

EXPERT **PROFILE**
WELLNESS
MAGAZINE

Expert Profile

Issue 5

W E L L N E S S

More
from our
global
experts
on
wellbeing

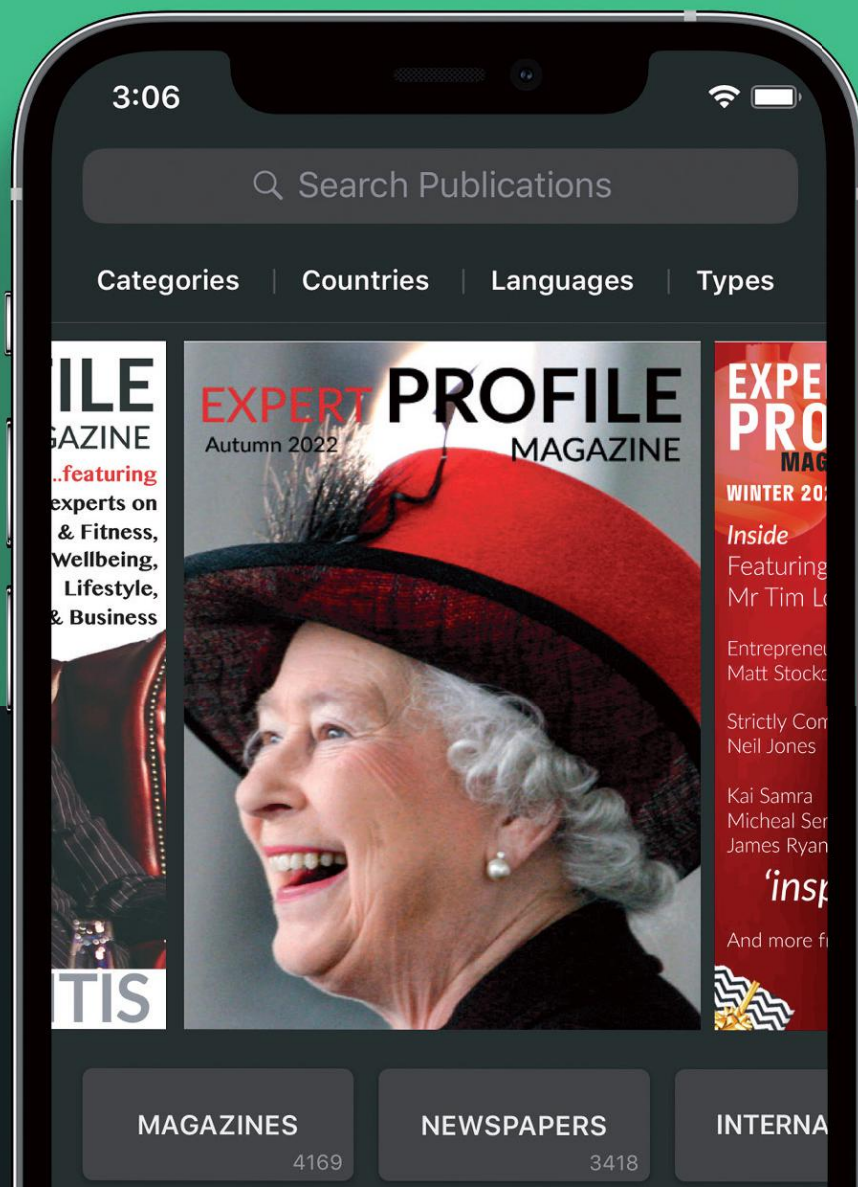
The Story 'so far' of
Gerrard Finlayson
Tragedy to Triumph



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EDITORS NOTE

Amidst our busy lives, we must remind ourselves of one simple yet profound truth: **We Are Not Alone.** We share this journey with countless others, each navigating their own challenges, joys, and quiet struggles. Now, more than ever, it's crucial that we check in on each other and extend a hand to our fellow human beings.

Checking in doesn't always have to be grand or time-consuming. Sometimes, it's a simple message, a phone call, or an offer of a coffee break that can make all the difference. A small act of kindness can create ripples of positivity in someone's life, reminding them they are seen and valued. In a time when technology connects us in more ways than ever before, true connection lies in the effort we make to genuinely care for each other.

As we navigate both personal and collective challenges, let's remember the power we hold in creating a stronger community. Whether it's with family, friends, colleagues, or even strangers, taking a moment to check in not only supports others, but also nurtures our own sense of purpose and belonging. We rise by lifting each other.

So, let this issue serve as a gentle nudge to pause, look around, and ask the simple question: "How are you?" It could be the most meaningful gesture of the day—for them, and for you.

