrive, reminding the body and mind that it's safe, nourished, and in rhythm with nature.

In short, winter is an invitation to slow down, eat deeply nourishing foods, and cultivate calm. By tending to your gut and nervous system, you can transform the season into one of grounded joy and steady vitality.



**Holistic Health and Nutrition Coach**

**[www.purposefullynourished.com](http://www.purposefullynourished.com)**



# LIMIT

## HAVE YOU LOST SIGHT OF WHO YOU ARE?

### RECONNECTING WITH YOUR TRUE SELF BY RELEASING LIMITING BELIEFS

Do you ever feel like you've lost a sense of who you are? Perhaps you wake up some mornings feeling confused, unsure of your direction in life. Maybe you once had big dreams, clear goals, and exciting plans, but now you feel stuck, perhaps unable to take that next step forward. You know what you want, but something invisible seems to be holding you back.

That "something" often sounds like the quiet but persistent inner voice that says, "I can't do this. What if I fail? I'm not ready. I'm not smart enough. I'm not healthy enough." Sometimes it even whispers, "What will people think?" And so, instead of moving toward the life we desire, we shrink back. We stay small, safe, and unseen not because we lack ability or desire, but because we've learned to doubt ourselves.

These patterns usually don't appear out of nowhere. They are rooted in deep-seated beliefs we've absorbed throughout our lives; beliefs that live beneath our conscious awareness.

From a young age, we take in messages from parents, teachers, friends, and society. Some of these messages uplift and encourage us, while others quietly shape the way we view ourselves and our place in the world.

When I was growing up, I was often told that I was "the quiet one" in the family.

At first, it was just an observation, a simple comment. But over time, it became something I believed about myself. I started to act in ways that matched that label, retreating from situations where I might have spoken up or been noticed. I would hide away in my room, spending hours alone, thinking that this was simply who I was.

What I didn't realise then was that this belief "I'm the quiet one" had become part of my identity. It influenced how I showed up in the world and how I related to others. It wasn't just a description; it was a limitation I had unknowingly accepted as truth.

Beliefs like these operate at the unconscious level. They are like invisible filters that colour our perception of reality. They affect how we interpret experiences, how we respond to challenges, and even how we view what's possible for us. When these beliefs are supportive - such as "I am capable" or "I am loved" - they help us flourish. But when they are rooted in fear, shame, or self-doubt, they hold us back from living the life we truly want.

The good news is that these beliefs are not set in stone. Once we become aware of them, we can begin to release and rewrite them. That's where Mind Detox comes in.

Mind Detox is a transformative process that helps uncover and dissolve the unhealthy beliefs, emotions, and memories stored in the unconscious mind. It works by identifying the root cause of an issue, not just the surface symptom, and clearing the emotional charge that keeps it in place. Through gentle questioning and awareness, you're guided to see things differently,

allowing old patterns to dissolve naturally by getting to the root cause.

When we let go of those outdated beliefs, something incredible happens: we reconnect with who we truly are beneath all the conditioning. The quiet confidence that's been buried under years of self-doubt begins to rise. We start making choices that align with our truth rather than our fears.

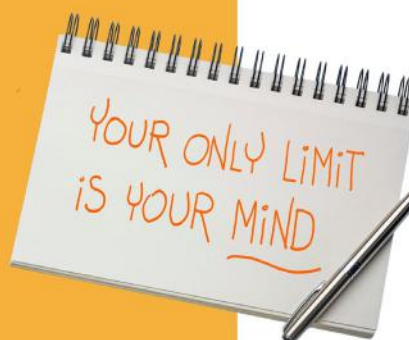
Reclaiming your sense of self isn't about becoming someone new; it's about remembering who you were before the world told you who to be. It's about stripping away the layers of "shoulds," labels, and expectations to reveal the vibrant, capable, and worthy person who's always been there.

So, if you've been feeling lost, stuck, or unsure of your path, know this: there is nothing wrong with you. You haven't failed. You haven't missed your chance. You've simply been living from old beliefs that no longer serve you. The moment you begin to question them, you open the door to freedom.

**By Nikki Hillhouse**

**[www.nikkihillhouse.com](http://www.nikkihillhouse.com)**

Nikki Hillhouse is a Therapeutic Coach, Meditation Teacher, Bestselling Author, and Speaker who helps people heal from trauma, reconnect with their true selves, and live with clarity and meaning. Now based in the Turkish countryside, she provides heart-led online coaching and leads restorative wellness retreats.







**SOME OF OUR**  
*collection*

### Who Are Ranath Media?

We are a creative publishing house that designs, curates, publishes and prints powerful, purpose-driven magazines and special editions for businesses, celebrities, influencers and institutions.

From concept to completion, we handle every stage of the journey, from editorial design and layout, to content creation and print distribution. Our publications are beautifully crafted, globally distributed, and made to inspire, inform and connect audiences.

Whether you're looking to elevate your brand, celebrate your story, or create meaningful engagement with your audience, Ranath Media transforms ideas into timeless magazines that make an impact across print and digital platforms.





# Horoscope for

Welcome, to a period of re-evaluation. Between December 2025 and March 2026 is not a time to be rushing into the new year with frantic energy, but about a necessary pause for deep recalibration. We are navigating a cosmic slow-down, designed to ensure our foundations in both our careers and our closest relationships are built to last.

**Jupiter Retrograde in Cancer (November 2025 – March 2026):** Jupiter, the planet of expansion and fortune, is moving backward through the sign of home, security, and emotion. This isn't a time for immediate, massive outward growth; it's a four-month period dedicated to emotional alignment. We are collectively asked the question: What makes me feel truly safe? Am I investing in the right emotional and personal foundations? This will profoundly affect career stability and the emotional root of our relationships.

**Saturn in Pisces:** The taskmaster of the cosmos continues its transit through the mystical, boundary-less waters of Pisces. This is where we learn to put structure around our intuition, compassion, and creative projects. Expect tests in areas where you lack clear emotional and financial boundaries. What have you been enabling? What do you need to sacrifice to build a more authentic future?

Let us now take a look at how these transits are showing up for each sign.

## Aries

Jupiter Retrograde activates your 4th House of Home/Foundation, suggesting a need to reassess your career's emotional cost. Does your work truly support your sense of belonging? You may feel a pull toward working from home, or dealing with family matters that distract from professional goals.

Saturn in the 12th House demands you build structure around your rest and mental health. Burnout is a risk if you don't. From January to February, Mars in your 10th House of Career provides powerful energy to push through major projects, but the foundation must be solid first.

## Taurus

Jupiter Retrograde in your 3rd House is a call to review your communication strategies and local networks. You may revisit old contracts, courses, or business ideas you previously abandoned. It's a powerful time for editing and refining your message. Saturn in the 11th House provides the structure needed to consolidate your network and social capital.

Be discerning about which groups or alliances truly serve your long-term vision. Money moves through your 8th House of shared resources and 9th House of higher learning/travel, suggesting a time to review investments or educational costs.

## Gemini

Jupiter Retrograde in your 2nd House is a four-month audit of your income, self-worth, and spending habits. This is not the time to take huge financial risks, but to review your relationship with money. Are you charging what you are truly worth? Saturn's transit through your 10th House of Career continues to demand discipline and maturity in your professional life.

Promotions and recognition are possible, but only through consistent, hard work and a willingness to take on new, serious responsibilities. The Mercury Retrograde in this same house in March requires you to triple-check communication with authority figures or in public statements.

## Cancer

Jupiter Retrograde is happening in your 1st House, placing your personal goals and identity under a microscope. You may revisit old professional paths or feel a deep need to align your career with your authentic self.

The money focus is on the 8th House of shared resources/debt through Mars's transit; this is a time for assertive action during January and February in resolving financial entanglements. Saturn in the 9th House asks you to ground your higher education, travel plans, or spiritual philosophies into a practical structure. Commit to one course or belief system rather than chasing every shiny new idea.

## Leo

Jupiter Retrograde in your 12th House signals a time for behind-the-scenes reflection. This is not a period for big launches or public fanfare; focus on editing, finishing old projects, and clearing away mental clutter. Saturn in your 8th House of Shared Resources and Debt demands a mature, responsible review of loans, investments, or a partner's finances.

This is the time to pay off or restructure debt. The most dynamic professional energy comes from the Mars transit in your 6th House in January and February, allowing you to assertively clean up routines and daily work habits.

## Virgo

Jupiter Retrograde in your 11th House is a time to revisit old contacts, networks, and long-term goals. An opportunity with an old friend or group may resurface. Saturn is transiting your 7th House of Partnerships, demanding structure and realism in all one-on-one working relationships, including collaborations and client dynamics.

You must define clear terms, boundaries, and expectations. Money is dynamic in your 5th House of speculation and investment due to Mars moving through it during January and February.



# Winter 2025/2026



## Libra

Jupiter Retrograde is happening in your 10th House, the very top of your chart. This is a powerful time for revising career ambitions and public image. An old boss, professional project, or public reputation issue may resurface, requiring a mature re-handling. Saturn in the 6th House continues to demand that you structure your daily work, routines, and health habits.

You cannot expand your career with Jupiter's assistance unless your daily life is efficient and disciplined, allow the Saturn transit to do this. Mars in your 4th House in January and February could create energy/tension around working from home or property matters.

## Scorpio

Jupiter Retrograde in your 9th House is a cue to re-evaluate your long-term goals, beliefs, or educational path. You may revisit a major publication, a legal matter, or a travel plan. Saturn in the 5th House asks you to bring structure and responsibility to your creative projects and romantic life.

Creative blocks are possible, but only to force you to commit seriously to the work. Money flows through your 2nd House with Mars providing assertive energy to increase your income, followed by intense communication related to money when Mars moves into your 3rd House.

## Sagittarius

Jupiter Retrograde in your 8th House is a deep-dive into shared finances, debts, or investments. You may need to revisit loan applications, tax filings, or renegotiate terms with a bank or partner. This is a time to release financial baggage. Saturn in the 4th

House continues to demand maturity and structure in your home environment. Property matters may feel heavy, or you may need to take on new responsibility for family members. Mars in your 2nd House during January and February provides the drive to earn money assertively, but be mindful of aggressive spending.

**Marion Kirk has worked with tarot and astrology since the 1990's, she is a fourth generation intuitive from Scotland. An International divination conference presenter, author and creator of The Grief Journey Oracle and organiser of The Oracles Rebellion Divination Event.**

## Capricorn

Jupiter Retrograde in your 7th House of Partnerships is asking you to re-evaluate your collaborations and client relationships. You may revisit an old contract or partner, deciding if the dynamic truly supports your growth. Saturn in the 3rd House continues to apply discipline to your communication style, local environment, and learning efforts.

Commit to learning a new, tangible skill. Mars in your 1st House over January and February gives you a huge boost of personal energy and drive, use this to assert yourself professionally and launch projects. Money is addressed by Venus in your 2nd House around the same time, linking charm and value to your income.

## Aquarius

Jupiter Retrograde in your 6th House is a call to review your daily work habits, routines, and relationship with service. This is the perfect time to clean up your professional efficiency and commit to a sustainable wellness plan. Saturn in the 2nd House continues to demand structure around your income and self-worth.

You must be disciplined about saving, budgeting, and clearly defining your value in the workplace. Pluto, having recently stationed Direct in your 1st House, is an ongoing theme of personal power and transformation that impacts your entire professional path. Mars in the 12th House during January and February may lead to hidden work or energy draining efforts, be mindful of what you do behind the scenes.

## Pisces

Jupiter Retrograde in your 5th House of Creativity and Joy asks you to revisit old creative projects, passions, or speculations. What brings you genuine joy? How can that inform your professional path? Saturn in your 1st House of Self and Identity is the main theme: this transit requires you to mature, take responsibility for your life, and define your personal boundaries.

This is a powerful, though sometimes heavy, period of self-definition. Mars in your 11th House in January and February gives you the energy to network and pursue group goals assertively. The inner work must precede the outer push.

**By Marion Kirk**  
**International Tarot &**  
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# WINTER'S QUIET LIGHT

## A SEASON OF GRATITUDE

As winter settles around us, the world begins to soften into stillness. The days are shorter, and the air carries a sharper chill, nature offering a sanctuary of peace. This is the season that calls us inward - not to achieve or to strive, but to soften and reflect.

In this article, we look to winter as a sacred pause, a season that guides us to gratitude and renewal. Together, we will reflect on the gifts of the year gone by, explore a gentle journaling practice, and discover how crystals and chakra work can support in this time of rest and transformation. Winter reminds us that even in peace, light is quietly gathering within.

For many, winter is a season of magic, where wonder reveals itself in the smallest moments. As the year folds gently behind us, this season provides an opportunity to look back with a grateful heart. Like snow covering the ground, appreciation lays a soft blanket over our memories, transforming even the most complex paths into moments of wisdom and growth. Winter encourages us to recognise the gifts hidden inside every life experience. In the depths of winter, meditation becomes a guiding light. A time to honour what has been and rest in the warmth of gratitude. Sitting quietly, allow the heart to open and give thanks for the people who walk beside us, for the growth we didn't expect, and for the strength we discovered within.

In the practice of meditation, winter becomes more than a cold season; it is a reminder that, within stillness, transformation quietly unfolds. In the soft glow of a candle or in the silence of the early morning, we are reminded of what it means to sit with ourselves in acceptance. To honour all that has been, without rushing to what is yet to come.

Winter's wisdom  
is simple and  
profound.  
Harness this  
opportunity to  
pause, reflect  
and give  
thanks.



### *Soul Notes: Winter Gratitude Journaling & Reflection*

Gratitude is one of the highest emotional vibrations. When we shift our focus from problems to blessings, the light in our lives becomes magnified. Gratitude lightens the weight we carry and generates joy, peace, and renewed energy, no matter the circumstances. It lifts us from dwelling on what is missing and anchors us in the beauty of what is already here.

This winter journaling practice invites you to sit quietly with a warm drink and write down what you are thankful for, for the year that is now almost over. Include the people, experiences, and lessons you feel most grateful for, honouring the moments of joy and ease, and also the ones that tested you, shaped you, and revealed strengths you may not have known you carried.

Place gratitude at the heart of your spiritual practice this winter; gratitude shifts everything. Even in the moments of challenge, there are threads of expansion, resilience and unexpected gifts.

### **Inspiration**

**Gratitude for the Year Past:** Which moments, people, or lessons from this year am I most grateful for? How have they shaped me, guided me, or helped me to grow?

**Inner Light:** In the quiet of winter, what light do I sense glowing within me? How can I nurture and protect this spark through the colder, darker months?

**Rest, Renewal & Simplicity:** Where in my life am I being invited to slow down? What would it look like to honour rest, create more space, or choose simplicity?

**Release & Surrender:** What am I ready to gently let go - old patterns, fears, or stories that no longer serve my Highest Good? How can I release them with love as I step forward into the New Year?

**Seeds of Intention:** What quiet dreams or intentions am I planting, trusting they will take root and flourish in their own time?

When your words feel complete, close your eyes and rest your hands over your heart. Breathe slowly, letting gratitude flow through you like a warm light.

*Whisper softly:*

*I am grateful for all that has carried me to this moment.  
With an open heart, I honour the lessons, the blessings, and  
the growth.*

*I trust that gratitude will continue to guide me forward with  
peace, abundance and grace.*



## ***Grounded in Gratitude: Crystals for Winter Alignment***

Crystals are not only stones of the earth, but they are also allies of the soul. In winter, they become gentle companions, amplifying gratitude, offering clarity, and steadying you for the path forward. Crystals carry ancient vibrations that support us as we reflect on the year gone by and gather strength for what lies ahead.

Invite your chosen crystals into your winter rituals. Place them near a candle during meditation, hold one gently as you write down what you are grateful for, or rest them by your bedside as you sleep. Trust their presence to ground you, comfort you, and remind you that even in the quiet, transformation is taking place. Trust your intuition to guide you to the stones you need most.

### **Snowflake Obsidian Purification Balance Transformation**

- *Dark volcanic glass marked with soft white patterns like falling snow, Snowflake Obsidian is the stone of winter's truth,*
- *It teaches us that within shadow there is always light, and within endings, the promise of new beginnings.*
- *Like winter itself, Snowflake Obsidian offers both stillness and renewal, guiding you through transformation with grounding and grace.*

### **Clear Quartz Clarity Amplification Healing**

- *Clear Quartz shines like frost-kissed ice beneath the winter sun, pure and luminous.*
- *Known as a master healer, it amplifies energy and intention, magnifying whatever you focus on.*
- *Clear Quartz helps you see beyond the surface, bringing clarity to your reflections and illuminating the quiet growth unfolding within.*

### **Amethyst Peace Wisdom Spiritual Connection**

- *Amethyst carries the silence of winter twilight, offering peace to the mind and nourishment to the soul.*
- *This soothing stone eases stress and restores balance, inviting clarity through calm contemplation.*
- *A crystal of wisdom and higher connection, Amethyst opens the way to deeper intuition and spiritual renewal, reminding us to trust the stillness of the season.*

## ***Quiet Radiance: Nurturing the Chakras in Winter***

The chakras, like the seasons, move in rhythm with the cycles of nature. In winter, their energy draws gently inward, no longer seeking to bloom, creating depth and renewal at a soul level. This is a time of quiet presence - a season for gratitude, for release, and for tending the inner flame that carries us through the darker months.

*International Usui Reiki Master Teacher, Angel Reiki Master, Advanced Crystal Therapy Healer, Professional Practitioner Diploma, Manifestation Coach, Holistic Partner at Tara Rose Salon UAE & Insight Timer Teacher.*

By attuning to the Crown, Third Eye, and Heart chakras, we open to winter's wisdom. Grounding in gratitude, deepening in vision, and resting in peace as we prepare for renewal.

In meditation, imagine your chakras like stars in the winter night sky, glowing softly and aligning themselves with calm precision. With every inhale, draw in clarity, light, and peace. With every exhale, release any heaviness the year has left behind. Allow your breath to be the gentle thread that guides you through the body, pausing at each chakra to notice, to listen, and to honour. Whatever arises, meet it with acceptance and compassion.

### **The Crown Chakra**

The Crown Chakra is our bridge to higher wisdom. Throughout this season, it reminds us of the sacred thread that connects us all to something greater. Sitting quietly, invite gratitude to flow upward, offering thanks for the unseen guidance that carried you throughout the past year.

#### **Affirmation:**

I am connected to the infinite light of the universe. I give thanks for the guidance that flows through me in every season of life.

### **The Third Eye Chakra**

Winter is a season of deep insight, a time to look back at the year with thanks and to see more clearly the wisdom it has offered. The Third Eye Chakra opens us to inner vision and truth, sharpening our awareness beyond what is seen.

#### **Affirmation:**

I trust my inner vision. I see the wisdom in my journey and carry it forward with clarity and grace.

### **The Heart Chakra**

The Heart Chakra is a sanctuary of love, compassion, and forgiveness. Winter asks us to open our hearts and create space for peace. Place your hands over your heart and breathe warmth into this centre.

#### **Affirmation:**

I honour the past with gratitude. My heart is open to love, forgiveness, and the healing presence of peace.

## **By Helen Gullick**



*Winter meditation*



**Instagram@healingwavesuae**



# ENERGY MATTERS

## EVERYTHING IS ENERGY -

## AND IT'S SHAPING YOUR

## DAILY CHOICES

"If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration." — Nikola Tesla

Everything is energy. Every thought, every feeling, every action, every object, every sound, and every experience carries a vibration. Science tells us that energy cannot be created or destroyed - it can only change form.

This means the world around us, and even within us, is constantly shifting, exchanging, and transforming energy. When we truly begin to understand this concept it has the power to shape the way we live and the choices we make each day.

### The Energy of Everyday Life

Most of us move through our day unaware of how much energy we're interacting with - from the clothes we wear to the spaces we live in. Yet, when we start to tune in and make more conscious energetic choices, life begins to feel lighter, more aligned, and more meaningful.

Take something as simple as opening your wardrobe each morning. You might notice that on some days, you're drawn to bright colours and flowing fabrics, while on others, you instinctively reach for soft neutrals or structured styles. This is not random. You're responding to energy - both the vibration of the clothing itself and your own energetic needs for that day.