Take care of each other. We all need it.

Rany Athwall
Editor



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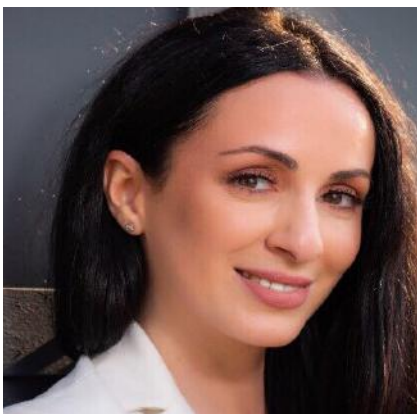
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From Tragedy to Triumph

*The Inspiring Journey of
Gerrard Finlayson*

He's a high-performance trainer to the 1%, working with CEOs, entrepreneurs, and busy professionals globally. Twice named 'Personal Trainer of the Year'

Gerrard Finlayson appears to be living the dream. However, his journey has been anything but smooth.

"My dreams were shattered in an instant," recalls Gerrard. In September 2001, a drunk driver hit Gerrard head-on at twice the speed limit, ending his aspirations of becoming a professional basketball player. "Ironically, I had just started my Sports Therapy degree. The principles I learned were crucial in my recovery from a life-changing back injury," he reflects.

Despite living with a lower back condition for two decades, Gerrard has not let this define him. "I can't run or jump as fast or high as I used to, but I've optimised everything else. Overcoming this challenge has proved invaluable in mentoring my clients. Life isn't about being dealt a good hand. It's about playing a poor hand well."



Gerrard started as a fitness instructor in 2003 at Amida Health Club near Twickenham, London, then as a personal trainer. "We won the UK Flame Awards for the best gym in the UK. I really got a flavor early in my career for high performance, be it in business, personally, or in the fitness space. A lot of the 2003 World Cup-winning England Rugby players were members there. I got to rub shoulders with them every day. I appreciated how they trained, how serious and dedicated they were."

In June 2005, Gerrard set up his personal training business. Since then, he has completed over 30,000 training sessions. From boot camps in the snow and rain in Cobham, Surrey, to training private clients in luxury home gyms that he helps design and supply, Gerrard's journey has been one of relentless perseverance. "I've learned in the fitness business that there are three keys to success. One - first class client experience. Two - results. Three - relationships. You need all three to make it work."

The vast majority of Gerrard's business has grown purely through recommendations. He's fully booked from 6:00 each morning, with a long waiting list. But Gerrard's journey hasn't been without further setbacks. In 2019, Gerrard's son, Jonah, was born with a serious congenital heart defect caused by 22q11 deletion syndrome, or DiGeorge syndrome.

The spectrum of DiGeorge syndrome is large, often including congenital heart defects, facial disfigurement, speech, language, learning difficulties, and compromised immunity. "Life suddenly got put on hold," says Gerrard. "Jonah

had life-saving open-heart reconstructive surgery at just three days old. His aortic arch was not connected, and he had two holes in his heart. The surgeons at The Royal Brompton Hospital, London, were miracle workers."

Jonah's recovery was a challenging time for Gerrard and his family. "It really took its toll. I prioritised my son and family, often not knowing how we would get through each day. But I am so proud of Jonah. He's a real





fighter who has taught me to dig deeper than ever. Carissa, my wife, is an absolute rock, too. We grew closer together during the ordeal, but things were starting to crack at the seams elsewhere.” Jonah has gone on to flourish, impressing his medical team with his progress. “To me, he is a modern-day miracle.” The prolonged and heavy life-and-death nature of Jonah’s difficult start to life not only affected

Gerrard’s business but also his physical and mental health. “I kind of forgot about myself. I became depressed and found myself in the worst shape of my life. It’s not easy to share this, especially as a personal trainer. There’s an expectation that we should always be in peak condition, but the reality is that we’re human, too. It can happen to anyone, and it happened to me. It was a tough period.” Despite these challenges, Gerrard is now in the best shape of his life at 41, and his business, GF Fitness Limited, has become a multi-award-winning enterprise. He’s also been voted ‘Personal Trainer of The Year’ two years in a row.

A major catalyst for his resurgence was the development of his online coaching platform and private app. “A person changes when the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change. For me, it was that time for change.” Gerrard’s online coaching platform and private app have transformed how he engages with clients globally, particularly busy professionals looking to integrate fitness into their demanding schedules. “I’ve created a system that delivers bespoke training programs, nutrition plans, and real-time support. This platform allows me to mentor clients no matter where they are in the world, ensuring they achieve transformative results. My industry-leading personal training experience ensures that clients tick all the right boxes, integrating essential fitness and wellness habits into their lives.”