Colour, texture, and fabric all carry frequencies that interact with your personal energy field. For example, natural fibres such as cotton, linen, and bamboo tend to hold a purer, earth-connected vibration, helping you feel grounded and calm. Synthetic materials, on the other hand, often feel denser or disconnected because of how they're produced and what they're made from.

When you start to see your wardrobe as an energetic extension of yourself, you can begin to dress with intention - aligning how you want to feel and what energy you wish to project into the world.

### The Hidden Story in Your Clothes

Every garment tells a story. From its humble beginnings - the seed that grew into the cotton, the sheep that provided the wool, the dye that coloured the fabric - to the hands that cut, stitched, and sewed it together. Each step of that journey infuses the clothing with its own energetic imprint.

**Ask yourself:** Who made my clothes? Was it created ethically and sustainably, by someone who was paid fairly and worked in safe conditions? Or was it mass-produced in a factory where workers are undervalued and overworked?

When something is made with love, care, and consciousness, that energy is embedded in the fabric - and when you wear it, you carry that frequency with you. Likewise, when clothing is produced through exploitation, that lower vibration remains within the garment, subtly affecting how it feels to wear.

This is why conscious fashion - choosing pieces made with integrity and intention - is about far more than aesthetics or sustainability. It's an energetic practice. When we choose what to wear based on how it feels energetically, we empower ourselves to align our outer world with our inner vibration.

So next time you're getting dressed, pause for a moment. Notice what colour you're drawn to. Feel the texture of the fabric between your fingers.

**Ask yourself:** What energy do I want to embody today? Confidence? Calm? Creativity? Joy? Your wardrobe can become your daily toolkit for energetic alignment.

### The Energy of the Things We Own

Clothing is just one example of how energy weaves through our lives. Every object we own holds its own energetic story.

Look around your home. What's the energy behind the things you choose to surround yourself with? Your furniture, artwork, photos, heirlooms - even the smallest trinket on a shelf - all carry vibrations connected to their history, the people they've belonged to, and the experiences they've witnessed.

Have you ever struggled to let go of something - a couch, an old piece of furniture, or a box of keepsakes - even though you don't really use it anymore? Often, we tell ourselves we're keeping it because it's "still good" or "too valuable to throw away." But on a deeper level, what we may be holding onto is the energy of a certain time in our lives - the memories, emotions, or even unresolved experiences connected to it.

For example, imagine a sofa you've had for many years. Think about what's happened in your life during that time. Was it a period of happiness and connection, or a time of stress, change, or loss? Every experience that took place around that piece of furniture leaves an energetic residue.

When you begin to see your belongings this way, you might notice how the energy of your home feels heavier or lighter depending on what you keep. Decluttering then becomes less about minimalism and more about energetic freedom.





**Ask yourself:** Does this item still align with who I am today? Does it carry an energy I want to bring forward into my future? If the answer is no, then perhaps it's time to lovingly release it.

### **Making Space for the New**

Energy, like water, needs to flow. When we hold on too tightly to the past - whether it's old emotions, outdated beliefs, or physical objects our energy can become stagnant. By consciously clearing space, we create room for fresh energy to enter our lives.

Just as we might open a window to let in fresh air, we can "spring clean" our energetic environment by letting go of what no longer serves us. This could mean clearing out your wardrobe, reorganising your home, or simply re-evaluating what and who you allow into your energetic field.

Remember, energy cannot be created or destroyed it can only change form. When you release something with love and gratitude, you're not losing it; you're transforming its energy, creating a ripple effect that invites something new and aligned to take its place.

So perhaps it's time to look around your home and ask: What energy am I holding onto? What am I ready to release so I can invite in something better?

This process is not about perfection or purging everything you own. It's about awareness, intention and flow. When we clear physical and energetic clutter, we create space for more joy, creativity, and abundance to enter our lives.

### **Empowering Your Energy Every Day**

When we start to live from the awareness that everything is energy, we realise we are not powerless passengers in our lives - we are the drivers.

### **About the Author**

***Sally Estlin is a consciousness mentor, frequency therapist, and founder of Self Empowered Lifestyles and Empowered Clothing, two brands dedicated to helping people look good, feel good, and do good for the planet. Through her work, Sally guides individuals to live in energetic alignment and make empowered, conscious choices every day.***

***Explore Sally's world of energy, empowerment, and intention at [www.sallyestlin.com](http://www.sallyestlin.com) - and discover how you can start aligning your energy to create a happier, healthier, and more abundant life today.***

Every thought we think, every emotion we feel, every action we take and every object we choose to keep or release contributes to the vibration we're emitting. And that vibration determines the kind of experiences we attract.

You don't have to meditate on a mountaintop or completely overhaul your life to work with energy. You can start in the smallest, most practical ways - by choosing what you wear with intention, by surrounding yourself with objects that uplift you, by clearing out what feels heavy or outdated and by bringing meaning and mindfulness to the ordinary moments of your day.

The more consciously we interact with energy, the more empowered we become. We begin to realise that our outer world mirrors our inner state - and by shifting our energy, we shift our reality.

### **A Final Thought**

We're not here for a long time, so let's make it a good time.

Life is meant to be lived with purpose, playfulness, and presence. When you honour energy - in your home, your wardrobe, your thoughts, and your choices - you begin to live in harmony with the natural rhythm of the universe.

So go ahead - open your wardrobe, take a deep breath, and ask yourself: What energy do I choose to wear today? What story do I want my life to tell?

Because when you remember that everything is energy, you realise that you are the artist, the conductor, and the creator of your own energetic masterpiece.



# The Invisible Role Running Your Life



## How Understanding Your Informal Role Can Transform Your Work and Relationships

By Linda Wes



Mary arrived at my practice exhausted and frustrated. “My colleagues are lazy and sloppy,” she told me. “I’m doing all the work. If it weren’t for me, our customers would be furious.”

Mary works for an international parcel delivery company in the UK, responsible for ensuring all documents accompanying packages are correct before they go through customs. Her colleagues pick up parcels from customers and have them fill in forms. Often, it’s a last-minute rush because clients want next-day delivery, but in the chaos, forms arrive incomplete or incorrect.

Mary, being at the final checkpoint, does a last check. And this is exactly where her stress lives. Most forms aren’t filled in correctly or completely. She works overtime every day, racing against the 23:00 deadline to fix everything so packages can clear customs and reach their destinations. She was burning out fast. Yet when she raised this with her manager, he told her she was taking her job too seriously. He suggested she take a holiday or start yoga to relax more.

### Your Childhood Blueprint

In my autumn article, I explored how your childhood role in your family system can determine the career you choose. In this article, I want to focus on becoming aware of the roles we unconsciously take up in our adult lives and how they affect every system we’re part of. When I asked Mary about her family, a familiar pattern emerged. She had a younger brother with autism who required most of her parents’ attention. At school, teachers asked Mary to watch him, help him, manage his behavior. After school, her parents expected detailed reports about his day. Mary became fiercely independent at a young age and was praised for it. She learned to step in whenever needed—shopping, childcare, housework, laundry. Mary was always there, taking care of everything.

To me, her workplace situation made perfect sense. Mary was doing exactly what she’d learned as a child: keeping the system running, taking care of everything

and everyone. But she couldn’t see this pattern. She only felt depleted.

### Formal vs. Informal Roles

Every organization assigns us formal roles—job descriptions that define duties, parameters, interactions, and deliverables. Mary’s formal role is “Transport Network Planner.” Her colleagues’ formal role is “Package Delivery Person,” which includes ensuring all required forms are complete and correct. These formal roles appear in organizational charts, making the system visible. But there’s another layer most people never see: informal roles.

René Molenkamp’s BART framework (Boundary, Authority, Role, and Task) helps us understand what happens when gaps appear in a system. When someone doesn’t fully take up their authority or complete their task, someone else with a tendency to fill such gaps will step in—unconsciously.

Mary fills gaps. It’s what she learned in childhood. Her colleagues aren’t completing their task—they’re not getting forms filled in correctly. But because Mary fills this gap, the system can’t see the real problem. She’s unconsciously covering for them.

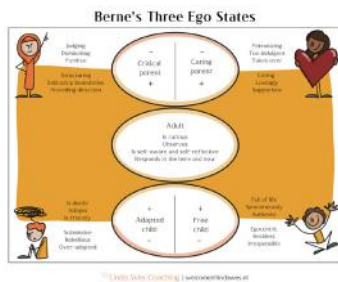
Management saw Mary as “too intense” rather than addressing the colleagues’ incomplete work. After several sessions, Mary had a breakthrough. She named her informal role: “Let’s Keep It Running.” She recognized she’d taken up this role since childhood, and she was still taking it up in every system—at her own expense.

### Understanding Ego States

To change her pattern, Mary needed to understand the invisible dynamics that kept it locked in place. A practical way to think about informal roles is through Eric Berne’s model of three ego states: Parent, Adult, and Child. While Berne didn’t call these “roles,” they’re a useful way to understand the unconscious dynamics between you and your colleagues, managers, friends, or family. We all carry these three ego states within us. Depending



on the context, different states get activated—mostly unconsciously, at least until we become aware of them.



Mary is 36, chronologically an adult. But when she enters a system where she senses help is needed, her Caring Parent ego state activates. She takes all the

responsibility, stepping into her “Let’s Keep It Running” role. Here’s where it gets interesting: when Mary operates from her Caring Parent state, she unconsciously activates the Child state in her colleagues. They slip into the negative Free Child—reckless, irresponsible, not doing what their job requires.

Think of the colleague who always volunteers to take notes in meetings. Over time, what happens? Others stop bringing pens, stop paying attention to action items, and assume someone else is tracking decisions. The note-taker’s Caring Parent (“I’ll make sure nothing falls through the cracks”) unconsciously activates everyone else’s Free Child (“I don’t need to worry about that”). Neither person realizes they’re locked in this dance. When both people operate from their Adult ego state, something different happens: genuine collaboration, clear communication, and mutual respect become possible.

### Responding from the Adult State

The goal isn’t to eliminate these ego states—that’s impossible. The goal is awareness. When you recognize which state you’re in, you gain the power to choose a different response.

In Transactional Analysis, Berne discovered that communication flows smoothly when people interact from matching states—Adult-to-Adult, Parent-to-Parent, even Child-to-Child. The dysfunction begins with crossed transactions: when Mary spoke from Caring Parent to her colleagues’ Child, she created the exact dynamic both parties found frustrating. When you catch yourself crossing these lines—speaking Parent-to-Child instead of Adult-to-Adult—you can consciously shift, changing the entire interaction.

The Adult ego state is characterized by curiosity. You ask open-ended questions, genuinely trying to understand. You observe and share factual feedback without emotional charge. You’re self-aware and self-reflective, understanding what’s happening inside you. You know your triggers and your valence

toward certain informal roles. This awareness allows you to respond to what’s actually happening in the here and now, rather than making assumptions based on old patterns and reacting to those assumptions. To stay in the Adult ego state requires practice. It means noticing when you’re triggered, pausing before reacting, and choosing how to respond.

### Mary’s Transformation

Mary began recognizing the three ego states in different parts of her life. She noticed when she switched between them. Most importantly, she took responsibility for her informal role. She stopped fixing all the incorrect forms her colleagues handed in. Instead, she stepped into her Adult ego state and stated the facts: “I cannot send this package through customs without complete documentation.”

Her colleagues were upset at first. They accused her of being inflexible, of creating problems. Mary felt the familiar anxiety rising in her chest—the urgent pull to keep the system running. What if packages missed the deadline? What if customers were furious? Every fibre of her being screamed at her to just fill in the forms.

But Mary recognized what was happening. She was being triggered. The discomfort was intense—almost unbearable. Yet instead of reacting automatically, she paused. She felt the urge, acknowledged it, and consciously chose not to act on it. Mary held firm. She requested meetings with management, presenting the data: how many forms were arriving incomplete, how many hours she was working overtime, and what the job descriptions actually stated. In her Adult state, she was factual, not emotional or blaming.

Management could no longer ignore the gap in the system. Once Mary stopped colluding with the dysfunction, the system reorganized itself around the actual task requirements rather than around Mary’s over-functioning. It took a few months, but the system shifted. Her colleagues began taking responsibility for their work. They started getting correct, complete forms from customers from the outset.

Mary still works hard, but she’s no longer working overtime every night. The system now functions as it should, with everyone doing their actual job. And Mary? She’s recognizing now when there’s a gap and she tends to jump in. But she realizes she’s not responsible for keeping the system running. She never was

### Your Turn

Every system—your family, your workplace, your friends—requires certain roles to function. When someone doesn’t fulfil their formal role, the system creates a pull for someone else to step in and fill the gap. Someone always steps in.

The question isn’t whether you take up informal roles. You do. We all do. The question is: are you aware when it’s happening to you? Look at the systems you’re part of. Where do you feel that familiar urgency to step in or out? Next time it happens: stop. Ask yourself—why am I doing this? Who am I doing this for?

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# When High Performers Get Managed Down

## The Hidden Politics Behind

### "Sudden Underperformance"

Every winter, as performance reviews roll in, an unsettling pattern emerges across industries: some unlucky high performers — the people who carried teams, solved crises, and consistently exceeded expectations — suddenly receive a rating that reads “does not meet expectations.”

*Their first instinct is self-doubt.*

*Their second is confusion. “What did I do wrong?”*

But for many, the real question should be: What changed in the power dynamics above me?

Because high performers rarely collapse overnight. But the narrative around them can and often does — especially when a toxic or insecure manager decides they’ve become inconvenient, too visible, too competent, or quietly threatening to the hierarchy. This article unpacks the subtle yet strategic process of “managing someone down,” why it happens, what it looks like, and how high performers can stay in their power while navigating what is, at its core, a political manoeuvre rather than a performance issue.

#### The Rewrite of Reality: When Excellence Gets Reframed

In healthy environments, results speak for themselves. But in toxic ones, results become negotiable. A common pattern emerges: achievements that were once praised are now minimised or ignored. Deliverables that previously positioned you as a rising star suddenly become the “bare minimum.”

This isn’t helpful feedback. It’s narrative manipulation. A way for a manager to reposition you in the organisational story so your eventual exit feels justified rather than questioned. High performers rarely turn into low performers overnight. What does change overnight is a toxic leader’s willingness to acknowledge your contributions.

When a manager needs to push someone out quietly, the first step is always the same: redefine what “good” means, and move the goalposts so it becomes unattainable.

#### The Moving Target: A Game You Were Never Meant to Win

Another unmistakable sign of being managed down is the sudden shift in expectations. You hit the target only to find that the target has moved.

Kick me



You follow the established process, even as it changes. You deliver what you were asked for — but “what leadership really wanted” suddenly changes. The intention is subtle but powerful: to create perpetual failure no matter what you do. In these environments, success becomes unattainable. It becomes discretionary, defined moment by moment by a manager who benefits from your destabilisation.

#### Ambiguity: The Toxic Leader’s Favourite Tool

Healthy leadership gives actionable feedback while toxic leadership gives... fog. Instead of clear input, you suddenly receive vague statements:

- “There are concerns.”
- “It’s about perception.”
- “We’re not convinced about your leadership.”

None of these statements contains data, examples, or a path forward. And they’re intentionally unmeasurable. When a manager cannot substantiate your supposed shortcomings, they shift toward language that cannot be disproven. And the more you try to clarify, the more they reinforce the idea that “you’re too defensive,” or “not self-aware.”

This is psychological positioning, and the goal is the erosion of your confidence.

#### Workload as a Weapon: When Overperformance Is Used Against You

High performers often become the workhorse of a team because they can handle pressure. But in toxic structures, this is being abused until you drop out.

You begin receiving the hardest projects, the tightest deadlines, the impossible missions. Meanwhile, peers who are less capable mysteriously receive more protection, more support, and more reasonable expectations. This imbalance is not accidental. It’s the setup stage of a push-out strategy.

Overload creates exhaustion. Exhaustion creates mistakes. Mistakes create “evidence.” And evidence (even artificially manufactured) is then used in front of HR, who have a hard time understanding the truth.

#### The Quiet Freeze-Out: Isolation as a Corporate Power Play

One of the earliest indicators that you’re being managed down is exclusion. Suddenly, you’re no longer in key meetings. Your projects are filtered through your manager before reaching leadership. Information that once flowed freely now arrives late (or not at all). This isolation accomplishes two things:





1. *It weakens your visibility.*
2. *It strengthens the narrative that you're "not that important."*

This isolation isn't personal, it's tactical → reducing your influence, exposure, and network while taking over the narrative.

### **The Four Retaliation Plays Most People Don't See Until It's Too Late**

Once a manager decides to push someone out, a series of predictable patterns unfold. Recognising these early is not paranoia - it's strategic awareness you need to plan your next move.

#### **1. Reputation Engineering**

This begins quietly. Subtle comments about attitude, commitment, or leadership potential are sprinkled into conversations. Not severe enough to alarm HR, but just enough to plant doubt. Toxic bosses aren't storytellers; they're story architects. They build a foundation so future actions appear credible.

#### **2. Psychological Undermining**

The attacks don't focus on your work; they target your confidence. "Are you sure you're ready for this?" "This seems unlike your usual quality." These micro-cuts are intentional. Their goal: to erode your self-trust so thoroughly that you eventually accept their narrative as truth.

#### **3. Strategic Resource Removal**

Information dries up. Support disappears. Your access becomes limited. Then, with a straight face, you're told your performance is slipping. This tactic is so quiet and normalised that many don't realise what's happening until they're in crisis.

#### **4. Exit-Narrative Control**

Before you've even considered leaving, your manager begins shaping the storyline: "Misaligned." "Not the right cultural fit." "Needs performance support."

This prepares leadership and HR for an outcome that feels inevitable, even if entirely constructed.

### **Retaliation Is a Power Play: Your Strategy Must Be Stronger Than Their Story**

Responding emotionally only feeds the narrative. Responding strategically is how high performers win the long game. Your power lies in: Documentation. Factual with proof, and ready to be sent to a labour attorney. A regulated nervous system and a strategy on how to deal with it in alignment with your values. Toxic bosses escalate chaos. You counter with clarity on what you want to do, how you want to do it, and execute in silence.

### **The Deeper Layer: Why High Performers Stay Too Long**

Awareness of the external situation is only half the work. The other half is internal and far more confronting. Many high performers tell themselves they're staying because: *"I love my team."* *"Things might improve."* *"I just need to push through this quarter."*

But the deeper truth is always more personal: Something within you believed you had to fix it. Something in your conditioning normalised fighting to be seen. Some part of you thought leaving would mean failure. Those beliefs - invisible or stemming from childhood trauma - keep talented people stuck in harmful environments far longer than they should be. And they must be dissolved before you can rise again.

### **This Is a Moment to Rebuild**

Right now, if you're in this situation, you're likely exhausted, anxious, and doubting your instincts. That is the worst psychological state from which to make big career decisions. What you need is not more pressure.

Not more "just push through." You need restoration: of confidence, clarity, self-trust, and your professional identity. Because once those return, your strategic mind activates again. Your options expand. And you stop accepting the narrative being written about you.

### **You Are Not Failing. You Are Being Positioned.**

And You Can Rise From This With More Power Than You Realise.\*\* You won't be under your toxic boss forever. But change doesn't happen through waiting. It happens through waking up, rebuilding yourself, and choosing to rise. This season can break you - or it can remake you.

And you don't have to do that rebuilding alone. I have helped thousands of high performers understand the game and supported hundreds through courses and 1-1 coaching in finding clarity and rebuilding themselves from the inside. It's deeper work than "career coaching" - and its positive effects will change the way you approach your career and life for the better.

**Send me a DM on Instagram @corporate\_warriors if you want to learn more.**

**By Fela Rosa**

 **Corporate**  
WARRIORS

[www.corporatewarriors.io](http://www.corporatewarriors.io)



BY  
GAYLE  
SWAFFIELD

# FENG SHUI

## WHY YOU'RE NOT USING THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL YOU ALREADY OWN FOR SUCCESS



When my client walked into her apartment in London, she had no idea that the key to her dream life in Dubai was already sitting in her living room. Three and a half months later, she packed her bags for the life she had been visualising for years. Even as a Feng Shui consultant, I was really struck by the speed and precision of the alignment, and what I mean by this is that I know Feng Shui works; otherwise, I wouldn't be where I am today, but even I was amazed. It reminded me that when energy, intention, and environment fall into supportive flow, life can shift faster than we expect.

We are often taught that success is something out there, beyond ourselves, beyond our routines, and so we look for clarity, opportunity, and progress, investing in self-development, mentorship, and wellbeing practices, while believing the next strategy or habit will finally unlock the life we want, without even considering the one important factor quietly influencing our success every single day is often totally overlooked: the energy of our home. This is the most powerful tool we already own and one that often remains underutilised, and I'm here to change that thought pattern.

### Why Most People Aren't Using It

#### *The impact of the environment is underestimated.*

It is often believed that success comes solely from effort, habits, or mindset, without realising that the space you live and work in is constantly shaping your focus, energy, and opportunities. Feng Shui reveals that your environment is an active participant in your life—far more than a place to showcase your interior design skills, however confident you feel about them.

I don't want to offend anyone by writing this, but you can have a pristine, show-home-worthy space that guests ooh and ahh over, offering endless compliments on how beautiful it looks, yet the energy can still be working against you. Energy flow is subtle but powerful, and until this is more widely understood, many people unknowingly overlook the most influential tool already in their hands: their home.

#### *Feng Shui is misunderstood as superstition or décor.*

Feng Shui is often dismissed as something related to luck or decorative trends, and it is often assumed it's just a practice for placing an object in a certain corner or rearranging a sofa is all there is to it but there is so much more to consider. Feng Shui is an ancient system for aligning energy with intention and the environment; its depth is underestimated.

#### *People don't know how to use it.*

Even when someone senses the effect of their environment, they don't know where to start or what to adjust and without guidance, the power of Feng Shui remains untapped.

#### *Life and routines get in the way*

Clutter, busy routines, and distractions keep people from noticing the subtle messages their space is sending, so their environment stays unaligned by default. Coupled with the busyness of life, energy stagnates, opportunities leak, and focus diminishes. Even high achievers can find that subtle energy misalignments in their space can slow progress and block opportunities.

### Your Home Mirrors Your Life

Walk into any room and pause. Take a deep breath. Notice what you feel. Is the feeling uplifting, or is it heavy? This reaction happens before a conscious thought, and your nervous system responds to spatial energy long before your mind interprets it.

*A cluttered hallway can trigger overwhelm before you reach the kitchen.  
A dim bedroom can make mornings feel heavier than they need to be.  
A chaotic desk can sabotage focus before you even start the day.  
A stagnant corner can create inertia that seeps into creativity, productivity, and relationships.*

Your space is communicating to you constantly, and when that energy is obstructive instead of supportive, life can feel somewhat like wading through treacle, no matter how committed or disciplined you are. This is where Feng Shui



becomes transformative; its purpose isn't to decorate or add "lucky" objects, but to help you create a space where energy flows in ways that strengthen your intentions, magnify clarity, and support your goals, because when your home is aligned energetically, it becomes an active ally in your life. Feng Shui is a 4,000-year-old practice rooted in the study of the natural world, cycles, and stars.

Feng Shui observes how energy flows through space and interacts with people, helping to align intention, environment, and opportunity, and while aesthetics play a part, what we see impacts how we feel, but the true power of Feng Shui lies in what cannot be seen: the subtle movement of energy that shapes our lives.

### I Guide Energy Into Alignment

I've seen homes that support and homes that block potential, and my role as a Feng Shui consultant is to help people notice what their space is whispering and then guide it to work for them. By applying structured Feng Shui methodology alongside my energetic intuition, subtle shifts spark tangible change, a workspace realigned can sharpen focus, amplify productivity, and open doors to opportunities, a refreshed bedroom can create mornings that feel lighter and more energised, and a living room cleared of stagnant energy can reignite creativity and connection. Your environment is ready and waiting, and Feng Shui teaches you how to unlock it.

### What Feng Shui Really Means

True Feng Shui is the study of energy flow and how chi moves through a space, interacting with the people who inhabit it.

*Every room has a flow.*

*Every doorway carries influence.*

*Every placement has a psychological and energetic impact.*

*Every home holds its own blueprint—its strengths, challenges, and unique potential.*

When energy flows freely, life follows, but when energy stagnates, even the most disciplined efforts just don't land.

Feng Shui is definitely not just a trend, and of course, in the 80s, Feng Shui had its moment when someone would point at a piece of furniture and announce out loud, "That's bad Feng Shui" as if this practice was solely based on furniture placement, but it's so much more than that. Why do you think Hong Kong Feng Shui Consultants are often engaged to guide everything from office layouts to investment decisions? It's a disciplined practice that makes your home work for your goals, that turns the environment around you into an ally, one that supports your intentions with clarity, momentum, and precision.

### Small Adjustments, Big Outcomes

One of the most empowering truths about Feng Shui is that small adjustments can create profound results, and what surprises most people is that you do not need to drastically overhaul your home to shift your life. Thankfully, there's no knocking down walls or completely redecorating,

For example:

- *Repositioning a desk so you can see the door may immediately enhance focus and confidence.*
- *Activating a neglected corner with light, movement, or a personal touch can spark creativity and motivation.*
- *Removing clutter from key entry points opens the flow of energy, allowing opportunities to arrive more easily.*
- *Balancing elements in a room—wood, water, fire, earth, metal—can harmonise energy and bring calm, clarity, and inspiration.*



Consider my client who manifested her dream life in Dubai, through intentional Feng Shui adjustments, activating her career corner, repositioning her desk, and clearing stagnant energy, she aligned her environment with her ambitions and within three and a half months, she received the offer she had been visualising and moved. These shifts weren't magical they were precise Feng Shui strategies that aligned her space with her success.

### Your Home as a Partner in Success

Consider this: your home knows you, stores your patterns and emotions, witnesses your distractions, and reflects your inner world with brutal honesty. You can set intentions for success, abundance, or creativity, but if your environment contradicts those intentions, your energy becomes divided. Your Wealth area may be congested, your bedroom may feel heavy or misaligned, and your offices may be energetically confused. Feng Shui brings coherence, allowing you to connect your intentions with your environment and bridges the gap between where you are and where you want to be, and once your environment begins to support your energy, momentum naturally follows.

### The Invitation

As 2026 begins, instead of asking yourself, "What else do I need to do to succeed?" begin asking: "What is my home telling me?"

Look at your environment with curiosity and notice where energy feels stuck or stagnant really take time to observe which spaces support clarity, creativity, and calm and those spaces which drain you. Consider how small Feng Shui adjustments could bring momentum, alignment, and flow.

Just like my client who manifested her dream life in Dubai, your home could be the space that aligns your energy with your ambitions. Are you ready to let Feng Shui work for you?

### Your Space, Your Success

Whether you are just stepping into your ambitions or are already operating at a high level, 2026 could be the year your home aligns your energy with your next level of success.

Sometimes, success isn't something you chase; it's something you unlock at home. Your home is ready, and your success may be closer than you think.

[www.fengshui-essence.com](http://www.fengshui-essence.com)

Instagram - [@thefengshuiessence.com](https://www.instagram.com/thefengshuiessence.com)

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Gayle offers Virtual 1-1 consultations & in-person consultations.





# RITUALS FOR EVERYDAY EMPOWERMENT

BY CLAIRE CHITTY



What if your daily ritual could supercharge your energy field, like Reiki on steroids? You may be familiar with Reiki, a Japanese healing system founded by Mikao Usui in 1922. The method involves the practitioner channelling universal life force energy via their hands to clear, heal and restore balance and emotional calm to the receiver's body.

Now, amplify this energy in today's world, and there's an acceleration to Dimensional Healing, which embraces deep levels of consciousness and soul-level recalibration to clear patterns and programming. Add in accessing higher frequencies, multiple layers of existence and interdimensional guidance to shift timelines; past, present and future, and it's deeply transformative. This is the work I'm passionate about, returning the individual back to their sovereign state of being through energetic shifts.

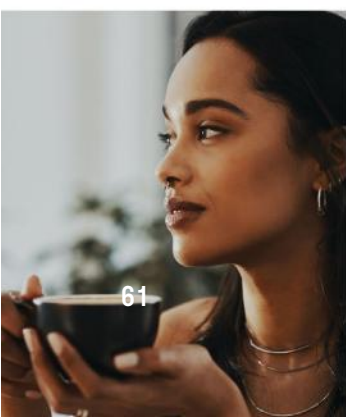
We forget we are electrical beings, and that everything in the universe is energy. Quantum scientists have proven that energy can never be destroyed, simply transformed into other forms. Take, for example, fire: it is created by burning wood, producing light and heat. Chemicals contained in a battery are converted into electrical energy. Our breath, essential for life, inhales oxygen, which is then taken into the red blood cells and converted into vitality for our body to fully function. Water is another perfect example of energetic receptivity.

Masaru Emoto, a Japanese researcher, showed how the mind is interrelated to matter by altering the molecular structure of water through thoughts, images, music and words when frozen into crystalline form. When the water received positive expressions, exquisite, symmetrical-shaped crystals formed. Less attractive structures occurred when the water was exposed to negative vibrations, including fear.

Let's distil this into essence. Sacred practices have been an integral part of humanity since the beginning of time, from sun worship and seasonal celebrations to religious and cultural events, weddings, graduation ceremonies, and dance and meditation. Few people understand that the simplest actions, from cooking a meal, taking a refreshing shower or cleaning teeth, are daily rituals we do without giving much thought to the process. But bring mindfulness into the practice, and the energy shifts. A meal made with love converts into nourishing and satisfying; add in a gratitude blessing prior to consuming, and the food becomes noticeably more flavoursome. Placebo? I think not due to the power of intention.

***'Quantum  
scientists  
have proven  
that energy  
can never be  
destroyed, simply  
transformed into  
other forms.'***

As a collective, we've been entrained away from our intuition and influenced by the external world of power, control and manipulation. But the real secret comes from mastering your innate inner power. Recognizing that rituals are more than symbolic practices and gestures, they're neurological resets, that start with intention, they are a conscious decision to create a desired outcome. Lighting a candle with intention and focus to invite harmony into a home will amplify peace for those who dwell within. In contrast, a wish, for example, a New Year's Eve resolution or blowing out birthday candles, is generally fleeting.





Going deeper, ritual is a bridge between an ordinary life and a more meaningful one, realizing that every second, every thought, every decision is creating the next moment and the moment after that. Mindfulness is a game-changer that doesn't require hours of meditation. When I was first introduced to Louise Hay, the Queen of Affirmations, in 1987, I'd place post-it notes on mirrors as reminders to change my mindset. The results were extraordinary as the unseen world collaborated to answer my prayers.

Affirmations are powerful when said with intention; they anchor energy. A mantra or short phrase that resonates with you may include 'Peace begins within me,' 'I know the Universe supports me,' 'I am safe.' Practical self-empowering tools are designed to be simple; stopping for a few minutes to take a breath, noticing the small things - the clouds, a gentle breeze, the way steam drifts up from your coffee. Use all your consciousness - sight, sound, touch, taste, smell and sense. Another effective practice is to set a gratitude reminder. Every time you sip water, think of one thing you're grateful for. It shifts energy, big time.

In conjunction with gratitude, intention, followed by trust, is essential to supercharge your life. Your soul is here to evolve, so what do you want to learn or experience in this lifetime? Write this down to ground and cement the energy. Now visualize a seed containing your intention being sown into fertile soil. Allow your heart to feel into the desire, bringing it to life by 'watering' daily through visualization, meditation and gratitude.

Now let go of any perceived outcomes, allowing your dream to be gently nurtured over time so grows into a healthy, strong plant. The next important key to materializing and manifesting is aligning, letting go, surrendering and allowing Universal cosmic energy to deliver in perfect divine timing. You may be ready for your soul mate, but are they ready? Or does the universe have a better plan for your personal growth? I encourage clients to let go of control, trust the process, and know that things will unfold when everything lines up.

Over the last 3 decades, I've come to understand the flow and importance of mastering energy and the mind through exploration, lessons, challenges and wins. It's been quite a journey, and yes, I have the occasional moment of fear or doubt, remembering that we are all on an evolutionary journey through time and space. That's the time to return to the breath to stabilize and recentre.

So, how have I incorporated ritual into my life? Each morning upon waking, I sense into the energy of the day, then feel into my body and chakras. If anything feels out of kilter or there's pain, I'll send energy to rebalance and realign. I acknowledge my spirit team, welcome the day with joy, say five blessings I'm grateful for, then declare to the universe that 'Something wonderful is destined to happen today.' And it always delivers.

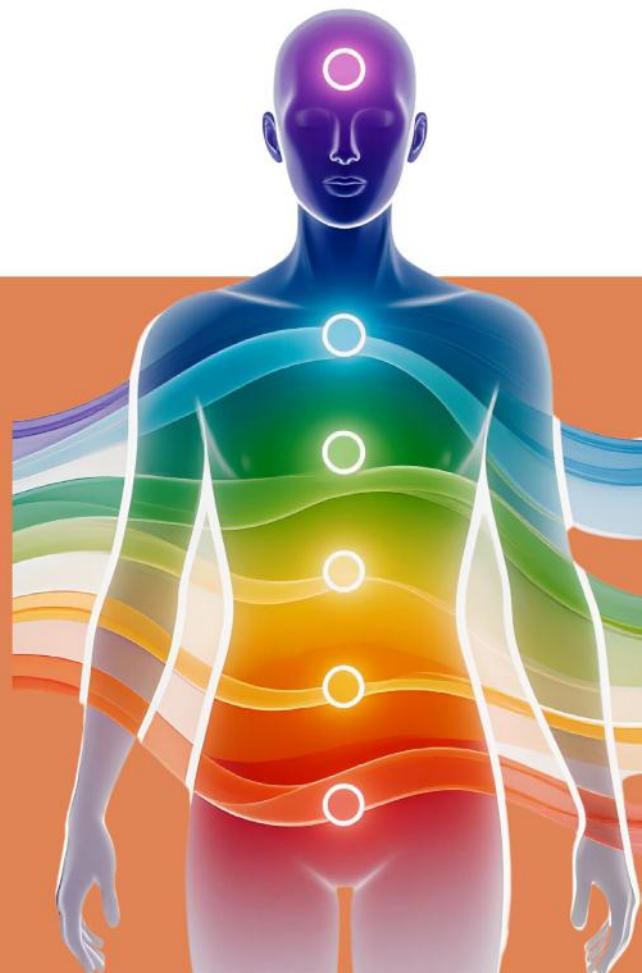
My life is full, and I've never been happier or felt more blessed. During the day, there's self-care, intentional meditations, listening to frequencies, supporting clients on their journeys, writing programs for upcoming workshops in 2026 and pottering around our organic garden. To reset and recharge my energy, paddleboarding, beach walks, and rock and roll dance add vibrancy and enjoyment in a world that's currently undergoing major transformation. At night, rather than being mesmerized by television, I'm either out listening to live music, mastering swing dance or journaling, reflecting upon another glorious day on Planet Earth.

As we fast-track into a new year and a new cycle, if this resonates with you, I encourage you to explore ritualistic intention and focus with consistency, patience and simplicity to access layers of existence. That morning routine you now choose to implement could be the gateway that unlocks the key to your next amazing evolutionary chapter.

*'In conjunction with gratitude, intention, followed by trust, is essential to supercharge your life.' Your soul is here to evolve, so what do you want to learn or experience in this lifetime?*

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# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE TRIGGERED A 5-STEP PROCESS

I'm sure every one of you reading this can relate to being completely hijacked by a trigger. Despite our shared experiences with triggers, we've never been taught what to actually do when we're in the middle of one. Most of us push the emotion away, rationalise it, or judge ourselves: responses that keep us trapped, unable to truly process what we're experiencing. Today I'll be introducing you to a model to change that, but before I do, here's something crucial: that trigger isn't about what just happened. It's a response to something deeper; an old wound, a core belief, a pattern formed long ago. Your trigger is a defence mechanism trying to protect you. When you realise this, compassion and curiosity become possible.

As a coach, helping people work with triggers is deeply personal to me. I developed the ALLOW model to help people process triggers and use them for immense personal growth, and I hope it will do the same for you.

## A: Acknowledge & Accept

The moment you feel triggered, your first instinct is probably to make it stop. Don't.

Instead, simply acknowledge what's happening: "I'm feeling triggered right now." Name it. Recognise it. Meet it. When you acknowledge the trigger, you're telling your nervous system: "I see you. I know you're here." Acceptance means you're not making the emotion wrong for existing. You're simply recognising it's there and meeting it with presence. This matters because resistance amplifies emotion. The moment you fight what you're feeling, you're putting more energy into it, intensifying the response.

## L: Let It Be

Now let the emotion be there without trying to fix it, change it or move it. Simply allow it to exist. This goes against everything we've been conditioned to do. We're taught to solve, to optimise, to make things better, but emotions don't work that way. Your emotion has come with a purpose. It's not here to torment you; it's here to move through.

*As Carl Jung said, "What you resist persists." Emotions ease off when you stop fighting them. Not because you've solved them, but because you've finally given them permission to be there.*

## L: Listen To What You Say To Yourself

Now listen to the narrative running in your mind. What are you telling yourself in this moment? Most of us aren't even aware of the internal dialogue that accompanies our triggers. When you tune in, you'll hear it: "I'm not good enough." "They think I'm incompetent." "I always mess this up." "I don't belong here."

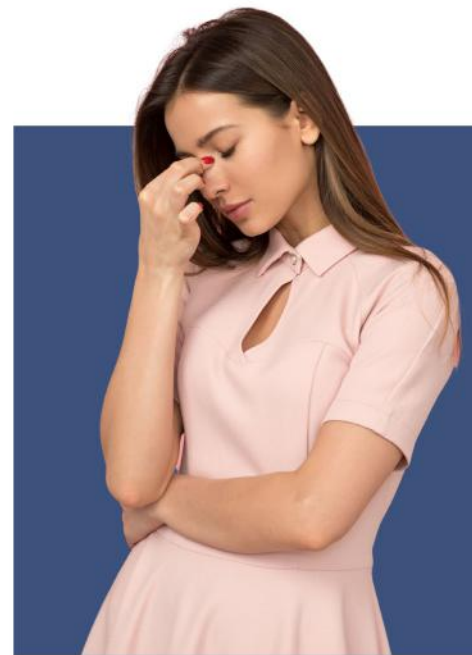
These aren't meaningless thoughts. They're echoes of old beliefs and unhealed wounds talking to each other. Listen without judgement. Don't try to fix the narrative. Just observe it with curiosity, as if you're listening to a friend share their deepest fears.

This step isn't about analysis; it's about awareness. These stories are pointing you directly to where your deepest healing work needs to happen.

## O: Observe and Orient

Now bring your attention to your body. Where exactly are you feeling this emotion? Your chest? Throat? Stomach? Shoulders? Get specific. How intense is it on a scale of 1 to 10? If this emotion had a shape, colour, and texture, what would it be? This might seem unusual, but describing the physical experience of your emotion helps you engage with it on a completely different level, and trust me, it works. You're moving from being consumed by the emotion to observing it.

Now comes the most important part: orient all your attention on that sensation. Don't try to change it or make it smaller. Just focus completely on where it lives in your body. Breathe into it. Stay with it.



When you bring your full awareness to the physical experience of an emotion without resistance, something remarkable happens. It begins to shift on its own because you're finally allowing it to complete its natural cycle.

## W: What and Why

Finally, ask yourself:

*Why is this showing up for me right now?*

*What is this really about?*

*Where else is this pattern showing up in my life?*

These questions aren't about finding immediate answers. They're about opening yourself to the ultimate truth of what you're really feeling.

## Moving Forward

The ALLOW model honours a truth we're rarely taught: emotions need to be met, not managed. The next time you feel triggered, walk through ALLOW.

Your triggers show you where your deepest transformation work lives. That work begins with allowing yourself to feel: fully, consciously, without apology.