Gerrard’s clients can seamlessly incorporate fitness into their routines with a user-friendly interface and personalised touch. “The results have been astounding. Clients not only see physical changes but also experience profound mental and emotional growth. It’s about creating a lifestyle that promotes total well-being. For busy professionals, this means efficient, impactful workouts and sustainable nutrition plans that fit their hectic lives.”

Since hitting his 40s, Gerrard has felt a burning desire to continue his personal growth. “You can either be judged because you created something or ignored because you left your greatness inside of you,” he says, quoting James Clear. I now feel like I’m just getting started. The fears and limiting beliefs I had before hitting rock bottom are gone.



It’s time to do something special!”

Gerrard is excited to announce the launch of a unique Wellbeing Retreat in partnership with Daunara Safari Camp in the heart of the Okavango Delta, Botswana. The retreat combines the raw beauty of a bespoke safari experience with a unique synergy of body and mind. “This is totally organic, not artificially created. The power of nature and its restorative powers are incredible.”

The camp is opulent, designed by award-winning architects Fox Browne Creative to make it feel like your dream home away from home. Together with your bespoke and exclusive safari experience, you will be personally trained by Gerrard every day in their luxury Technogym-equipped wellness studio. “I will push your body safely and effectively, but also provide you with the tools to continue your fitness journey for life. You’ll often see the elephants visiting to say hello with each rep or step, and we’ll have fun while we’re doing it!”

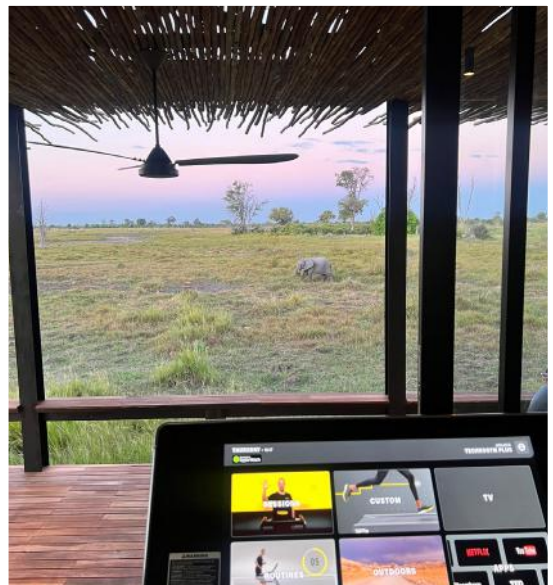


According to Gerrard, nutrition is a fundamental wellness pillar. “Unlike other retreats, we don’t skimp on food. You’ll be fed mouthwatering, vibrant, and wholesome flavors of the delta, passionately prepared by our Michelin-star chefs, leaving you feeling utterly nourished. Every bite is a taste of adventure amidst nature’s splendour.”

Exciting times lie ahead. This is the culmination of years of dedication, setbacks, 4:30 am alarms, and real-world experience being fed into this next project for Gerrard. He feels he’s only getting started, so we look forward to seeing his journey continue.

Gerrard Finlayson’s story serves as an inspiration to us all. He has empowered himself and others to achieve physical and mental transformation, helping them consistently integrate the right fitness and lifestyle choices for the long haul. Even though Gerrard works with many influential individuals from all over the world, he remains grounded, with a quiet confidence and a clear, burning drive to be and do better. As his story signifies, and as he has so openly shared, it is okay to fail. It isn’t OK to not try.

Wellbeing Retreat, in partnership with Daunara Safari Camp in the heart of the Okavango Delta, Botswana



UNCONSCIOUS CORE BELIEFS



Children from 0 to 7 are like little sponges; they absorb all the information around them and take it all on board... whether it is good or bad.

For example, a person might say to a child, "You're a piece of rubbish; you will never amount to anything."

That child will then gain the perception that others can treat them like dirt and that they will never amount to much.... This often leads to the child becoming a victim of abuse, of being bullied and not having any resources to fight back. Being in victim mode can make it seem insurmountable to get out of a situation, and they may also lack the resources to have the wherewithal to fight back to take a stand.

Later, as adults, they may rebel against this concept and choose to retaliate and change their lives by doing the opposite, to prove that they are worthy, to make a success of their lives, and to become amazingly successful. It is possible... but rare.

People often think that a victim of domestic violence should just leave, but it is not as easy as that. There are so many other factors to consider, the biggest one being: Where to? The other is cost/money. In addition, many have children to consider: what will be best for the child? So change is never easy, but not impossible. In addition, psychological factors play a huge role,... what if it's unsafe to leave? Fear of repercussions, fear of being hunted down and hurt... fear of the unknown, the lack of safety and security. These questions will face both men and women of domestic violence. Sadly, it is true that not all

domestic violence victims are women; there are more and more men also being subject to abuse and victimisation.

Once again, children are often used as pawns in the game for the oppressor to gain their own way. This can then lead to months or years of hearings, court sessions and support from social workers, mental health workers and other care workers. Another client of mine has mental health issues due to the stress of all the false accusations he has had placed at his door. All he wants to do is have time with his kids and be the loving father in their lives. Yet he has been denied access to them for the last two years. This story is, unfortunately, prevalent. The system is overstretched and often populated with workers not concerned for their clients' welfare and best interests. The court gets weary of cases that are mismanaged and misrepresented.

Timing may play a huge part in the departure, and sometimes it escalates when violence occurs... one of my clients was in an abusive relationship and was strangled and left for dead while her partner took off of the children. He was chased and crashed the car and ran, leaving the children in the car. Now, my client lives in a safe place with her children under a new identity. It had been hard to leave, as he was extremely controlling and manipulative, plus she was confused as she felt strong feelings for her partner because he was the father to her children. Fortunately, she and her children are doing well now and are moving on with their lives. It all takes time to heal and regroup.

Personally I have found that the gifts of being heard, and being encouraged to step up have played a huge part in my becoming a Trauma Counsellor. It has enabled me to empathise with my clients, and knowing what gaslighting, being lied to and victimised is all about has given me a greater understanding of where my clients are coming from.

A couple of my clients have been so traumatised by the events that their whole sensory system has become numb. They have felt unable to cry and have felt disconnected from reality. Feeling numb has left them not being able to feel emotions or to connect closely with family and friends. It is so rewarding to take these clients through Richards Trauma Process and help them to begin to thaw, to begin to connect with their inner feelings, and to be able to cry again.

It reminds me of the caterpillar, going through the transformational change to being free to fly!

By Fran Nguyen



How to maintain your spirit during ... weight loss!

Losing weight can be one of the most challenging and frustrating journeys, but it's also one of the most rewarding. If you're finding it tough to stay motivated and manage the frustrations that come with it, you're not alone. BELIEVE ME! This is a universal experience. Here are some practical and encouraging tips to help you stay on track and keep your spirits high, with a special focus on maintaining a positive mindset and managing thoughts and frustrations.

Set Realistic Goals

First and foremost, be realistic! And set realistic goals. This means having both short-term and long-term targets. Rather than focusing solely on losing a significant amount of weight, break it down into smaller, achievable milestones. Celebrate every small victory along the way. It's not just about the number on the scale—consider other wins like increased energy, better focus and sleep, or increased strength and stamina. Remember, as you gain strength, you gain weight – muscle weight. It may take time to see the actual numbers on the scale move. And track your progress to keep focused on habits and recognize patterns that may derail efforts. Remember, the scale is not the only measure of success. Sometimes, the changes you don't see immediately are the most significant.

Develop a Positive Mindset

A positive mindset is essential for managing frustrations and staying motivated. One of the biggest hurdles in weight loss is the development of a negative loop—where you beat yourself up over every misstep. This can quickly derail your efforts. When you constantly criticize yourself, it creates a cycle of negative emotions that can lead to stress eating, skipping workouts, or even giving up entirely.

Breaking the Negative Loop

To break this negative loop, practice self-compassion and understand that setbacks are a natural part of the process. Don't be too hard on yourself if you have a bad day or slip up. Instead, focus on getting back on track and learning from the experience. Celebrate your small wins—they're stepping stones to your larger goal. Remember, every step forward is progress, no matter how small.

Mindfulness and Stress Management

Stress and emotions play a significant role in weight loss. Incorporate mindfulness practices like meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises into your routine. These practices can help you manage stress and reduce emotional eating. When you're feeling frustrated, take a moment to breathe deeply and refocus your thoughts. Recognize the emotions you're experiencing and let them pass without judgment.

Educate Yourself

Information is power. Educate yourself about nutrition and exercise from reliable sources. Understanding how your body responds to

different foods and workouts can help you make informed decisions. Avoid falling for fad diets or quick fixes—they often do more harm than good. Absolutely no easy fix exists when it comes to weight loss. Instead, focus on sustainable changes that you can maintain in the long term. When we get educated about how the body works, we can have more realistic expectations and greater self-compassion. Realizing that weight loss is a complex process influenced by various factors can help you be kinder to yourself along the way.

Diversify Your Routine

Keep your routine interesting to avoid boredom. Mix up your workouts to keep them exciting. Try different activities like dancing, hiking, or joining a new fitness class. The same goes for your diet—experiment with new healthy recipes to keep your meals enjoyable and diverse. This can help you stay engaged and motivated. Often, we give up when we are bored. If you notice resistance, ask yourself if you are bored and need to shake things up!