**By Chantelle Dantu**  
**Depth Coach**



*Chantelle Dantu is a Jungian Depth Coach who helps female leaders and executives overcome fear, anxiety, and imposter syndrome without changing who they are.*

[www.thefemininelead.com](http://www.thefemininelead.com)



# Perfect on Paper?

## (Re)defining your leadership

For years, I was driven by ambition. I thrived in the fast-paced, deadline-driven world of medical communications—always reaching for the next challenge, the next opportunity. Clients respected me, and I built a reputation for being their indispensable partner. Becoming Managing Director of the company I loved felt like the culmination of it all: autonomy, visibility, influence. On paper, it was perfect.

### *Getting there was the easy part.*

I kept working as I always had—long hours, constant travel, stepping in when others couldn't, protecting the team. It wasn't sustainable, nor what the team needed. I had also recently married and wanted to build a life beyond work. In my mind, I couldn't have both—so I walked away from my job, believing I couldn't give it “my all”.

What I now realise is that I had never truly defined who I was as a leader.

### **The habits that got you here may not get you there**

If you're a leader who's perfect on paper, I see you. You don't need to start over—but you might need to start differently.

The leaders who thrive aren't the ones who do it all; they're the ones who define who they are and lead from that truth—a conscious shift from doing to leading, from controlling to trusting, from busy to intentional, from proving to empowering. Many of my coaching clients arrive at this exact point. They've achieved what they set out to do—but they're exhausted by what it takes to maintain it. They've mastered delivery but haven't yet defined what leading means to them.

One cofounder of an expanding business realised that the habits that once fuelled success—being hands-on, stepping in, staying across every decision—were now holding the company back. Another, recently promoted to lead former peers in healthcare, struggled to balance authority with authenticity. A third, who built a thriving trade business from scratch, found himself procrastinating and stuck “half on the tools” instead of leading as Managing Director.

Different worlds, same story: each had outgrown its old way of working. What once made them effective was now limiting their growth. In coaching, we didn't create new plans; we built clarity—seeing the patterns beneath the surface and redefining who they wanted to be as leaders.

*Martine is a woman of remarkable resilience and determination, having faced more challenges in a few short years than she would have wished for in a lifetime. With a PhD in neuroscience and leadership experience as Managing Director in medical communications, she blends sharp insight with intelligence and deep empathy. Drawing on her ADJUST Coaching™ framework, Martine helps people navigate life's transitions with clarity, courage and confidence.*

[www.ADJUSTcoaching.com](http://www.ADJUSTcoaching.com)



### **From awareness to definition**

Awareness is the first step in any coaching process—uncovering what's really going on. It's noticing that the habits that once helped you excel—perfectionism, over-responsibility, constant availability, the need to fix, protect, or prove—may now be costing you energy, clarity, and presence.

Once awareness takes root, the next step is to define who you want to be as a leader. It's about choosing, consciously, how you want to show up now, rather than defaulting to who you've always been.

You might ask yourself:

- Which habits or working patterns no longer serve me?
- What do I believe leadership “should” look like—and where did that belief come from?
- What am I holding onto that keeps me busy, not effective?
- What might leading differently look and feel like—for me and for those around me?
- How clear am I about the kind of leader I want to be—and how intentionally am I shaping my behaviours to reflect that?

Defining leadership for yourself is both about mindset and behaviour. It's the shift from effort to influence.

### **A first step towards leading differently**

From here, you can begin to shape a leadership style that sustains you rather than drains you. For me, that realisation came late. It wasn't the role that was unsustainable, but the way I was fulfilling it. I simply didn't yet have the awareness that change was possible, or the understanding to intentionally define how I wanted to lead.

I now support others in making that shift before they reach breaking point—to stay ambitious without burning out and to find meaning beyond the metrics of success. Leadership that looks perfect on paper might impress others, but leadership that feels aligned truly inspires.

**By Martine Garabette PhD**



# biohacking - cutting edge health tech

Medical tech for health is being created at lightning speed. Our nutrition may well be helped more and more by genetic testing, or a personalised probiotic plan from stool samples. Our microbiome of the gut affects mood & immunity. It is our control centre for overall health. Not just an analysis of our blood markers.

## Evolving Apps

Will track our absorption of key nutrients. Calories will be a thing of the past. Supplements are engineered to adapt as our bodies change monthly. We already have skin products bespoke for individual skin types. Many clinical apps can address our medical conditions without resorting to medication. Holistic treatment via virtual reality therapies for extreme anxiety, phobias and PTSD. Stressful appointments, travel and waiting lists would be avoided.

Lab-grown seafood avoids overfishing. Our plant foods are enhanced by adaptogens. Such as plant-based yoghurts using additional herbs, with synbiotics (a combined product of probiotics & prebiotics harmonising the gut). Moving further away from animal reliance. Continuous glucose monitoring for non-diabetics. Allowing us to track our sugar spikes from what we eat. Keeping us level-headed and energetic for longer.

## A1

Many offer chatbots for CBT  
Cognitive Behavioural therapy,

We will see more home diagnostic test kits. Drone-based prescription delivery, possibly. VR-based consultations globally. Since COVID, virtual online has expanded. Distance is no barrier. A digital system integral to our lifestyle will continue to grow.

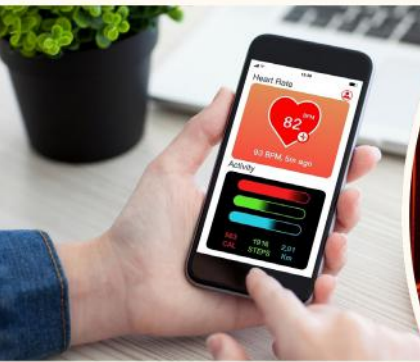
## Why is new easy accessibility essential?

This may reduce waiting lists and possibly expensive private tests. We can adjust daily rather than suffering symptoms until the next check-up. Early detection of inflammatory markers can lower the risk of disease and complications occurring. Allowing us to feel inspired and in control of our health. Rather than the lazy approach of waiting for the magic pill for recovery. Some suggestions are smart toilets, strange but who knows, analysing biomarkers daily from our urine and stools, at-home lab pods for health scans. Life may utilise this tech just as we use our mobiles or electric toothbrushes. It will be the norm. Freeing up medical staff from routine practices for more urgent and hands-on treatment.

Common practices of cold plunge pools, infra-red heat lights for injury and exercise recovery or depression using daylight lamps are common. Fitbits will become more intuitive. Maybe linking directly to our surgery database. More online communities that transparently share research, data insights and latest protocols.

## In the home

Builders will offer circadian lighting systems, adjusting colour therapy for



even mindful games apps, entertaining but reducing stress at the same time. Headbands that guide us in meditation, tracking brainwaves. Neurofeedback apps that reward for maintaining concentration. Aiding schools and supporting neurodiverse conditions. Kinetic energy may be utilised from treadmills and bikes powering gyms. The members create energy as they use energy. Cryotherapy and recovery pods will be standard.

Sleep disturbances are now rife with hormonal disruption, noise pollution and stress factors. We already have smart mattresses that adjust temperature, position and firmness. New adaptogenic blends of herbs for natural restorative sleep. Lesser known is the Epigenetic testing revealing our biological vs chronological age. With poor results, action can be taken.

New research in Senolytic therapies that selectively destroy and target ageing cells, without damaging healthy ones. Older cells can linger and secrete inflammatory chemicals, leading to tissue degeneration and disease. Hormone balancing for both sexes, allowing the body to function as it did in youth.

your mood. Air purification systems for asthma sufferers. Not just heat and cold adjustments. High-tech water filters for perfect water temperature and quality. At home, blood tests for nutrition and hormone level monitoring. A1 analysis and updates to supplements or a custom diet plan for health, not just losing weight. Ketone measurements indicate how fat is being metabolised, fasting guidance for your body's individuality.

Compression boots are used now for lymphatic draining after operations or post-workout recovery. A multitude of home machinery could become the norm. Taking support treatments out of the hospital system.

## Future biohacking

There are many new exploratory science projects. One being implants for monitoring brain activity and possibly understanding and supporting epilepsy, depression and addiction. Everything that needs a solution can, with time, be resolved. As A1 improves there will be many lifechanging and longevity options that will become standard.

By Nicky Abell-Francis





# Empathetic Leadership in Times of Crisis

## Why “This Can Wait” Matters

“I’m sorry I couldn’t finish the video edit. We had a magnitude 6.9 earthquake and are still having aftershocks, and our electricity has been unstable since then.” “I’m sorry I missed our meeting; there was a drone strike, and I spent all day yesterday in the bomb shelter.” “I’m sorry I took longer to get back to your chat message. There is an uprising in my hometown, and I had to work out an evacuation plan for my grandparents.”

These are all real things people have said to me at work in the last few years. Every time, I felt the same pang. The guilt in their words, the pressure my team put on themselves despite facing circumstances no one could reasonably expect them to control. This is the reality of modern international workplaces.

Even when it is not a natural disaster, a war, or a political upheaval, the dismantling of laws, rights, and safety nets can leave people with no headspace to be anything other than physically present. Teams are spread across continents, time zones, and very different realities. While some of us sit with our coffee in comfort, someone else may be scrambling to solve impossible problems or grappling with the weight of dread about the future.

The frequency of such crises is only increasing. Our leadership needs to develop at a rate to match it. In this article, I offer practical suggestions for leaders supporting international teams during times of change without absorbing all the heat themselves. There will be a bit of tough love in this article, because I believe lots of us tout the benefits of international teams without committing to the work they actually take to make work. But first, empathy: this is hard, and this is a lot. Talk to someone, do not carry it alone. Put your safety mask on before helping others.

### **Step 1: Make sure you are actually committed to leading an international team**

Having an international team comes with significant benefits. You gain access to diverse perspectives, broader creativity, different cultural approaches to problem-solving, and the opportunity to create a truly global impact. These teams often outperform homogeneous teams when well supported, because their diverse experiences and ideas drive innovation.

But there are also downsides. Leading across borders takes more work: understanding context, building cohesion, and being compassionate across cultural, political, and logistical differences. I believe the benefits far outweigh the downsides. But if you do not have the conviction that an international team is worth the extra effort, you will struggle to lead effectively in times of crisis. People can smell intent. If you want to guide a team through a crisis, you must genuinely believe it is worth your energy; if you don’t, find another job or find another team.



### **Step 2: Building a Culture of Care**

Some practical steps include:

**Build in redundancy:** Create internal deadlines well before external deadlines, and ensure multiple people are familiar with each task. This provides breathing space to absorb unpredictable changes and prevents bottlenecks if someone is unavailable. Train the team in adaptive planning. Yes, project and process leadership and adaptive planning got really sexy and necessary.

**Model vulnerability:** Share your own experiences of feeling affected by global or national events. For example, when Brexit happened, I was personally devastated, and I told my team I would not be doing my best work that week. Showing vulnerability signals that it is human to be impacted by events beyond our control and creates permission for people to do the same.



**Regular check-ins without pressure:** Make time to connect, but do not force discussions about news or crises if people do not want to talk. Some will be using work as an escape mechanism and will value work as a space where they can escape the headlines, and others will deeply appreciate the ability to share. Want a question that leaves space for people to answer how they want? Try: “What’s on your mind?” Embedding these behaviours creates a culture where people feel safe and valued, not just in crisis, but at all times.

### **A Final Reflection**

The world is increasingly unpredictable. Disasters, conflict, and crises are part of modern life. How leaders respond when life collides with work defines not only their teams’ immediate wellbeing, but also their long-term trust, loyalty, and resilience.

If your response as a leader is anything less than:

“Look after yourself first; this can wait”  
and  
“Do you need anything?”

...you risk teaching people that their safety and wellbeing come second. No deadline, project, or KPI is worth that cost.

If you look after your people when they need you, they will look after each other and you when it matters.

Crises do not have to stop progress. They can be the moments when teams discover what they are capable of and leaders discover what it truly means to lead.

**By Lucy Chambers**

[www.facilitationmindset.com](http://www.facilitationmindset.com)





So many women in business lead with heart — but somewhere along the way, they start to undervalue their own magic. Here's how to stop discounting your worth and start selling from self-trust, not scarcity.

She loved her work. She loved coaching, helping, and supporting other women... but every time she presented her offer and it was time to name her price, her throat would tighten and panic would rise in her stomach. Almost instinctively, she'd discount her work before the client even had time to consider the full price.

The thoughts that would run through her mind were, "I just want to help them," or "If I can just get them through the door and give them the transformation, it will prove my worth." She'd promise herself, "Next time I'll share the full price." But next time would come, and she'd find herself in the same cycle again. So many women sell straight from the heart. We want to give — but in doing so, we often end up selling ourselves short.

### Why We Undervalue Ourselves

While we don't intentionally set out to undervalue our work, there's usually a layer of fear sitting underneath it. The fear of not being enough. The need to prove our worth. The belief that if we overdeliver and undercharge, clients will stay. But selling doesn't mean you have to carry the emotional weight of every client through every sale. There's an art to selling with self-trust and integrity instead of fear and scarcity. When you consistently discount your work, you teach your audience to value you less.

# The Art of Selling Without Selling Yourself Short

The trust in your brand begins to erode, and you start to attract clients who invest from scarcity rather than self-leadership. By lowering your price, you're not just disempowering yourself — you're also disempowering your clients from making decisions from their highest self. Every time you lower your price to ease someone else's discomfort, you send the message that your work isn't worth its full value — and deep down, you start to believe it too.

## Selling With Self-Respect

Selling from your truest value, with confidence and conviction, models self-worth straight to your potential client. When you hold firm on your boundaries — who you are, what you offer, and what you deliver — your clients rise to meet you. They experience the transformation your work provides, and you hold space for them to grow. In my world, selling isn't about convincing — it's about connection. And connection starts with the relationship you have with yourself first.

## How to Stop Selling Yourself Short

### 1. Use a tailored sales conversation framework.

As a Heart-Led Sales Coach, I support my clients with a personalised sales conversation framework — not a script, but a structure that helps them lead with confidence and conviction.

### 2. Hold firm on your boundaries.

It's time to stop undercharging and overdelivering. The work you do is worthy of the premium pricing you've set. Present your full price and allow your potential clients the opportunity to actually receive it.

### 3. Create natural internal urgency.

Buying will always be an emotional decision. When you know how to connect with what's really going on for your clients, you create internal urgency — not through discounts or promotions, but through genuine understanding and trust.

Here's a simple framework I teach to guide authentic, heart-led conversations:

**Hear your client's current story and situation**

**Explore their challenges — what's holding them back?**

**Align with their vision — what are they dreaming to achieve?**

**Recommend your offer**

**Take their commitment**

If you've been struggling with confidence in sales, know this: it's not something you're born with — it's something you build, through learning, practice, and support. The moment you stop discounting your magic, your dream clients stop discounting it too.

Selling isn't selfish — it's self-honouring of the work you've intentionally created and the impact you're here to make. The more sales that you make, whether that's in your work or in your business, the more lives that you ultimately get to impact and make a difference in.

And that is the most heart-led sale of all.

By Gemma Rosbiffi







## The Hidden Gender Gap in Rest

### The mental load is its own sleep disorder.

Biology is only half the story. Modern motherhood comes with an invisible cognitive workload that studies show disproportionately falls on women, planning appointments, remembering daycare supplies, managing meals, tracking milestones, and anticipating every possible need.

This mental load activates the “default mode network,” which makes falling asleep harder and staying asleep even more difficult. Even if she gets the same number of hours, the quality of sleep is drastically different. Men tend to compartmentalize. Women tend to anticipate. No wonder moms feel the effects so much more intensely.

### Chronic sleep loss hits women harder

Long-term sleep deprivation impacts women differently:

- Higher rates of anxiety and depression
- Increased risk of autoimmune conditions
- Stronger inflammatory response
- Impaired decision-making and memory
- Lowered immune function

### What moms can actually do

While biological differences aren't going away, support systems and strategies can make a huge difference.

#### 1. Protect the first chunk of night sleep

This is when deep, restorative sleep happens. Swap night duties with a partner or caregiver so you can sleep uninterrupted from bedtime to midnight at least a few nights a week.

#### 2. Lighten the mental load

Shared calendars, daily check-ins, and delegating invisible tasks reduce the cognitive weight that keeps moms awake even when they're exhausted.

#### 3. Don't skip your evening wind-down

Your body needs a cue that the day is done. A warm shower, stretching, or even two minutes of deep breathing can lower cortisol and prepare your brain for sleep.

#### 4. Get morning light exposure

Ten minutes of sunlight in the morning resets melatonin production, stabilizes hormones, and combats fatigue.

#### 5. Support your child's sleep

Better sleep for your little one directly supports your health, your mood, your hormones, and your identity as a mother, not because you're doing something wrong, but because the female body was never designed to thrive on fragmented sleep.

**You deserve rest. You deserve support. And I'm here to help you get both.**

I've helped hundreds of families gently, confidently, and without compromising connection to rebuild healthy sleep. Whether you're navigating night wakings, early mornings, bedtime battles, or you're simply exhausted from carrying the mental and emotional load, I can guide you step-by-step.

With personalized strategies, daily support, and a plan tailored to your child and your family, sleep can become predictable again. And when your little one sleeps better, your body, your mind, and your entire life begin to shift.

**By Samantha Buhrs**

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If you've ever wondered why you feel utterly destroyed after a night of broken sleep while your partner seems to function almost normally, you're not imagining it. Sleep deprivation affects mothers differently, and often more intensely, than it does fathers. The reasons are rooted in biology, hormones, the mental load of motherhood, and the invisible expectations women carry long after the world claims we've reached equality.

### The female body wasn't designed for fragmented sleep.

Women's bodies are wired for responsiveness. From pregnancy onward, the female brain shifts: the amygdala becomes more active (heightening vigilance), and the prefrontal cortex becomes more attuned to infant cues. This makes a mother biologically more reactive to sound, movement, and subtle changes in her child's breathing, wonderful for survival, terrible for sleep. Studies show that women wake more frequently during the night, take longer to fall back asleep, and reach restorative deep sleep less consistently. A mother's sleep cycles become lighter and more fragmented, and even when she's “sleeping,” her brain is on standby.

Fathers experience hormonal changes too, oxytocin increases and cortisol shifts, but not to the same intensity. Their sleep cycles tend to remain more stable, and once asleep, they enter deeper sleep phases more quickly.

**Put simply: Mom's brain stays half-awake even when she's fully exhausted.**

### Hormones: The unfair layer no one talks about

Add in postpartum hormones, breastfeeding shifts, menstrual cycles, and perimenopause (for many moms of toddlers, this isn't far away), and the female body is constantly adjusting. Lack of sleep amplifies these fluctuations:

- Mood swings increase
- Cortisol levels stay elevated
- Hunger and cravings spike
- Emotional regulation decreases
- Anxiety intensifies

Meanwhile, men's hormone cycles reset every 24 hours. Women's reset on a roughly 28-day cycle, meaning sleep loss compounds more dramatically.



# The Healing Power of Crystal Skulls

## Spiritual Tools to Awaken Inner Consciousness

By Alphedia Arara

Crystal Skulls are intriguing and powerful metaphysical tools supporting deep soul healing, inner transformation and spiritual ascension. Over the last 20 years, their popularity has increased as meditation tools to access higher

consciousness. Those on the path of inner enlightenment and spiritual growth treasure them, often curating vast collections to meditate with. Yet others find them intimidating and even frightening.

The power of Crystal Skulls helps us to move through our shadow self, which keeps us from fully embodying our Divine Light, instead holding us limited by fears, distrust, and separation from the Whole. As our consciousness evolves, we become aware of the limitations of the ego mind, enabling us to see beyond the conditioned perception most humans live within. The Crystal Skulls connect with our intuitive selves, perceiving the truths beyond the physical world.

The crystal skulls are gateways, portals to accessing higher consciousness. They are wisdom keepers, teachers, energy healers, and spiritual protectors who assist in developing our inner intuition, higher-dimensional awareness, and support us on our ascension to full soul embodiment.

### My Journey of Discovery

My love of crystals began as a child, drawn to their beautiful colours, shapes, and the way they captured light. I went on to study them at University, but it wasn't until I met my first crystal skull that I understood the depth of their spiritual powers and realised my mission with them as a spiritual channel and healer. Thousands around the world have benefited from their connection with Crystal Skulls, many of which were sourced through me.

Crystal skulls are exquisitely carved, human skull-shaped, some ancient, others modern, crystal carvings. Available now too are dragon, unicorn, raven and star being skulls. They all have different energies and consciousness, and it's very individual; which variant speaks to your soul, allowing you to connect with it.

### Connecting with Crystal Skulls

Crystal skulls will come into your awareness when your soul is ready to evolve and remember its Divine nature. Each Crystal skull contains a facet of greater consciousness known as the Crystal Skull Conclave, which is how it's distinguished from an ordinary crystal of that stone.

The conclave has its own specialities of wisdom, spiritual insight and healing skills. They communicate telepathically with those who have developed this skill, or through visions, intuitive guidance and by downloading Divine understandings. Some Crystal Skulls like to just sit and hold healing space, while others enjoy travelling and clearing the land energies for Earth Healing. Each personality is unique.

Think of Crystal Skulls as the computers of the spiritual world. Like your desktop, unless someone shows you how to use it and what it can do, its potential in your life remains untapped. Once activated, your crystal skull can give you access to vast healing programmes of frequencies, Divine guidance and life insights.

When you meet or become a guardian of a crystal skull, you have the opportunity to unlock a library of healing frequencies and wisdom. Always start by surrounding yourself in Divine light and asking for spiritual protection from your guides.

Let the crystal skull make an energetic connection; notice how you feel in its presence. Perhaps it calms and soothes you, or maybe it challenges you. Each sensation offers you insight into your own state of being and what is ready to shift and heal.

Once you are familiar with the crystal skull's energy, ground yourself, becoming present in your body, and imagine a connection of light flowing between your third eye point in the centre of your eyebrow gap and the crystal skull's third eye. Take a few deep breaths and ask the skull a question about what help and support you would like at this point in your life.

Start by meditating with the crystal skull for 5 minutes, building it up as you become more confident in working together. Notice any feelings, ideas, thoughts you have and journal each experience with the skull.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable, notice what the crystal skull is showing you. It wishes to help you heal. The more you connect with the crystal skull, the deeper a connection you can develop together.

Crystal Skulls can support many areas of healing. They can work with you individually or as part of a group, receiving healing. As multidimensional consciousness, they dissolve energetic blocks, clear past-life and ancestral traumas, unlock abundance, dormant spiritual skills, and inner talents.

They can take you off into other dimensions, astrally journeying, and invoke euphoric states. When you choose to welcome crystal skulls into your life, it changes forever.





What do you see magic as? Maybe you have experienced something you consider to be a miracle or magical event.

Magic, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is:

- 1) *The secret power of appearing to make impossible things happen by saying special words or doing special things.*
- 2) *The art of doing tricks that seem impossible in order to entertain people.*
- 3) *A special quality or ability that someone/ something has, that seems too wonderful to be real.*

I am Indigo Psychic, and I have a passion for the occult (hidden wisdom), divination (psychic readings) and spirit communication (mediumship).

From a very young age, I experienced a peculiar phenomenon: my name was called, and I had visions. During my childhood, I was continuously told, "I had a very overactive imagination; it's not real".

My adventure with magic and tarot cards began when I was 17, at a house party with a friend. Out of the blue, one of the hosts, a complete stranger, walked over to me and handed me a gift. Swaddled in a soft blue silk scarf was a tarot deck.

The only words he ever spoke to me were "there is a time when things need to be passed on". This was my first mature experience of magic; if it had never occurred, I may well have never been writing this to share with you today.

People often ask during psychic readings, "Will I be a psychic reader?" Even though I believe everyone has their intuitive ability they can tap into, I also understand "if something is meant for you, it will not pass you by".

***"Those who believe in magic will surely entice it into their world",  
Indigo.***



# THE ESSENCE OF ALL MAGIC



When you have a passion for a subject, focused study and hard work will always be rewarded, such as athletes, musicians, artists, and many other vocations. Your spiritual work will become more potent with practice and perseverance.

Magic, to some people, is conceived as fiction. This is not the case as magic is an interpretive concept that varies from person to person. It could mean a type of entertainment, a personal memory, a deep emotional feeling, or even the devotion of a pet.

To myself, it is something I appreciate every day of my life. I believe it is always transmutation or transformation of energy. So I want you to consider what magic represents for you.

I have had many magical experiences within my psychometry, mirror scrying, mediumship, and spiritual apps.

In my psychic development class, we worked with psychometry. We placed objects on a tray, then chose one to hold and read into psychically. From the watch I chose, I received details and visions, and I heard "John" and "James". When we shared our findings, I mentioned John James, assuming it was his first name. The person the watch belonged to looked in shock and said, "The watch is my grandad's, and his name was John James".

During mirror scrying, I gave a complete description of a lady's face I could see, which, sadly, was missing part of it. I trust my guides, following the event, I spoke to my sitter who informed me her mother had to have part of her face removed due to illness. "

One evening, on my social media platform, I was giving a live mediumship reading. Sometimes I hear, see, or feel words I do not understand. I have learnt over the years to give my client the information and trust the moment. I heard the word "Nomaili"; it turned out to be his mother's special term between them in his native language.

Many years ago, I attended a psychical medium retreat in a remote area. We held hands in a dark room and sang. Within minutes, flowers, fur-cones and small leaves fell from the ceiling. The cottage had no landing, and we never stopped holding hands. Even to this day, it excites me. The event completely changed my outlook on life's possibilities and my belief in magic.

Every day in life, we make choices; each of us is unique and holds individual beliefs, shaped by our life experiences and traditions. For myself, all the magic I cast is for self-empowerment, seeking direction, healing and personal development.

If you fancy delving into this further, I recommend researching sigils, candle magic, ritual burnings (paper or bay leaf) or using tarot/tarot readings for self-discovery.

Whatever ritual you create, your belief is the most important aspect. Whether it is a placebo effect or true magic, transformation will occur.

**In conclusion, the essence of all magic is the intent, but that all begins with YOU! YOU are magic!**

By Indigo Amy Packman

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# THE MANTOVANI METHOD®

## The Microbiome, the Biology of Identity, and the Future of Human Performance

### The Microbiome: The Origin of Human Alignment

When people ask how the Mantovani Method® was created, I always begin from the same place: the microbiome. Not the simplified version trending online, but the real one — the regulatory network behind hormones, neurotransmitters, inflammation, stress response, cognitive clarity, emotional tone and, for many, identity. Across more than twenty years of clinical work with thousands of patients and high-performers, I've observed the same pattern: **When the microbiome destabilises, the person becomes a different version of themselves.** That isn't a metaphor. It's biology.

*Imagine if the anxiety you feel isn't "you"... but a microbial signal misfiring.*

*Imagine if your loss of confidence isn't personal... but biochemical.*

When the ecosystem shifts, everything shifts.

### When Biology Interrupts Identity

During a very dramatic period of my life, my microbiome collapsed so deeply that my emotional responses no longer matched who I knew myself to be. My vagus nerve froze, my clarity disappeared, and the scientist in me kept asking: **"Why is this happening biologically?"**

That question led me into trauma physiology, neuro-immune pathways, frequency medicine and research such as the work on Borna virus (BoDV-1), a neurotropic virus capable of influencing behaviour through the gut-brain-immune axis. It confirmed what I had witnessed for years: A Biological interruption can imitate a psychological breakdown. This insight became the foundation of the Mantovani Method™.

### Beyond Mindset: A System-Level Reconstruction

I don't just coach mindset, hand out supplements or give nutrition advice. I integrate DNA-based nutrition, targeted natural remedies and high-level coaching into one coherent strategy — keeping clients aligned, accountable and fully supported through every layer of their transformation. High-performers don't lack motivation — they lack biological clarity. My work is a structured integration of microbiome science, frequency analysis, emotional physiology, cognitive pattern mapping and environmental interpretation. Because a human being is not a symptom;

**A human being is a system, and the microbiome is that system's control centre. Imagine if every behaviour you struggle with had a biological signature.**

*Imagine if your thinking patterns, reactions and emotional tone were simply data waiting to be decoded.*

We're not fixing problems.

**We are restoring internal communication.**

*By Letizia Mantovani MSc*

*Microbiologist, Integrative Health Expert & Multi-Awarded Founder of The Mantovani Method®  
Internationally Recognised for Pioneering Microbiome-Based Transformation*

### The Test Is Only the Beginning

Many believe the breakthrough lies in the test — the microbiome analysis, the frequency scan, the full-body assessment. But the test is not the transformation.

#### *The test is the beginning.*

It is the moment when your biology speaks in data rather than symptoms. The real work unfolds in weekly coaching sessions where we interpret your results together:

**Where did the disruption start?**

**Which pathways are blocked?**

**Which microbial shifts explain your emotional or cognitive symptoms?**

How does your biology reflect your thinking patterns?

From there, the Mantovani Method™ becomes a personalised reconstruction of your microbiome, stress response, nervous system, emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, energetic stability and identity expression. This is not just a protocol.

**This is a redesign of the human system.**

### Twenty Years. Thousands of Cases. One Pattern.

Across two decades of practice, one truth has remained constant:

**When the microbiome recovers, the person returns.**

**When the microbiome is unstable, the person fades.**

High-performers know exactly what it means to drop from 100% to 60% for reasons they cannot explain.

And they always feel the misalignment before anyone else sees it.

*If your biology hasn't been matching your ambition,*

*If your clarity has dipped without explanation,*

***If you feel yourself operating below the level you know you're capable of, this is not failure — it's your system asking for intervention.***

**The test gives us the truth.**

**The Mantovani Method® gives you the transformation.**

Spaces for this work are intentionally limited to ensure depth, precision and results.

Executives and high-performers who resonate with this approach are invited to submit an enquiry and request an eligibility review.

If you qualify, we begin with a full assessment and build your personalised strategy immediately — ensuring that data, clarity and biological alignment support every step you take from this point forward.

**Your system is already signalling.**

**What you do next determines your trajectory.**





# Success Isn't a Strategy Problem, it's an Identity One

We talk about success as if it's a fixed destination, something obvious and agreed upon, but most of us never actually stop to decide what success means for us in the first place. We inherit it. We absorb it. We step into adulthood already carrying expectations about what a good life is supposed to look like, often without questioning who those expectations belong to.

In life, it usually follows a familiar script. Build security. Find stability. Settle down. Get the job, the house, the partner, the children, the routine. Be sensible. Be responsible. And for many people, that path genuinely works. But for others, there's a persistent friction, a sense that even when you're doing everything "right," something still doesn't quite fit.

So you step off the traditional path.... You start a business. You choose freedom over predictability because you believe the rewards of building something of your own are greater. And they are.

***But not in the way most people expect.***

The online business world has its own unspoken hierarchy of success, and it's just as powerful as the societal one we think we've left behind. The language changes, the aesthetics change, but the pressure remains. First, it's about reaching your first 5K month, then holding it, then scaling it, then multiplying it. Ten becomes twenty, twenty becomes fifty, fifty becomes a hundred, and the goalposts keep moving faster than your ability to pause and ask how any of this actually feels.

What makes this more complicated is that there are endless strategies, all contradicting each other, all backed by someone else's proof, someone else's certainty, someone else's results. And the piece that gets missed is that it's not the strategy doing the heavy lifting. It's the identity behind it. The confidence. The decisiveness. The willingness to take responsibility and move before certainty arrives.

A plan will only work if you're the person who can execute it, hold it, and evolve alongside it. Without that, even the best strategy eventually starts to feel heavy and unsustainable. And when you're ambitious, when you care deeply about the impact you have, of course, you look to the people who appear to be further ahead. Of course, you listen. Of course, you assume that if they've done it, this must be the way.

***That's how self-abandonment happens. Quietly.***

You don't set out to build a life or a business that doesn't feel good to live inside. You're simply following the maps that are most readily available to you, first in life, then again in business. And before you realise it, you've created something that looks like success from the outside but feels heavy or quietly exhausting on the inside.

***I know this because I've lived it.***

I built something that worked strategically, the model made sense, and the numbers stacked up. From the outside, it

looked like success. But living inside that version of success required me to be constantly available, constantly producing, constantly switched on. I wasn't present, not fully. Not in my body, not in my life, and most painfully, not in the moments that mattered most to me as a mother.

We step off the traditional path because we believe the rewards of entrepreneurship are greater, more freedom, more choice, and more impact. But those rewards only exist if you're willing to take the real risk that business demands. And that risk is rarely external. It's not the market, the strategy, or the money.

***It's the internal risk of having to change who you are.***

The reason the rewards are greater is that the demand on your identity is greater. You're required to lead yourself. To look honestly at where you're playing small, where you're hiding behind busyness, where you're making excuses that sound reasonable but keep you stuck. You're asked to take responsibility for your patterns, your avoidance, and your willingness to be seen.

***For me, ambition didn't disappear. It matured.***

Success stopped being about how much I could build and started being about how deeply I could live inside what I was creating. It became about building a business that matched the woman I wanted to be, not the one the industry celebrates.

Real success isn't just what you build, it's whether you're still present enough to experience the life you're building it for.

***By Jodie Hayward***



**[www.jodiehayward.com](http://www.jodiehayward.com)**

# When We Stop, We Heal

## Reclaiming Rest in a World That Never Slows

by Pamela Redford



Mindfulness can be described as focusing on the present moment and what is happening right now. At this minute, you may be reading this magazine, feeling the gloss of the paper beneath your fingers, or seeing the text glow softly on a screen. You might hear the faint swish of pages turning, or the quiet hum of the space around you. How easy was it to be mindful just then? You did it without effort or instruction. You were present before you even noticed. Now, try to pay attention again.

Moments like this can feel surprisingly rare in a world that constantly asks for our attention. The mind is encouraged to move ahead, to what comes next, what still needs doing, what remains unfinished. We are taught how to plan and produce, but rarely how to pause. Over time, presence can feel unfamiliar, while busyness becomes the norm. Yet it is often within these small, overlooked pauses that a sense of grounding begins to return. So, let me share with you what happened when I had the “lightbulb” moment to pause, notice and be present.

### The World That Never Stops

We live in a culture that rarely pauses or pays full attention to the present moment. For many of us, speed is rewarded, productivity is praised, and being busy is quietly encouraged. The message is subtle but consistent: keep going, do more, move faster. Silence can feel uncomfortable, stillness unproductive, and rest becomes something to fit in once everything else is complete.

This is particularly evident in fast-paced industries such as marketing, sales, and the corporate world, where targets, deadlines, and performance metrics shape the working day. There is always another email to answer or a result to review. Time is measured in output, and value is often linked to performance. Even moments intended for rest can feel interrupted by the unspoken expectation to stay “switched on.”

Over time, this pace became familiar to me. I overlooked tiredness, and it became part of my routine. I learned to prioritise momentum over listening to myself, often only noticing the impact when stress, burnout, or disconnection began to surface.

### What Happens When We Pause

A life without pause is not how the natural world operates. Seasons change, tides retreat, and growth is followed by rest. Nothing moves continuously without recovery. Yet people have created systems that often value speed over rhythm, forgetting that we, too, are part of nature.

When we pause, even briefly, something softens. Thoughts lose some of their urgency, and clarity begins to emerge. The body responds as breathing deepens and tension eases. This is not inactivity; it is restoration. Creativity can return, and emotions that were pushed aside have space to be acknowledged, rather than overwhelm us.

This was my “lightbulb” moment - pausing helped me reconnect with presence. I discovered that stopping did not mean falling behind, but moving forward with more awareness and balance.

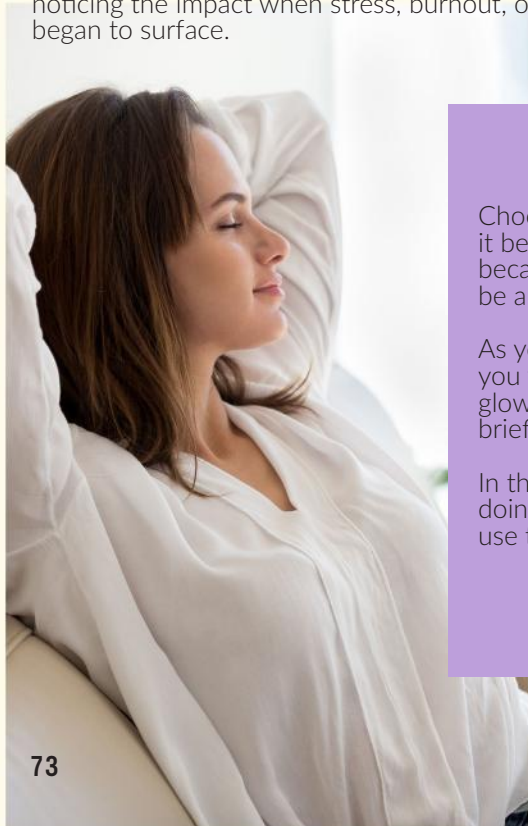


### Choosing Presence in a Culture of Rush

Choosing presence does not require a dramatic change. Sometimes it begins with recognition, reading something that resonates with you because it reflects how you are feeling in that moment. That awareness can be a gentle wake-up call, approached with an open mind rather than fear.

As you reach the end of this piece, you may notice the same small details you were invited to observe at the beginning. The feel of the page, the glow of the screen, the sounds around you. In choosing presence, even briefly, we create space to rest, reset, and begin again.

In the next article, we will explore how mindfulness often comes not from doing more, but from noticing what is already here, along with tools we can use to be more present in everyday life.





# THE IDENTITY SHIFT OF MOTHERHOOD & HOW TO FIND YOURSELF AGAIN



Motherhood changes everything — and not just your schedule. We're often prepared for the practical shifts: nappies, sleepless nights, feeding routines, and calendars that revolve around tiny humans. What we're far less prepared for is the internal change — the quiet but powerful identity shift that arrives the moment your baby does.

As a mum of two boys, I expected my body to change. I anticipated recovery, tiredness, and learning a whole new rhythm of life. What I didn't expect was how much I would change. Suddenly, you're "Mum" before you're anything else — before woman, partner, professional, friend. And for many women, there's a deep, unspoken guilt attached to missing the version of themselves they were before.

Let me say this clearly: feeling a loss of identity does not make you any less of a mother.

## The Hidden Identity Loss Nobody Talks About

Motherhood redefines every part of your life.

You gain overwhelming love, purpose, and connection — but you can also lose space, autonomy, and self-recognition. Your needs move to the bottom of the list. Your body feels unfamiliar. Your time is no longer your own. And some days, you don't recognise the woman staring back at you in the mirror.

This feeling is often intensified when women are navigating postpartum symptoms such as:

- Diastasis Recti
- Incontinence
- Prolapse
- Back or pelvic pain
- Extreme or chronic fatigue

These aren't "minor" issues. They affect how you move, how you feel, how you show up — and ultimately, how you see yourself. When your body doesn't feel reliable, strong, or comfortable, it can quietly erode confidence and identity.

## Missing who you were doesn't mean you love your children any less.

It means you're human.

## Movement: A Path Back to Yourself

For many women — myself included — movement becomes the turning point, not as a way to "bounce back," but as a way to reconnect. When done correctly



and safely, movement is profoundly healing. Pilates teaches women how to breathe, control, and trust their bodies again. Strength training restores a sense of capability — reminding you that your body is not broken, but adaptable and powerful. Working with a pre- and postnatal qualified professional ensures that exercise isn't about pushing through symptoms but addressing them with care and intention.

When women feel supported, movement becomes more than exercise. It becomes identity work.

It's the moment you realise I can still feel strong. I can still feel like me.

## The ReformHer Framework for Rebuilding You

At ReformHer, I support women through a holistic, compassionate approach built around five key pillars:

### 1. Strength

Not just physical strength, but emotional resilience and confidence. Strength changes how you carry yourself — in your body and in your life.

### 2. Autonomy

Creating space that belongs entirely to you. Time where you are not needed by anyone else — and that matters more than most women realise.

### 3. Connection

Being surrounded by women who understand without explanation. Community reduces shame, isolation, and the feeling that you're doing motherhood "wrong."

### 4. Education

Learning what's normal, what isn't, and how your postpartum body truly works. Knowledge empowers women to advocate for themselves.

### 5. Collaboration

Working alongside trusted pelvic health physiotherapists. True recovery is never a solo journey — it's a team effort.

This framework allows women to rebuild themselves safely, sustainably, and without pressure.