Build a Support System

Having a strong support system can make a world of difference. Share your goals with friends and family who can encourage and motivate you. Joining a weight loss group or an online community can also provide the necessary accountability and support. Sharing your journey with others going through the same thing can be incredibly empowering. And make it fun! What do you enjoy doing? If it is not fun, it won't be sustainable.

Plan Ahead

Planning is key to staying on track. Meal prepping can save you time and ensure you have healthy options available when you're hungry. Plan your workouts like important appointments and stick to them. A structured plan can help you stay committed and reduce the likelihood of making unhealthy choices.

Embrace the Journey

Lastly, embrace the journey. Weight loss is a marathon, not a sprint. It's about making lifestyle changes that improve your overall health and well-being. There will be ups and downs, but every step you take brings you closer to your goal. Stay positive, stay committed, and remember why you started.

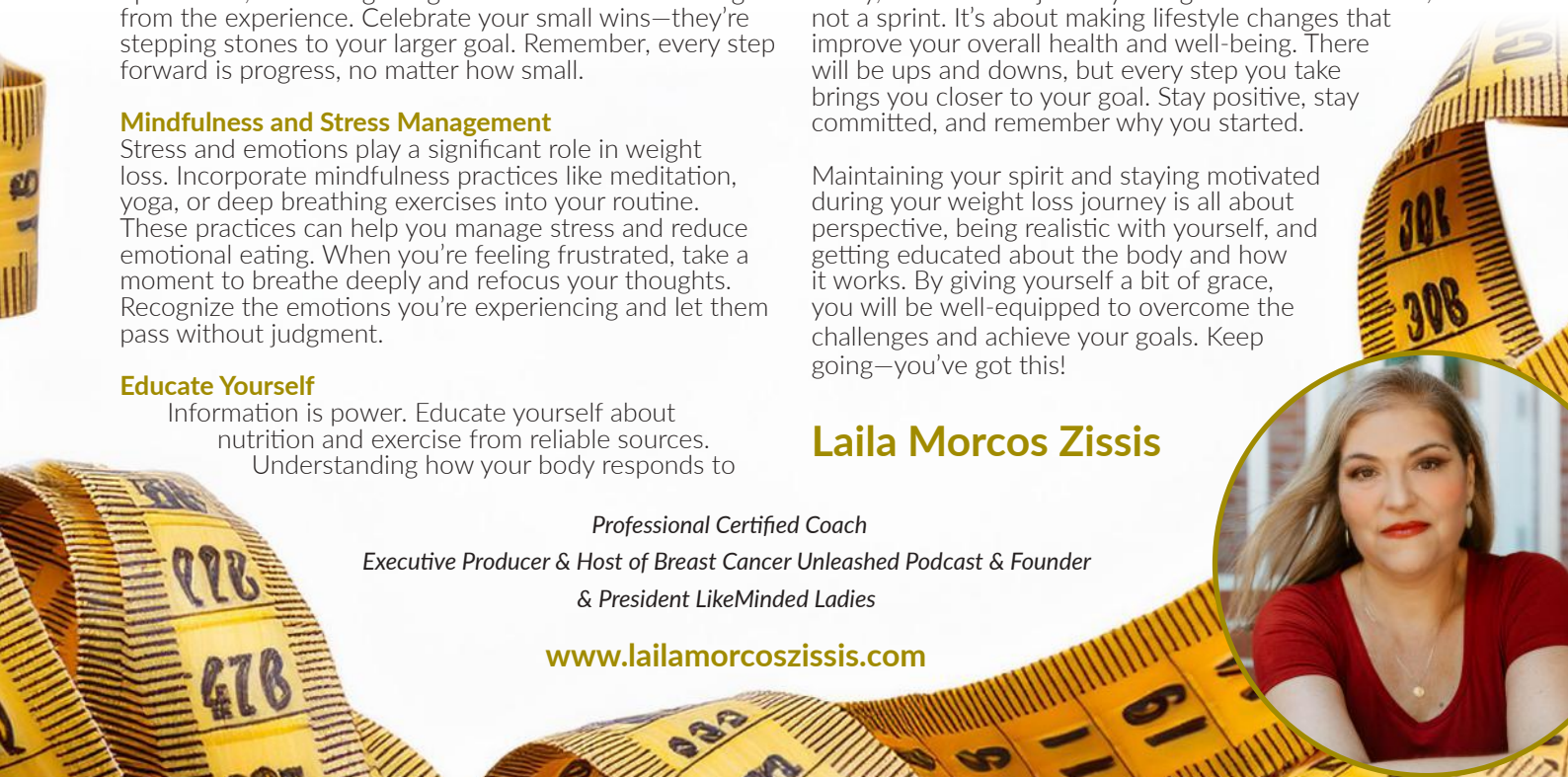
Maintaining your spirit and staying motivated during your weight loss journey is all about perspective, being realistic with yourself, and getting educated about the body and how it works. By giving yourself a bit of grace, you will be well-equipped to overcome the challenges and achieve your goals. Keep going—you've got this!