## You Haven't Lost Yourself — You're Becoming More You

Motherhood doesn't erase who you were. It adds layers.

Strength, you didn't know you had.

Softness, you never expected.

Depth, resilience, and perspective that only experience can bring.

Yes, there may be moments where you feel lost — but you are not gone.

With the right support, you don't rebuild the old version of yourself. You create a stronger, wiser, more grounded version of her — one who honours both who she was and who she's becoming.

You don't need to choose between being a brilliant mum and being yourself.

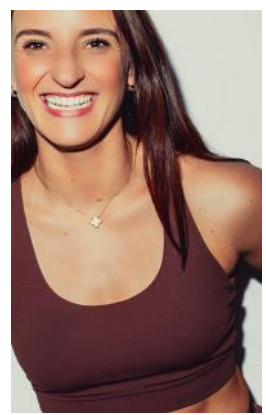
You are allowed to be both.

## By Lauren Kay

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# FROM SOLE TRADERS TO MULTI-MILLION POUND SMES

## HOW AI IS TRANSFORMING BUSINESSES IN 2026

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in 2026 face an ongoing challenge: juggling admin while maintaining momentum. Admin might not be glamorous, but it underpins everything. Whether you're a sole trader or a large service provider with a multi-million-pound turnover, a delayed invoice means delayed cash flow. Missed communications during an onboarding process can sour a customer relationship early on. A mismanaged client relationship can erode trust and prompt your clients to seek better service elsewhere.

Thanks to a powerhouse of AI-driven tools designed to scale to any budget, admin can now be smoother, faster, and less prone to error. Current trends for AI admin include the automation of repetitive tasks, such as emails and reminders, and invoice generation without the need for human input. Tools that analyse sales and predict stock needs before they run out.

### Sole Traders: Make AI Your Digital Assistant

When you're working alone or with one assistant, time is your most valuable resource. Admin can eat into the hours you'd rather spend on production. AI tools can significantly reduce this burden.

- **Chatbots (Tidio, ManyChat):** Simple AI chat widgets can handle FAQs, order updates, or basic customisation queries, freeing you from constant email replies.
  - **Invoice Automation (Zoho Books, QuickBooks AI features):** These platforms use AI to pull invoice details from emails or order forms and auto-generate paperwork.
  - **Scheduling (Calendly AI Assist):** AI-enabled schedulers that eliminate the back-and-forth of finding a time. For sole traders, the future points towards plug-and-play AI tools: affordable apps that integrate with your existing email, website, or accounting software without requiring technical expertise.
- Small SMEs: Juggling Growth with Limited Resources**  
A small operation still has a fair amount of moving parts. Job tracking and customer management can quickly overwhelm traditional spreadsheets. AI tools at this stage are about bringing order without adding admin work.
- **AI-Powered CRMs (GoHighLevel, Pipedrive with AI add-ons):** These predict which enquiries are most likely to convert and remind staff to follow up.
  - **Inventory Management (inFlow with AI Reorder Predictions):** Instead of running out of materials, AI predicts when you'll need to reorder based on historical demand.
  - **Email Drafting (Microsoft 365 Copilot, Grammarly Business):** These tools can draft responses to customer queries, while still letting staff personalise the tone before sending.

Expect to see more AI tools designed specifically for SMEs that blend order management, job tracking, and design previews into a single system.

### Mid-Size SMEs: Efficiency at Scale

Once you're handling hundreds of orders a week, manual admin can spiral out of control. Mid-size SMEs benefit most from AI that integrates across multiple functions.

- **Workflow Automation (Zapier with AI triggers):** Links your order forms to accounting, inventory, and customer updates without human intervention.
- **AI Analytics (Tableau with Einstein AI, Power BI with Copilot):** Goes beyond standard sales reports by highlighting seasonal demands or flagging underperformers.
- **Customer Service AI (Zendesk AI):** Provides ticket sorting and instant answers to common order-tracking questions, so human staff can focus on bespoke requests. The future here is about predictive business intelligence. AI won't just tidy up admin - it will help plan your staffing and marketing months ahead.

### Large SMEs: Multi-Million Pound Turnover and Complex Operations

At this scale, large SMEs often serve international clients, manage multiple locations, or run large online shops. AI tools here focus on integration and advanced forecasting.

- **Enterprise Resource Planning with AI (NetSuite AI, SAP Business One with AI modules):** Brings together finance, products, HR, and customer data into one system. AI forecasts material needs, highlights inefficiencies, and automates compliance reporting.
- **Supply Chain Optimisation (Coupa Supply Chain Design powered by Llamasoft AI, Oracle AI SCM):** Ensures smooth delivery of bulk orders, predicting potential delays and suggesting alternative suppliers.
- **AI-Enhanced HR Tools (BambooHR AI, Deel AI):** Automates payroll, flags compliance issues, and even analyses staff engagement through communication trends. Future developments are pointing towards AI co-pilots that sit across entire organisations, making proactive recommendations: what to prioritise, which customers to target, and where to trim costs.

Embrace these tools now to not only reduce admin costs but also to be better positioned to compete.

### By Seb Brantigan

AI and Marketing Automation Expert  
Co-founder and COO of DBSS Digital

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# Change Starts With Choice

## How One Wee Thing Can Shift Your Life During a

# CRISIS

Have you ever felt completely stuck? Like you're trapped in your own life, watching everyone else move forward while you're standing still? If you're nodding right now, you're not alone. And here's something that might surprise you: the answer isn't found in making massive, life-altering changes. It's actually much simpler than that.

### When Life Hands You a CRISIS

Let's talk about the word CRISIS for a moment. We usually think of it as something terrible happening, losing a job, ending a relationship, or facing a health scare. But what if we looked at it differently? What if CRISIS simply meant Circumstances Requiring Immediate Change in Strategy? Suddenly, it does not sound so scary. Life is telling you your current approach isn't working. Try something new.

### The Power of One Wee Thing

Here's where Change Starts With Choice comes in. You don't need to flip your entire world upside down. You just need to change one wee thing. One small choice. One tiny shift in your daily routine.

Think about a butterfly for a moment. It doesn't wake up one morning and suddenly decide to grow wings. The transformation happens gradually, from egg to caterpillar, from caterpillar to chrysalis, and finally emerging as something completely new. Each stage is necessary. Each step matters.

Your life works the same way. That overwhelming feeling you have about needing to change everything? That's your inner caterpillar panicking about becoming a butterfly. But transformation doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't require you to change everything at once.

### Real Talk: Small Changes, Big Impact

Sarah was stuck in a job she hated, coming home exhausted every day, scrolling social media until midnight, then dragging herself to bed only to repeat the cycle. Her CRISIS wasn't dramatic; it was the quiet desperation of feeling trapped in her own routine. Instead of quitting her job or moving across the country, Sarah chose one wee thing: she started going to bed 30 minutes earlier.

That one choice gave her more energy the next day, which led to taking a walk during lunch, which led to feeling more confident, which led to speaking up in a meeting, which led to being offered a new project, which led to discovering she actually had valuable skills. One choice. Thirty minutes earlier bedtime. It changed everything.

### Your CRISIS Toolkit

When you're facing your own Circumstances Requiring Immediate Change in Strategy, remember that you already have everything you need. You have the power to choose differently. Think of CHOICES as clarity, honesty, ownership, intention, courage, energy, and support that you bring to each small decision. Maybe your one wee thing is

- *Saying "no" to one commitment that drains your energy*
- *Taking five minutes to write down three things you're grateful for*
- *Choosing water instead of that third cup of coffee*
- *Sending one text to reconnect with an old friend*
- *Spending ten minutes decluttering one small space*

Change starts with choice, and choice can be beautifully simple.

### The Chrysalis Moment

Right now, you might feel like you're in the chrysalis stage, that uncomfortable in-between space where you're no longer who you were, but you're not yet who you're becoming. It's messy. It's uncertain. It feels like nothing is happening.

But here's what's really going on: you're dissolving and rebuilding at the same time. Every small choice you make is adding to your transformation. Every one wee thing matters.

### Your Next Move

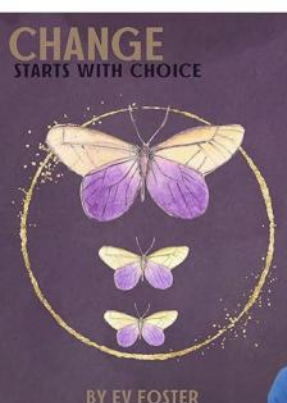
So what's your one wee thing going to be today? Not tomorrow, not next week, not when you feel more ready. Today.

Remember, change starts with choice. Your choice. And it doesn't have to be perfect, permanent, or life-changing in an obvious way. It just has to be different from what you did yesterday. The butterfly doesn't emerge from its chrysalis by making huge, dramatic movements. It pushes gently, consistently, until one day, a breakthrough.

Your CRISIS isn't a catastrophe. It's an invitation. It's life asking you, "Are you ready to choose differently?" The answer can be as simple as one wee thing.

What will you choose?

By Ev Foster



<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0G4KPB19F>

<https://www.skool.com/changestartswithchoice/about?ref=667d9ad595ed482fb452049a3da73198>

# *Why living two years in Caribbean luxury is not a definition of happiness!*

I had the opportunity to live on a paradise island in the Caribbean for two years. An experience that most people can only dream of. I had everything that modern society would define as luxury; for example, I was newly in love and had a luxurious stay in a hotel suite. I had no financial worries and as much time as I wanted.

A typical day would look like this: I would wake up refreshed and well, go down to the hotel for breakfast. Then I would go to the local diving club, where I would help serve tourists and go on various diving trips. When I got back, I would have lunch at one of the nearby restaurants, then take an afternoon rest at either the activity pool or the quieter pool a little further away. I would read books and newspapers and sunbathe. In the evening, I would usually go back to a restaurant. According to most people, that would probably be the definition of a more or less "perfect day" and maybe even a "perfect life".

## **A different kind of rich**

But to my own and most others' surprise, I was not happy. How is this possible? I had everything that was considered to bring total happiness in a person's life, everything that, at least according to society's view, is considered to bring happiness. Perhaps some would think that I was picky and spoiled.

Or maybe it was that, for the first time, I really understood that real happiness in life does not depend on material or superficial things, but on something else. How did it all really fit together, and what else could it be in that case? It was during this time that I did one of the wisest things I had ever done in my life. - I started asking myself different questions that could definitely be called "reality check" questions. They were simple and clear questions like:

*What do I want? Why do I want it?*

*What is important to me?*

*In what way can I be of most use in the world I live in?*

*What do I need to do to get there?*

*What is the most important thing to start focusing on today?*

*What do I need to do, and what can I do today, to get closer to my goals?*

*What obstacles do I have? What resources? Am I willing to do what is required if I get what I want?*

*What do I do if my discipline fails me? How do I view success and adversity?*

*How much and about what have I allowed myself to be influenced by other people in my environment?*

*When was the last time I succeeded in something important to me? Why did it go so well, or was it so successful?*

When I asked myself these questions, I naturally began to get completely different answers. I then came to a deeper realisation than before, that happiness does not depend on your possessions, status, or appearance. Happiness does not depend on how much or little time you have. Nor on how much or little money you have in your bank account.

I then came to two things that made all the difference for me:

**One:** A person's happiness is created by internal circumstances, emotions, and the ability to focus on the right things in life.

**Two:** When I take responsibility for my whole self, my whole life can be affected. I also understood that if I fail, it is the person in the mirror that I should confront. If I succeed, it is also the person in the mirror who should get the praise.

It is the face in the mirror that bears the responsibility, whether I succeed or fail. The only thing that will matter in the end is the effort I am willing to put into what I undertake. With a dynamic attitude and enough effort, I will be able to get exactly where I want to go. The direction and the process itself to the goal will also be far more important than the individual results.

In the Caribbean, I had no real task to get up for in the morning, and hence my energy-less and less happy state. The same "reality check" questions that I asked myself then, you can ask yourself now.


Are you or your company interested in attending a seminar to learn how to apply reality-check questions in your everyday work?  
Have a great work season!

**By Jeanette Szymanski**

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# Finding Strength in the Lows

## How Hitting Rock Bottom Led Me to My True Path

Have you ever thought, *“Why is this happening to me?”* Or *“Why can’t I have a stable period in my life, even for a few months?”*

The truth is, life is full of ups and downs. When we’re in the middle of a difficult situation, it’s hard to see the wood from the trees. Once we’ve come through the storm—and done the healing—we gain clarity. Whilst I’ve disliked the low points, I’ve come to realise they are essential. They allow us to grow, to reset, and to appreciate the highs when they arrive. I have learned to trust in divine timing. Even when it feels chaotic, we are always exactly where we need to be in our journey.

It can be difficult to have faith in the process, especially during the darkest of days, but there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, it is often the lowest points in our journey that teach us to appreciate the moments when life begins to come together. As human beings, we tend to focus on what we lack—whether it’s money, love, friendships, or career progression. When we feel down on our luck, our perspective narrows. Instead of noticing the opportunities right in front of us, we become consumed by our struggles and blind to possibilities. The truth is, opportunities are always there—we can’t see them.

Equally, in those moments, we often forget to appreciate what we do have. These are blessings that form the foundation of our resilience and growth.

Without challenges, we

wouldn’t discover our true capabilities or recognise the strength we build through resilience and the transformation that comes from facing hardship.

Sometimes the most difficult experiences are not obstacles but essential parts of the journey. We may not always understand it, but more often than not, we are exactly where we need to be.

My transformation was during my engagement. I thought I was building towards the “two M’s”—marriage and a mortgage—with my fiancé. When that relationship collapsed, everything as I knew it came crashing down around me. It was a low point in my life, yet it became the catalyst for my transformation.

I sought therapy, faced past wounds, and started to heal my relationships—with family, friends, and, most importantly, myself. From there, I found the courage to start my own business. Along the way, I developed new skills, leadership qualities, and a mindset aligned with the most authentic version of myself.

Letting go of how my family, peers, or society judged me was liberating. For the first time in a long time, I wasn’t living by anyone else’s expectations. I embraced my individuality and shared my healing abilities with the world.

On reflection, my engagement and career had to fall away for me to start making changes in my life.

My breakdown became my breakthrough; I was forced to ask myself the uncomfortable question: “Is this really as good as life can get?” Of course, my answer was no. I knew I had to act, and in doing so, I set myself on an entirely new path.

What amazes me is how far I have come. The shy girl who once dreaded speaking up at school—or even asking for the bill at a restaurant—has since built a business, embraced her voice, and recently won an award for her work.

If you had told me in 2021 I would be running a business, I would have laughed and insisted nursing was my whole life. But life had other plans. Now I know I can achieve whatever I set my mind to.

The greatest gift I have received from my darkest moments is perspective. Sometimes we are exactly where we need to be, even if we cannot see it. Our lows are not the end of the story; they are often the very beginning of something far greater.



By Crystal Johns

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# Breaking the permission block



## Stop sabotaging your wellbeing

What if you could move the dial? Stop feeling overwhelmed by deadlines, never-ending to-do lists, and the balls you are juggling for a better life... or the fear of stepping off the treadmill in case it all comes crashing down?

### *Does this sound familiar?*

This was me until I took my power back. Every day, I see purpose-driven women living in the shadow of an automated survival mode. Life passes by. Joy feels fleeting. Magic goes unnoticed. You are at the bottom of your own queue, everything seems out of control, and yet you are scared to step out of the bubble.

The powerful moments pass you by, your children's laughter, the sunset, and conversations that matter. You tell yourself you will pay attention "once you get through this bit," but there is always another bit to fill.

### *The garden gate you are afraid to close.*

Picture your life as a garden. Right now, your gate might be wide open. Demands, expectations, and other people's needs flow freely, draining your energy. How would it feel to close the gate? What if people think you are selfish? What if everything falls apart without you holding it all together?

Here is the truth: closing your garden gate does not mean abandoning people. It means creating sustainable boundaries so you can show up as your whole, present self, rather than a depleted version running on fumes. When you are not stopping for breaks, getting no fresh air, lacking sleep, and your joy jar sits empty, you cannot sustainably support anyone. Signs show up as fatigue, anxiety, and a loss of sense of self. You are firefighting, never truly present, and always feeling guilty. Many of us run on autopilot, "everyone else first, me if there is time left." Spoiler alert: there is never time left.

### *The permission you are waiting for*

You know what you need: more sleep, a boundary with a demanding client, and an afternoon off to breathe. Yet somehow, you keep pushing, waiting for permission that will never come. When you say, "I cannot stop," what you might really mean is: "I am terrified of what will happen if I do." But what if the thing you are most afraid of has happened? By not giving yourself permission to rest, to set boundaries, and to fill your own life force first, you are already missing what matters most... actually living your life. You are not broken. You are conditioned to believe rest must be earned and that your needs come last, if at all. This conditioning does not have to control your life. There is another way.

### *What changed everything*

After my daughter passed, I ran full throttle. Seven days a week, building my wellbeing business whilst missing precious time with my family. Quick breakfasts, hours shut in my office, weekends are no different. Six months

*I support women Worldwide to reclaim their inner power, trust themselves, and confidently lead and succeed in all areas of life, becoming the leader they were always meant to be.*

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ago, I finally gave myself permission to stop working weekends. To be present. To switch off. Here is what shocked me: the world kept turning. The business did not fall apart. I became more effective, more creative, more energised, operating from a full tank rather than fumes.

### *The truth you need to hear*

The people you love do not need your exhaustion. They need your presence. Overwhelm is not about capability or strength; it is the direct result of chronic self-denial. Putting yourself last and waiting for permission that only you can give. If you recognise yourself here, you are probably waiting for someone to say it is okay: that your needs matter, that you deserve rest, boundaries, and presence.

Let this be the message. You have permission. To rest. To say no. To prioritise your wellbeing. To close your garden gate. To stop being a power station for everyone else. You do not need to earn it. You do not need to justify it. You simply need to claim it. Start small. Three deep breaths can shift you from overwhelm to calm. Notice where you are denying yourself. Close one small part of your garden gate this week, say no to one thing, protect one evening, take one proper break.

Build your wellbeing toolkit. Mine includes meditation, breathwork, grounding techniques, time outdoors, and creativity. Yours might look completely different. What matters is filling your life force and making it non-negotiable. You have been put on this planet to live your life on your terms, not merely survive. Surviving is not living, and you deserve to live.

Close your garden gate. Feed your life force first. Move yourself up to the top of the queue. And that starts with giving yourself permission to claim it, because you are so worth it!

### *By Louise Dicks*

**Empowerment & Wellbeing Specialist**





# Seeing through the illusion of the character is experiencing your deepest desires

***The one bold move that lifts the veil and allows you to live the life of your dreams effortlessly***

If you're like me, always wanting to make it right - read carefully. This might be the last puzzle piece that frees you from the endless seeking for fulfillment. Pause and ask yourself: Am I aware? Yes, you will say. I see the room I'm sitting in. I smell the salty air on the sandy beach. I taste the delicious cake on my tongue.

Am I aware of being aware? Do I notice that there's something that is aware of these qualias I'm experiencing? Aware of these questions? Something that doesn't judge or measure the experience. Something that just is. Silently observing the character I'm playing. Something I can recognize when I put aside all labels, preconceived notions, stories.

What is left? What is true of this moment when I rest in not knowing about anything that I thought I knew before?

It's just I am. Beingness. Stillness. Pure awareness. It's all pointing to the same thing. And this something is you. It's no-thing in particular and at the same time everything. Limitless and free. It can become aware of every experience and can make every desire appear because it is already there.

But, when I'm everything - why can't I see it, you might ask.

It's not because you're not doing or affirming enough. It's already here. Creation is finished. There's nothing to do, just to be and know. No effort required.

You don't create your life. You're your life - the love, the abundance, the freedom you're craving. Everything you experience is a reflection of the degree that you've recognized this truth.

The seeking of the final solution is exactly what keeps you from living the life you want to live. Because the reflection echoes your "I'm not there yet."

You've put so much effort into reaching your goals, getting your desires, and being the master manifestor. Sometimes you feel it's close, and sometimes you think you'll never get there. And just want to give up.

I know how exhausting it is, because I was there. Swinging with the pendulum between I am, and I am not. Never being in the sweet spot of here and now. Where everything happens. Where I happen. Where my life is unfolding.