Laila Morcos Zissis

Professional Certified Coach

Executive Producer & Host of Breast Cancer Unleashed Podcast & Founder
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Transformational Travel: Elevating the Human Experience

In a time characterized by rapid technological advances and our increasingly busy lifestyles, the concept of travel has evolved from mere relaxation and sightseeing to journeys that foster profound personal growth and transformation. It emphasizes experiences that can potentially change an individual's life in meaningful ways. As travelers seek more depth and purpose in their journeys, they are discovering that transformational travel can offer a wealth of benefits, enabling personal evolution and broader perspectives. I'm spending the summer in a lovely Moroccan seaside town and wanted to share some insights that may encourage you to consider adding a few more intentional types of trips to your schedule this year!

The Essence of Transformational Travel

It is not just about visiting new places; it's about experiencing journeys that challenge, enlighten, and ultimately transform. These are travels that provoke self-reflection, broaden horizons, and foster a deeper connection with oneself and the world. Whether it's a spiritual retreat in the mountains, volunteering in a remote village, or embarking on a solo expedition, this way of traveling challenges individuals to step out of their comfort zones and engage with both the external environment and their inner selves.

Breaking the Routine

One of the most significant benefits of traveling with this intention is its ability to interrupt routine. Everyday life often becomes a cycle of repetition, leading to complacency and stunted personal growth. Traveling to a new environment disrupts this monotony, challenging us to adapt, learn, and grow. Facing new challenges and navigating unfamiliar terrains evoke resilience and creativity, qualities that are often dormant during routine activities.

Cultural Immersion and Empathy

Travel exposes individuals to diverse cultures, traditions, and ways of life. This immersion fosters understanding and empathy, such important qualities in an increasingly interconnected world. Encountering different perspectives can shatter preconceived notions and biases, nurturing a more inclusive and open-minded outlook. For example, volunteering in community projects abroad can provide insights into global issues, underscoring the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of collective action.

Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

Transformational travel often involves deep introspective activities such as meditation, journaling, and mindful exploration. These practices encourage self-reflection, helping individuals gain clarity about their values, goals, and aspirations. For instance, a trekking expedition in the Himalayas can instill a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence, revealing strengths and capabilities previously unrecognized. Such experiences catalyze personal growth, fostering a stronger, more resilient self.

Spiritual Awakening

For many, this way of traveling is a path to spiritual awakening. Engaging with nature, practicing mindfulness, and participating in spiritual rituals can lead to profound inner peace and enlightenment. Destinations like Bali,

Sedona, and Rishikesh are renowned for their spiritual energy and offer myriad opportunities for rejuvenation and spiritual connection. These experiences can nurture a sense of purpose and belonging, vital components of a fulfilled life.

Creating Meaningful Connections

In my experience, traveling often involves meaningful interactions with locals and fellow travelers. Sharing experiences and stories fosters enriching and enlightening connections. These relationships can offer new perspectives and support systems, solidifying the transformative impact of the journey. Building a bond with a host family in a foreign land or forming friendships with like-minded individuals on a retreat can lead to lifelong connections and networks.

Environmental Consciousness

Many transformational travel experiences emphasize sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Engaging with nature and witnessing the impact of human activity on the planet can inspire greater environmental consciousness. Activities such as conservation projects, eco-friendly accommodations, and wildlife protection efforts can instill a sense of responsibility and advocacy for the environment, prompting travellers to adopt more sustainable practices in their daily lives.

Rediscovering Joy and Wonder

In the pursuit of careers and responsibilities, many individuals lose touch with the innate sense of joy and wonder they once possessed. Transformational travel rekindles this spirit by encouraging exploration and play. Whether it's marvelling at the Northern Lights, dancing at a cultural festival, or exploring ancient ruins, these experiences remind travellers of the beauty and wonder in the world, reigniting a zest for life.

Conclusion: Embracing the Journey

Transformational travel is a gateway to profound personal and spiritual growth. It challenges individuals to step out of their comfort zones, embrace new experiences, and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world. By fostering empathy, environmental consciousness, and a sense of global interconnectedness, transformational travel changes us in the best possible way, creating more enlightened, resilient, and fulfilled individuals. As we continue to navigate the complexities of modern life, embracing transformational travel can offer a path to a richer and more meaningful existence. I hope you enjoy the journey!

By Hayley Hunter Hines

Spiritual Advisor and Integrative Well-Being Strategist



Becoming the person you were always meant to be not the one others want you to be

In the contemporary world, it's common for everyone to have opinions about how others should live their lives, yet few take the time to reflect on their own circumstances. I have yet to encounter someone with all aspects of their life perfectly sorted. This is precisely why we should refrain from passing judgment on others; everyone is navigating their unique journey, striving to create their masterpiece to the best of their abilities.

Growing up on the small island of Seychelles, one inevitably finds themselves confined within cultural boundaries from an early age, shaped by familial and societal expectations. Throughout my formative years, I found myself confined within various societal constructs crafted by family, peers, and societal pressures. Raised as a 'good' Catholic girl, I endured weight-related bullying in the Seychelles, perpetually seeking validation and approval from those around me.

These societal constructs proved stifling, entrapping me for nearly four decades across different stages of life. Fueled by these limitations and my own self-imposed beliefs, I adopted a people-pleasing persona, concealing my true identity behind a facade to shield my authentic self.

Undoubtedly, this journey elicited frustration and emotional turmoil. Can you relate?

Over time, these relationships disintegrated as I refused to compromise my self-worth. Through personal growth and maturation, I now prioritize living in alignment with my values, embracing mistakes as opportunities for growth. I remind myself that I am a work in progress, embracing the journey of self-discovery and continual learning.

Indeed, we inhabit a world rife with comparisons, where escalating demands and expectations exacerbate mental health stressors. Many succumb to lowering their standards, swayed by the opinions of loved ones in a quest for acceptance and belonging.

However, tethering our identities to others' perceptions jeopardizes authenticity. While familial and social acceptance is important, we must not relinquish our self-esteem to their judgment. Self-acceptance enables connection with our intrinsic values and true selves, fostering fulfillment and positivity.

In essence, we must not permit external opinions to define our essence, as they are subjective and variable. Each individual must forge their own path to facilitate personal growth and self-discovery. While witnessing loved ones endure unnecessary hardships can be painful, these trials often catalyze profound personal evolution.

As we traverse life's tumultuous terrain, characterized by peaks and valleys, it may feel as though our journey is spiraling out of control. Yet, amidst the chaos, we unearth our authentic selves gleaned from the wreckage of failure and despair.

My own journey has revealed transformative insights amid moments of despair, underscoring the notion that adversity fosters evolution. Though painful, these experiences propel us towards our true potential, shaping our trajectory towards self-realization.

Embrace the challenges, for they hold the key to unlocking our latent potential. Remember, amidst hardship, "this too shall pass." Resist the temptation to succumb to suffering, for it is transient. Our darkest moments harbor the seeds of growth and resilience, guiding us towards our ultimate purpose.

By Marsah Parcou



Boosting Immune Health to Combat Recurrent Illness in Children

By Rachel Marley



A strong immune system is crucial for survival and long-term health. Children face many immune challenges during childhood, but with a good functioning immune system, they can be resilient and bounce back to health. Recurrent or chronic illness in children is a significant concern for parents, and understanding the cause and triggers is key when considering treatment options. Understanding how the immune system works, key nutrients required, and prevention strategies can help in improving health and preventing further illness. Let's dig deeper into common childhood illnesses and explore the immune system and strategies to support good immune function.

Understanding the Immune System

The Immune system is extremely intelligent and constantly monitors for danger signals produced by the body. The immune system can be divided into two parts: the innate and adaptive immune responses. Both are essential for health and the prevention of serious or chronic illness. The innate immune response is the first responder (and very quick) to any invading pathogens.

Several different cells are involved in helping with inflammation and creating a barrier to keep bacteria, viruses, or foreign bodies out or limit the spread throughout the body. The innate immune response is generalised and can be less effective than the adaptive immune response. The adaptive immune response has specialised cells (T and B cells) that, once responded to a pathogen, create a memory. If exposed again, a more rapid response occurs, preventing infection and symptoms. Factors impacting upon these immune responses vary; however, genetics, nutrition and our environment all play a major role.



Common recurrent illnesses in Children and contributing factors

A child with good immune function can have between 4-8 upper respiratory infections per year without compromising health or growth and development. Children should respond well to treatment, recover quickly, and be in good health in between infections. Recurrent infections in children can be a sign the immune system is compromised and not functioning as it should.



Common recurrent illnesses in children are:

- Colds and flu
- Ear infections
- Strep throat
- Urinary tract infections

When a child presents with recurring infections, there are various factors to consider that may be contributing to poor immune function.