Somehow we've "learned" that life is about personal growth and self optimization. We have to heal our past to create a better future.

What if I tell you that this understanding of life is causing all the suffering? What if everything is completely different? What if you stop the self-development and start to see through it?

Everything changes, because life happens not out there. You're life itself. Everything is made of your awareness. People, places, circumstances. Assumptions, thoughts, feelings. What you're aware of is what you're experiencing.

What is that one bold move that changes everything? It's you recognizing yourself as the awareness that encompasses it all. There is no separation between you, everything and everyone.

Pause, rest and know. Then bring your desire to mind. Can you see how this happens effortlessly without any resistance? Reality is seamless. No 3D, 4D, 5D. Undivided. We use all these terms to describe the experience and reinforce the separation. There's only one love energy, one awareness, one God. And you're already that.

When you identify with your true nature, you start to see through the illusion of the separate self that veils your sight.

Stay there, anchored in truth, catch yourself when you identify with the character again. Notice it knowingly, without resisting. Your vision will become clearer, and your deepest desires will have space to reveal themselves. Not because you've manifested them, but because you're being your true self, already living it.

Everything is always waiting for you. There are no conditions to be met. God has already made you everything.

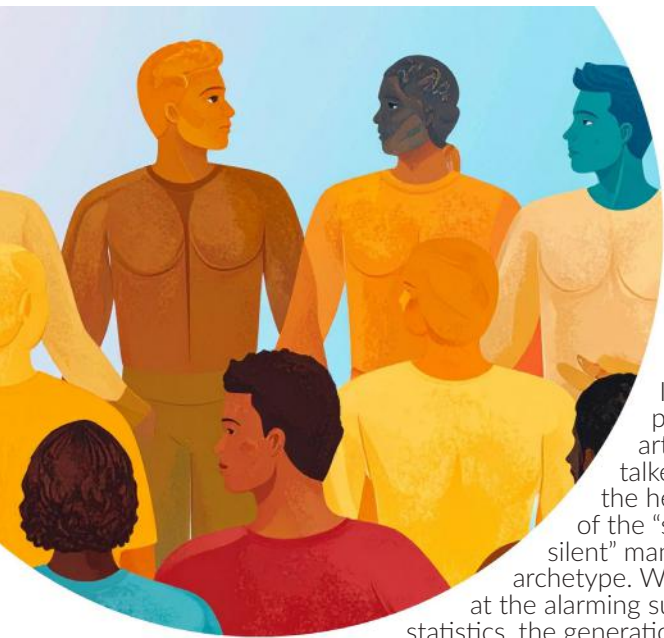
The effortlessness lies in its simplicity. Resist nothing. Go with the flow. Know life is you. You're the happening and the unfolding. The desire to experience yourself as boundless awareness is God's way of saying "Yes" to you.

***By Eva-Maria Prell***

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# The Unexpected Rewards of Showing Your Hand



In my previous article, I talked about the heavy toll of the “strong, silent” man archetype. We looked at the alarming suicide statistics, the generational pressure, and the hidden fears that keep men from opening up. However, the cost of silence is simply too high for men, their relationships, and their health.

Now for the next, more hopeful chapter: What happens when men do choose to talk?

The journey from emotional lockdown to open expression isn't easily solved. It takes deliberate, conscious effort, which can be uncomfortable. That initial decision to embrace vulnerability and speak openly is a huge hurdle to overcome, but it is a step that can bring profound rewards. It can actually build a stronger, more authentic self, a newfound confidence, and the rekindling of ambition.

## From Silence to Clarity

One of the biggest challenges men face is the lack of an emotional vocabulary. We're taught a handful of default settings: happy, angry, fine, and stressed. These words don't cover the range of the human experience. The first practical step in showing your hand is learning to name what you're holding. When you can distinguish anxiety from fear, loneliness from isolation, or frustration from disappointment, you gain power over the feeling. You can detach yourself from the emotion and see it for what it is. An unnamed emotion is a confusing, overwhelming force; a named emotion is a specific piece of information you can work with. Once you can identify those feelings, clarity can emerge.

This is backed by science. A 2007 UCLA brain study found that when people simply named their emotions, it softened the activity in the brain's alarm system, effectively lessening the intensity of the feeling. By digging deeper and uncovering the true meaning, a person shifts from a reactive state to a reflective one.

## Deepening Male Friendship

The silent majority of men often rely on “shoulder-to-shoulder” connections, such as watching a match, working on a project, or playing golf. These shared activities are vital, but they rarely require the “face-to-face” intimacy that builds real trust.

A recent study showed that the number of American men who report having no close friends has risen fivefold since 1990. Conversely, the number of men with six or more close friends has halved. This paints a picture of growing isolation, and it comes at a major cost. The number of close, intimate social relationships is one of the single biggest predictors of a person's long-term health and longevity, highlighting the life-or-death stakes associated with forging these connections.



True vulnerability often starts in the company of other men. This is where the old rules of masculinity are most rigidly enforced, but it's also where they can be most powerfully broken. When one man in a group has the courage to admit he's struggling with work or grieving a loss, it grants permission for every other man in the room to open up. It shows everyone that “it's OK not to be OK” and that asking for help isn't a sign of failure but an invitation for support. Men's groups are opening up in many locations and communities, with the specific aim of being a safe space for men to share their feelings. This can only be encouraged.

## The Richest Reward

For many men, the greatest fear in opening up is the potential for judgment. But the greatest reward is the opposite: authentic connection. When you choose to be vulnerable with a partner, a friend, or a family member, you are essentially saying: “This is all of me and I trust you with it.” This is the foundation of genuine intimacy, serving to strengthen a relationship. The emotional barrier that once felt like self-protection actually becomes a barrier that prevents love from truly landing.

By sharing an insecurity or a deep worry, you replace surface-level conversation with the kind of emotional presence that makes life meaningful. Studies consistently show that couples who practice emotional self-disclosure report significantly higher relationship satisfaction and a greater sense of intimacy. You stop expending energy to maintain a facade and can reinvest that energy into living a more authentic, engaged, and less-stressed life.

Vulnerability is not a burden you place on others. It should be seen as the ultimate act of courage, a self-directed move that unlocks freedom, builds stronger relationships, and, ironically, leads to a far more resilient and genuine form of strength. The silent man appears strong, but the man who chooses to share his truth is strong. The time to collect the rewards of that choice is now.—

**By Julian Gilbey**

*Julian Gilbey is a resilient mindset coach, helping men aged 35-55 reclaim their power, purpose, and direction. For more information, visit [www.juliangilbeycoaching.com](http://www.juliangilbeycoaching.com), or Instagram @juliangilbey1.*







# Recognizing the Warning Signs of Child Sexual Abuse— and Building a Family Safety Plan

Throughout the year, we've discussed what abuse is, who may be most vulnerable, who might commit it, where boundaries begin, and how to identify potential abusers. To close out the year, we shift from recognition to action—when to be concerned, how to spot warning signs, and how to establish a protective family **PLAN**.

Parents want nothing more than to keep their children safe, yet many hesitate to confront the possibility of sexual abuse. By learning to spot the signs and creating a proactive safety plan, caregivers can protect children and respond quickly when concerns arise.

## When to Be Concerned

Children often express distress through actions and mood changes rather than words. A sudden shift toward isolation, depression, or low self-esteem is a red flag. Key indicators include:

**Unexplained gifts.** A child who suddenly acquires toys, clothes, or money without explanation may be receiving inappropriate attention from an adult. Know who gives your child gifts and set firm boundaries if anything feels suspicious.

**Regressive behaviors.** Thumb-sucking, bedwetting, or a sudden drop in school performance can signal inner turmoil. A formerly high-achieving student who starts failing or a toilet-trained child who reverts to accidents deserves compassionate attention and professional evaluation.

**New fears of familiar people or places.** If a child abruptly refuses to visit a previously loved friend, relative, or location, respect that instinct. Do not force contact; instead, gently explore what might have changed.

**Acting out or risky behaviors.** Delinquency, reckless stunts, or self-harm—including cutting—may mask overwhelming pain. Statements about suicide or visible self-injury are urgent cries for help, not mere attention-seeking. Seek immediate support from a mental-health professional.

## Sexualized behavior beyond age norms.

Natural curiosity about bodies is expected, but behavior that disrupts daily life or involves seeking to touch another child's genitals is cause for immediate concern and professional guidance.

**Sudden anxiety or depression.** An energetic child who becomes persistently sad, withdrawn, or anxious may be coping with trauma they cannot articulate. Therapy can help them process these feelings safely.

**Physical discomfort.** Complaints of pain while sitting, riding a bike, bathing, or using the restroom warrant a prompt medical evaluation to rule out injury or abuse. Other possible signs include obsession with fire, cruelty to animals, hallucinations, unexplained headaches or nausea, overdressing to hide the body, and secretive withdrawal. While any single symptom may have other explanations, patterns or combinations should never be ignored.

## Building a Safety Plan: The PLAN Acronym

Prevention is as vital as detection. Parents can instill safety habits using the acronym **PLAN**:

- **Permission:** Children must always have parental permission before leaving home.
- **Location:** Caregivers should know a child's whereabouts at all times; the plan restarts if the location changes.
- **Activity:** Parents need to know what the child will be doing; a change in activity means rechecking the plan.
- **Names and Numbers:** Children should carry the names and contact numbers of two trusted adults and share the name and number of the person they're with. This framework keeps children accountable and reinforces that their safety is a family priority.

## Teaching Body Boundaries and Digital Awareness

Family therapist Cheryl Overby's "**11 Privacy Rules**" gives children clear guidelines:

- No one may touch or look at another person's private parts, and it's never okay for someone to touch or photograph theirs.

- Children should never show their own private parts or make others uncomfortable with sexual language.
- It's fine to touch oneself in private for hygiene or curiosity, but never to involve others.
- If any rule is broken—or even if something feels confusing—children must tell a trusted adult and keep telling until someone helps.

Parents should explain that "private parts" mean any area a bathing suit covers, while also emphasizing that boys' chests and other body parts deserve equal respect. These rules apply both in person and online, where predators can exploit digital spaces.

## Empowering Trusted Communication

Every child needs a "trusted triangle" of adults they can confide in—perhaps a parent, relative, teacher, or counselor. Allowing children to choose these people fosters ownership and ensures they feel comfortable speaking up. Parents should discuss safe communication, help kids recognize how different situations make them feel, and encourage them to listen to their inner "guiding voice."

By watching for behavioral changes, responding promptly to warning signs, and creating a clear safety plan, parents provide both protection and empowerment. Open dialogue, attentive observation, and consistent boundaries are powerful tools to keep children safe and help them thrive. Protecting our children starts with awareness, vigilance, and the courage to act. No concern is too small when a child's safety is at stake.

By Yvonne Sandomir



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2. Safe Kids Thrive <https://safekidsthive.org/the-report/introduction/other-warning-signs/>



# Building Fire Breaks

## by Janice Elsley

transform when leaders normalise conversations about pressure, capacity, and misalignment before things unravel. When people are allowed to say, "This isn't sustainable," without consequences, problems shrink rather than explode. The fire doesn't disappear. It just never grows large enough to burn everything down.

### The Discipline of the Long Game

Building firebreaks will feel slower at first. You're choosing prevention over urgency, design over drama, and long-term impact over short-term relief. In environments conditioned to reward constant motion, this choice is often misunderstood. Some will mistake it for inaction. It isn't. It's restraint with intention.

Once firebreaks are in place, something fundamental begins to shift. Leaders stop solving the same problems on repeat. The same tensions no longer dominate meetings. Teams are no longer held together by exhausted people compensating through sheer effort. The organisation starts to stabilise — not because people are trying harder, but because the system is finally supporting them.

What returns in this space is clarity. Clarity creates capacity. Not more hours or more output, but the mental and emotional space required to think. To see patterns instead of reacting to noise. To make decisions deliberately rather than defensively. Capacity is what allows leaders to move from survival mode back into true leadership.

When leaders step out of constant threat response, they regain access to the part of the brain that can actually lead. Strategy improves. Decisions sharpen. Presence deepens. Conversations become cleaner. Priorities become clearer. Leadership becomes intentional again, rather than reactive. This is a different kind of leadership legacy — one built not on heroics or endurance, but on foresight, design, and the courage to lead before things break.

### A Different Kind of Leadership Legacy

Here's what I've learned after years on leadership teams, in boardrooms, and in change programs. The fires don't stop because leaders work harder. They stop when leaders finally slow down enough to see what keeps igniting them. Firefighting makes you feel needed. Fire breaks make you effective. One keeps your nervous system locked into survival mode.

The other creates the conditions for clarity, trust, and sustained performance. The most powerful shift a leader can make isn't learning how to respond faster in a crisis — it's learning how to tolerate the discomfort of prevention. Of having the conversation early. Of redesigning what isn't working before it becomes urgent. That's the work that rarely gets recognised. It's also the work that changes everything.

So if you're tired — not just busy, but deeply tired — this is your invitation.

**Stop proving your value in the flames**

**Start building the breaks.**

**That's not stepping back from leadership.**

**That's finally stepping into it.**

In my last column, I wrote about the firefighter trap, how many leaders quietly build their sense of value around being the one who steps in when everything is on fire. If that landed for you, this is the harder conversation. Because once you stop running toward the flames, you're left with the real work of leadership: stopping the fires from starting in the first place. And that work doesn't come with applause.

### Why Firefighting Is So Hard to Let Go Of

Firefighting feels productive. Necessary. Important. There's a reason for that. When something goes wrong, the brain switches into threat mode. The amygdala lights up, stress hormones surge, and attention narrows. And when the problem is resolved, there's relief—a subtle release that tells the nervous system, "You survived."

Over time, many leaders become conditioned to this cycle. Crisis creates urgency. Urgency creates focus. Resolution brings relief. The brain learns that intensity equals relevance. The problem is, this keeps leaders trapped in reaction.

When your nervous system is constantly scanning for threat, the part of the brain responsible for foresight, pattern recognition, and strategic thinking never fully comes online. You're busy, visible, and exhausted — but not ahead. Fire breaks require a different state altogether.

### Fire Breaks Are Built From Awareness, Not Urgency

Fire breaks aren't dramatic. They're designed. They're the systems, habits, and decisions that quietly remove the conditions that create repeat problems. Not after the damage is done — but before the spark ever catches. Most leaders don't actually have unpredictable teams or volatile environments. They have predictable pressure points that they haven't slowed down long enough to name.

Roles that always stretch too far. Decisions that stay unclear for too long. Expectations that are assumed, not stated. Conversations that are avoided until they can't be. A fire break is recognising patterns before they become problems — and having the discipline to act early, when it still feels unnecessary. That takes maturity. And restraint.

### The Cultural Fire Break That Changes Everything

Here's where most well-intended fire break strategies collapse. They focus on structure, but ignore the nervous systems of the people inside them. Neuroscience is clear on this: when people feel under threat — whether that's fear of judgement, failure, or being seen as incapable — they don't bring information forward. They withhold it. They soften it. They wait. By the time the truth surfaces, it's already a fire. Fire breaks only work in cultures where people feel safe enough to speak early. Not dramatically. Not emotionally. Just honestly. I've watched teams

*This is the second edition of "Putting Out the Fire," a series exploring the hidden habits that drain leaders—and the practices that help them thrive. I'm Janice Elsley, a leadership and change expert, international author, and podcast host who blends neuroscience, psychology, and human connection to help leaders stop burning out and start building legacies that last.*



# NEW YEAR, SAME WORTH

By Samantha Rayford

**Winter is such a funny season, isn't it?**

We're wrapped in cosy jumpers, sipping hot drinks, surrounded by fairy lights and family traditions... and yet for so many of us, this is the time of year when our confidence takes the biggest hit. Maybe it's the Christmas photos we dread. Maybe it's the food guilt we carry even when everyone else is just enjoying the moment. Maybe it's the comments from people who don't quite realise their words linger long after dinner is over.

And then, just when we've finally exhaled after the chaos of Christmas, the world hits us with the message it delivers every single year:

**"New Year, New You."**

Tell me I'm not the only one who feels exhausted by that. Every advert, every headline, every "reset challenge" on social media seems to scream the same thing: "That version of you from last year? Nope. Not good enough. Time to upgrade." But before you start thinking about resolutions, detoxes, new routines or whatever the world tells you you "should" be doing... I want to gently offer you a different way of looking at the new year. You don't need a new you.

**You need to recognise the worth of the you that's already here. New year, SAME worth.**

## THE TRUTH ABOUT WINTER NOBODY REALLY TALKS ABOUT

Let's be honest for a second. This time of year is full of joy, yes — but it's also full of pressure. You're surrounded by people, routines shift, your body might feel different, your emotions might be louder, and you're forced into situations that can make you question yourself without even realising it. You see a picture of yourself, and suddenly you freeze. You hear someone mention how much they've "overindulged," and it triggers an old belief. You scroll past someone's highlight reel and instantly compare.

And then January arrives like a giant magnifying glass over every insecurity we've tried to keep quiet. But here's something most people don't realise: That pressure you feel? It's not coming from your body. It's coming from the expectations society has placed on it. There is nothing wrong with you. Nothing to fix or start over. Nothing about you needs reinventing just because the calendar is flipping over.

### WHY "NEW YEAR, NEW YOU" DOES MORE HARM THAN GOOD

Let's think about that phrase for a minute. "New year, new you." It sounds positive...

but I want you to notice what it's actually saying underneath: "You're not enough as you are." "You've failed somewhere."

"You should be different by now."

And when we build goals from that place — from shame, comparison or panic — they don't strengthen us. They wear us down. This is something I see constantly in my work as a body confidence and self-love coach.

Women sit in front of me with a list of strict plans for January because they believe that changing themselves physically will finally make them feel better inside. But confidence doesn't work like that. Confidence doesn't magically appear at the end of a diet or after a transformation. It grows when you stop tying your worth to how you think you should look. That's why I want you to shift the focus this year. Not "new year, new you," but:

**"New year, same worth — and goals that respect that."**

## THREE SHIFTS THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR WHOLE WINTER

**1. You don't need to "start again."** How many times have you told yourself that everything has to begin on a Monday? Or the first of the month? Or the first of the year? You're not a project. You're a person. And people grow in seasons, not deadlines. You can begin whenever you choose— gently, slowly, imperfectly.

**2. Ask yourself:** "How do I want to feel?" Instead of setting body-focused goals because you feel you "should," try shifting the question completely. Ask: "How do I want to feel in myself this year?" Energetic? Grounded? Confident? Stronger? Less overwhelmed? When you choose goals that support how you want to feel, not how you want to look, you step into a version of change that's actually healthy for your mind and body.

**3. Remind yourself that your worth is constant.** Your worth does not rise in January and fall in December. You are worthy in the moments you feel strong and the moments you feel lost in the clothes that fit perfectly and the ones that don't. In the selfies you delete and the ones you post. In every single season of your life. And if nobody has said this to you before— let me be the first: You don't have to earn the right to feel good about yourself.

## A LITTLE NOTE FOR YOU AS YOU STEP INTO THE NEW YEAR.

If we were sitting together right now — maybe with a coffee, wrapped up warm, talking honestly — this is what I'd tell you: You can set goals. You can dream big. You can want change. You can pursue growth in any way that feels exciting for you. But not because you think the "old you" wasn't enough. Do it because you already deserve good things. Do it because you want to feel more connected to yourself. Do it because you are learning to treat your body with the respect it has always deserved.

**So this winter, I hope you carry this with you: New Year. Same You. Same heart. Same strength. Same worth— finally seen and honoured.**

You are already everything you need to be. Let this be the year you finally see it too.

**By Samantha Rayford**  
Novaré Confidence

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# The Gratitude Effect

## How Self-Appreciation Creates Better Leaders



We often think leadership is about skill, stamina, and strategy - yet one of the most powerful performance tools is one of the most overlooked: gratitude.

According to Gallup, employees who feel recognised are five times more likely to stay in their role and 4.6 times more engaged. The O.C. Tanner Global Culture Report found that gratitude increases productivity by 31% and reduces burnout by 44%. That's not fluff - that's science.

But here's the truth: you can't give authentic appreciation to others if you don't feel it for yourself. That's where **self-appreciation** becomes authentic leadership in action.

One of the 38 components of NAIL-IT Leadership to ensure you feel fulfilled, happy, productive and balanced is the **SELF-APPRECIATION** Formula. This 16-part framework builds confidence, connection, and purpose from the inside out.

Each quality strengthens your leadership and energy:

- **Self-Respect** - Value your own worth and boundaries.
- **Empathy** - Show yourself the compassion you give others.

- **Love** - Accept yourself fully, flaws and all.
- **Forgiveness** - Release guilt and learn from setbacks.
- **Acceptance** - Honour your strengths and imperfections equally.
- **Positivity** - Focus on what's working and what's possible.
- **Purpose** - Align actions with what truly matters.
- **Resilience** - Recognise your ability to bounce back.
- **Expression** - Speak your truth authentically.
- **Courage** - Face fears and act with confidence.
- **Integrity** - Stay true to your values under pressure.
- **Awareness** - Notice thoughts and emotions without judgement.
- **Thankfulness** - Celebrate achievements and small wins.
- **Inspiration** - Tap into your internal sources of motivation.
- **Open-Mindedness** - Stay curious and flexible.
- **Nurturing** - Prioritise self-care for your mind, body, and spirit.

When you practise appreciation, for yourself and others, performance naturally follows.

Studies from Harvard and Warwick Universities show gratitude strengthens immunity, enhances sleep, and boosts productivity by up to 13%. In other words, it's good for your health, your performance, and your leadership.

Gratitude is not a soft skill, not a luxury. It's a strength - one that turns exhaustion into enthusiasm and pressure into purpose. So, before you thank someone else today, pause and thank yourself too. That's not ego. That's energy. And it's where true leadership begins.

**Dr Rana Al-Falaki**

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# From Research to Reality

## The Role of Lived Experience in Lifestyle Medicine

Lifestyle medicine is transforming the way we approach health. Grounded in six scientifically validated pillars—nutrition, movement, restorative sleep, stress management, social connection, and reduction of harmful substances—it offers practical interventions that can both prevent and treat chronic disease. Research shows lifestyle changes can reduce systemic inflammation, support cardiovascular health, and even influence gene expression through epigenetic pathways (Ornish et al., 2008). Yet science alone is not enough. To truly change outcomes, we must bring in another essential element: the voices of lived experience.

Lived experience is the bridge between data and reality. While clinical studies demonstrate that exercise improves insulin sensitivity or that social isolation increases mortality risk (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010), it is the patient who lives these truths daily—feeling the fatigue of disrupted cortisol cycles, the emotional weight of disconnection, or the empowerment that comes from sustainable habit change. Chronic stress, through repeated activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, is now recognised as a driver in autoimmunity and inflammatory disease (Chrousos, 2009). Their stories breathe life into these statistics, illustrating what works in practice and what gets lost in translation.

Healthcare professionals are increasingly recognising this. Across the British Society of Lifestyle Medicine and other networks, people with lived experience

are being invited to participate in conferences, policy discussions, and clinical design. Their insight does more than complement research—it enhances it. By voicing the nuances of fatigue, stress, and resilience, they guide practitioners toward care that is more person-centred, trauma-informed, and ultimately more effective.

My own journey with autoimmune disease underscored this truth. Despite years in healthcare, it was not until I began applying lifestyle medicine principles—creating nervous system safety, improving sleep, and nurturing supportive relationships—that I discovered sustainable change. Science gave me the framework, but lived experience gave me the compass.

The integration of evidence and experience marks the future of lifestyle medicine. From research to reality, it is this partnership—science and story, data and human voice—that will shape the next chapter of health and healing.

**By Emma Toms**  
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# Supporting

# NHS

# New Year, More You.....

Yes, I know that is not how the saying goes, but maybe this year, instead of trying to change things by committing to resolutions and promises you feel you should make to yourself, you could focus on releasing the pressure, pausing, and taking moments to simply be... Not only that, perhaps you could plant the seed of intention to be more of you, the most you that you have ever been...

When you were little, you were not focused on the 'should's' and the 'should not's'. You viewed the world with curiosity and wonder, and you probably didn't pick yourself apart for the external things you notice so quickly now. In the Early Years, children learn best through curiosity, discovery and trial and error, all through play. Their natural ability to be present, to explore, and to follow what feels right is something we often lose as adults.

So, ask yourself: when was the last time you allowed yourself to be curious? When was the last time you paused and welcomed fun and joy into your world? When was the last time you truly recognised what you are good at?

Children can teach us so much about how to be, but here is something important: the little version of you is still inside. They have witnessed every lesson and every blessing that has shaped you until this moment. They want you to grow, to thrive, and to become whoever you wish to be.

In Soul Plan work, we talk about the blueprint you arrived with- the energetic map of your gifts, challenges and talents, present from the moment you were born. Your

Soul Plan is laid out in the form of a star, which means that, quite literally, a star was born the day you came into the world. That inner child within you remembers this blueprint.

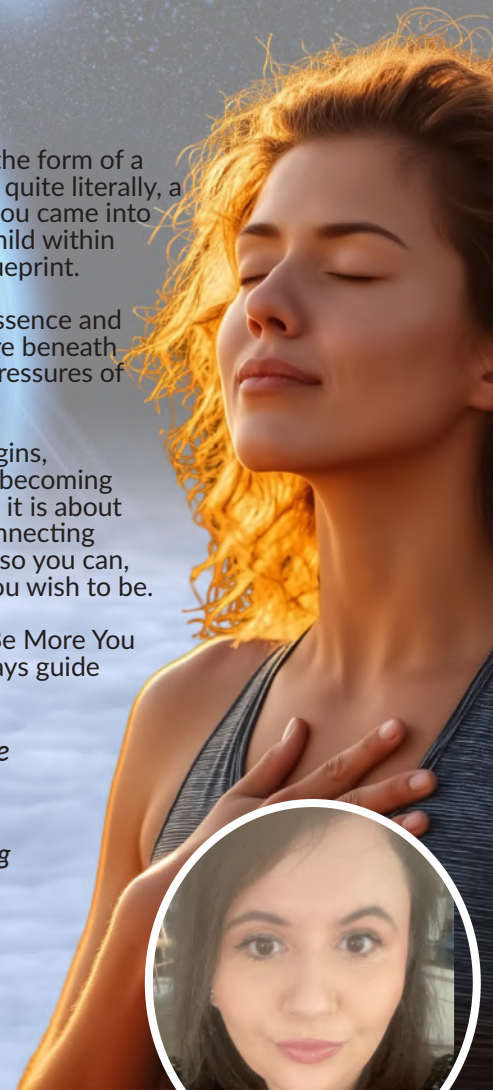
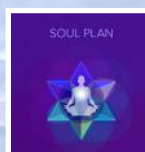
They remember your essence and the truth of who you are beneath the expectations and pressures of adult life.

So, as this new year begins, perhaps it is not about becoming someone new. Perhaps it is about remembering and reconnecting with who you truly are so you can, in turn, become who you wish to be.

2026 is simply saying Be More You & the Little Us will always guide the way!

By Georgina Goldstone  
Spiritual Counsellor

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Georgina Goldstone



## Supporting

# CALM



# It All Ends With You

This year began with you. Through both internal and external challenges, you have returned to your centre to rediscover your true self. By embracing your authenticity and moving from survival to a place of clarity and neutrality, you have shed old layers and transformed into who you are today. Letting go of what no longer serves you—whether relationships, habits, or routines—allows you to move forward with love, truth, and confidence, free from the need for approval or validation from others.

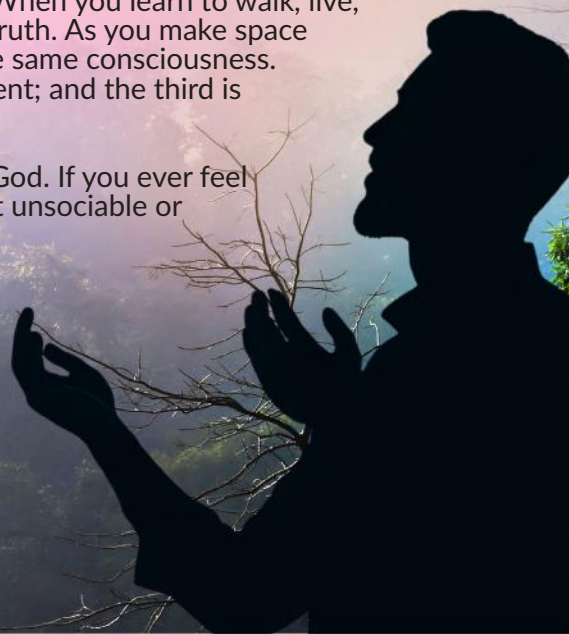
We are not here to fix or carry the burdens of others, but to serve. You are the guide to your own destiny, and you grant yourself permission to move ahead. Times of solitude help you quiet your mind, reconnect with your feelings, and listen to your body's messages.

Trust that your soul leads the way, knowing your path before you do. When you learn to walk, live, and stand alone, this strength cannot be taken from you. This is your truth. As you make space for authentic relationships, you will find others who meet you with the same consciousness. The first step is letting go; the second is healing the past and the present; and the third is remembering that your journey begins and ends with you.

There is always more to learn, and no one has all the answers except God. If you ever feel alone, remember you are never truly alone. You are not lost, you're not unsociable or crazy, you are being shaped, and you are being guided. Many are walking on their own timeline, never judge yourself, you're not behind, you're right on time to take the first step into your future that awaits you.

Love, truth, light be with you!

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## Supporting





# How Ketamine-Assisted Therapy Can Support Healing Childhood Trauma and Attachment Wounds

Childhood trauma is not defined solely by what happened to us, but by what happened inside of us as a result. When a child feels unseen, unprotected, or emotionally alone, the nervous system adapts in order to survive. Over time, those adaptations can show up as anxiety, emotional shutdown, avoidance, or relationship patterns that feel difficult to shift.

As trauma specialist Gabor Maté often explains, what we label as disorders are frequently adaptive responses to environments that overwhelmed us when we were young.

Ketamine-assisted therapy is emerging as one approach that may help soften these deeply ingrained survival patterns, creating a therapeutic window in which the person beneath the coping strategies can be met with compassion and understanding.

## Why Ketamine May Help Access Trauma Safely

In a supported therapeutic setting, ketamine can quiet the brain's habitual self-protective loops long enough for deeper emotional material to arise without overwhelming the nervous system. In this softened state, individuals may experience:

- A reduced sense of constant threat or hypervigilance
- Access to memories without becoming emotionally flooded
- A shift from shame toward self-compassion
- A felt sense of safety that allows the inner child to be acknowledged

Many describe the experience not as disorientating or "trippy," but as clarifying — a reconnection with what feels authentic and true.

## Healing Attachment Patterns From the Inside Out

Attachment wounds are not character flaws. They are the natural outcomes of a child adapting to emotional scarcity, unpredictability, or inconsistency. Early beliefs such as: "I am too much," "I am alone," "I must earn love," can become deeply embedded in the nervous system.

Ketamine's neuroplastic effects may allow individuals to revisit these early imprints from a place of internal safety, making it possible to gently update long-held beliefs and create space for healthier boundaries, more secure relationships, and connection without fear.

## Integration: Where Lasting Change Occurs

Insight alone rarely creates lasting change. Healing happens through integration, bringing awareness into daily life with the support of skilled therapy. Somatic practices, compassionate inquiry, and nervous system regulation are essential in helping the body learn that safety is no longer conditional. Ketamine-assisted therapy is not a standalone solution. It works best when combined with thoughtful integration and professional guidance.

## An Invitation to Reflect

If something resonated or softened as you read this, consider it an invitation to pause and reflect on your own patterns and experiences. Exploring trauma and attachment with a qualified professional can help determine whether ketamine-assisted therapy is appropriate for you, or whether another therapeutic modality may be a better fit.

Healing does not mean becoming someone new. It means becoming who you may have been if safety had been present all along.

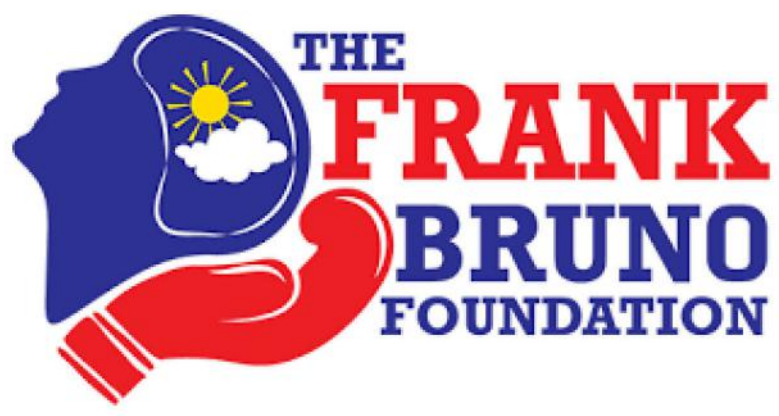
By Kimberly Trickey MS LPC

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*Editorial note: This article is intended for informational and educational purposes only. Ketamine-assisted therapy is a medical treatment and should only be accessed through qualified, licensed professionals. Individual experiences vary, and it may not be suitable for everyone.*



# Supporting





# Post-Separation Abuse & Goodbye

Do we truly understand the impact that goodbye has on a child of **PSA - post-separation abuse**? For children who experience PSA, it means the abuser will use this as an opportunity to retain control and power by various means, such as manipulation and emotional abuse.

***There may be a Child Arrangements Order in place, which sets out where the children will spend Christmas.*** This means they may be spending Christmas with the abuser, who may not allow the children to keep in contact with the victim/survivor parent while they're away.

Abusers may intentionally delay times or change arrangements at the last minute. The goal? To cause distress, worry, and frustration for the other parent and child. I cannot stress enough how horrendous this time of year can be.

***The most important thing for the victim/survivor parent to remember is that this won't last forever.***

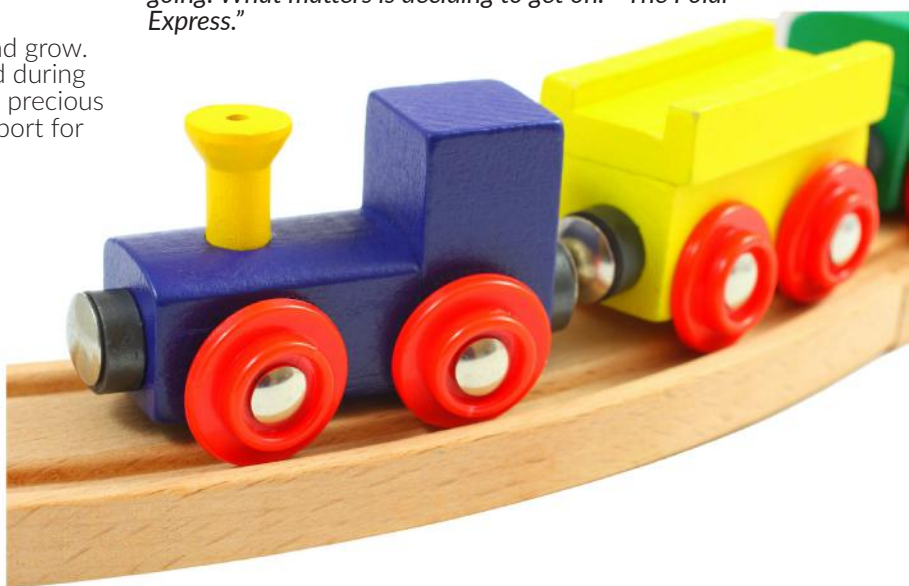
It may feel as though it will, but children learn and grow. So being loving and supportive towards the child during those years of PSA is essential. And it's the most precious gift a parent can give. Also, seeking external support for the child where necessary.

This doesn't mean spending a fortune either. Children want time and attention. Play games, bake cookies, and watch Christmas films. These are the things that memories are made of that will last.

Don't allow the abuser to steal the small joys around Christmas time. When it's time to say goodbye, and the child leaves for the holidays, you will know that you've done the best you can and given them memories to cherish.

Then take time for yourself. Rest, meet with friends, whatever works for you. Don't feel guilty about focusing on you for a moment. An individual can have the most wonderful memories with their children if they decide to make it an incredible journey and get on board to make the best of the situation.

***"The thing about trains ... it doesn't matter where they're going. What matters is deciding to get on." "The Polar Express."***



By Lucy Wade

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# Sleep Your Way Into the New Year

## Simple, Sustainable Tips That Actually Work

As the New Year begins, many of us set ambitious goals around health, productivity and wellbeing. Yet one of the most powerful foundations for achieving any resolution is often overlooked: sleep. Rather than vowing to overhaul everything at once, the New Year is an ideal time to make small, realistic changes that support better rest, and in turn, better days.

Start by focusing on consistency rather than perfection. Waking up at roughly the same time each day (including weekends) helps regulate your body clock. You don't need military precision; even keeping within an hour can make a noticeable difference to how alert you feel and how easily you fall asleep. Naturally, you should start to feel sleepy around the same time.

Many people resolve to 'go to bed earlier, but sleep works better when you listen to your body. If you're not sleepy, lying in bed awake can increase frustration. Instead, create a short, calming wind-down routine. Perhaps reading, gentle stretching or a warm shower and head to bed when your eyes feel heavy rather than when the clock tells you to.

Light exposure is another simple but effective lever. Try to get outside for natural daylight within an hour of waking, even if it's cloudy. Morning light helps anchor your circadian rhythm, making it easier to feel sleepy at night. In the evening, do the opposite: dim lights where possible and avoid harsh overhead lighting to signal to your brain that the day is winding down.

Finally, approach sleep goals with self-compassion. Life doesn't reset neatly on 1 January, and neither does sleep. There will be late nights, disrupted routines and mornings where you feel tired despite doing 'all the right things'. That's normal. Improvement comes from patterns over time, not one perfect night. Progress over perfection.

This New Year, consider sleep not as another resolution that might not last, but as a supportive habit that underpins everything else. Small changes, practised consistently, can lead to more energy, better focus and a healthier year ahead.

**By Sam Sadighi**  
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## My Simple Yet Powerful Morning Routine: Wellness Starts in 5 Minutes

Let's talk mornings. You know that moment when you wake up and feel like your to-do list is already shouting at you? I've been there. But I've also learned that the way we start our day shapes everything that follows.

Wellness doesn't have to start with fancy retreats or biohacking tech. It starts right at home—often in the first five minutes. Here's a peek into my winter morning routine that keeps me grounded, energized, and aging with intention.

### 1. Start with Breathwork

Before my feet hit the floor, I take five minutes to breathe deeply and clear overnight CO<sub>2</sub> buildup. Engage your core to shift your breath to your belly. It calms my nervous system and brings me into the present.

### 2. Hydrate & Alkalize

Castor oil on my face for moisture (yes, I look like a shiny penny!) and a glass of water with algae to alkalize my body. Spirulina and chlorella are loaded with chlorophyll, which helps balance acidity and inflammation—a key for midlife resilience.

### 3. Multitask with Laser Therapy

While making breakfast for my kids, I pop on my low-level laser cap from Dr. Bauman. Five minutes for hair health while making eggs? Win-win.

### 4. Delay the Coffee

I wait an hour before my supercharged coffee (with Silverfern fiber, coconut oil, and adaptogens). Why? Giving cortisol time to peak naturally supports steadier energy—especially crucial in midlife.

### 5. Keep Skincare Simple, Smart

My three non-negotiables:

- One Skin cleanser (hello peptides!)
- Young Goose eye serum, NAD care and SPF for repair and protection—even on surf days.

### Why This Works

These rituals may be simple, but their consistency lays the foundation for lasting wellness and longevity. It's not about perfection—it's about starting your day with intention.

So what's one small ritual you can start tomorrow?

Remember: it doesn't have to be complicated to be powerful.

Here's to mornings that fuel a life you love.

**Want More?** If skincare is your thing, tune in to my latest episode with the founders of Young Goose to see how my skin aged backward! Check out on [thewelldrop.com](http://thewelldrop.com)

Your Wellness Friend,

**Amber Berger**

**THE WELL DROP**

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