These may include:

- Nutritional deficiencies
- Lack of sleep or stress
- High, repeated exposure to pathogens (eg. childcare)
- Atopic predisposition (allergies, asthma) can increase frequency and prolong recovery
- Environmental factors (smoke exposure, mould exposure)
- Poor gut health (70% of the immune system is in the gut!)

Treating symptoms and supporting the body is key; however, understanding and investigating the cause is essential for long-term prevention.



Strengthening the Immune System and prevention strategies

The body is remarkable and is always striving to keep us well. Supporting the immune system, particularly during infections, can help recover from illness and prevent further illness.

Some key treatment considerations to support immune function and overall health are:

1. Ensure to consume a balanced diet that is rich in plant-based foods, whole grains and proteins. This provides essential vitamins and minerals and helps to keep our gut bacteria healthy and happy!
2. Include key nutrients, including zinc, vitamin A, vitamin D and probiotics (supplementation may be recommended)
3. Ensure adequate sleep for your child, which is critical to good immune health and development
4. Reduce stress and practice effective strategies for stress and anxiety management
5. Ensure daily physical activity and time outside in nature
6. Create a healthy home environment, including clean air with good ventilation, reduce exposure to allergens and reduce mould exposure

When to Seek Medical Advice

Infections are common in childhood, which can help build a resilient immune system. It is important to seek professional medical advice if your child is experiencing the following:

- frequent recurrent infections (more than eight times per year),
- chronic symptoms (persistent coughs, UTI's),
- delayed recovery, growth or development

Recurrent infections in children can impact the quality of life for both the child and family and incur significant stress and cost to families. Supporting the immune system through specific nutritional, lifestyle, and environmental strategies can significantly improve recovery and prevent further illness.

The support of a health professional can provide valuable treatment options. However, it is important to seek the help of a medical professional if there are signs that there may be an underlying cause preventing recovery and healthy development in your child.



Menopause and Sleep: Navigating the Night time Changes

As women gracefully transition into menopause, their bodies undergo a series of intricate changes. While hot flashes and mood swings often take centre stage for most women, one aspect that deserves equal attention is sleep. How does menopause impact our nightly rest, and what can we do to ensure better sleep during this transformative phase?

The Menopausal Sleep Saga

1. Hot Flashes and Night Sweats

Hot flashes—sudden waves of intense heat starting on the inside—can disrupt even the most peaceful slumber. These fiery episodes, often accompanied by profuse sweating and anxiety, make falling back asleep a challenge.

2. Insomnia: The Unwanted Sleep Partner

Insomnia creeps in during and after the menopausal transition, not for all, but for many women. Falling asleep becomes a battle, and staying asleep seems even more difficult. Contrary to widespread belief, it is not just the hot flashes that keep us tossing and turning. Increased wakefulness due to hormonal shifts and mental health factors play a significant role in insomnia.

3. Snoring and Sleep Apnoea

Menopause brings along a not-so-welcome guest: snoring. Reproductive hormones take a nosedive, causing the soft tissues in our throats to become more collapsible. Add some weight gain, and voilà—snoring disrupts our peaceful nights. But wait, there is more! Snoring might signal sleep apnoea, where breathing becomes shallow or stops momentarily. This affects sleep quality and daytime alertness, adding to our daytime fatigue and lack of energy.

4. Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

Picture this: You are all tucked in, ready for dreamland, when suddenly, your legs decide to do the boogie. Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) makes its debut during menopause. The urge to move your legs, accompanied by discomfort and an irresistible need to fidget, causes severe discomfort and can wreak havoc on your sleep.

5. Hormonal Shenanigans

Oestrogen, our hormonal superstar, plays a pivotal role in sleep regulation. As its levels drop during menopause, sleep patterns get disrupted, leading to less time asleep or inferior quality sleep. Falling asleep becomes a delicate balancing act, and staying asleep feels like chasing fireflies. Lighter sleep, restless nights, and frequent awakenings leave us exhausted the next day.

Unlocking the Sleep Secrets

Fear not; this is not the end of peaceful nights forever! Here are some strategies to reclaim your beauty sleep:

Prioritize Sleep: Aim for 7–9 hours of quality sleep each night. Yes, it is non-negotiable!

Create a Sleep Sanctuary: Your bedroom should be dark, cool, and gadget-free. Think of it as your dream cocoon. If you work from home, try creating a workspace outside of your bedroom.



Consistent Sleep Schedule: Train your body with a regular sleep-wake routine. Your internal clock will thank you. For optimal results, practice this schedule over weekends, too.

Limit Late-Night Screen Time: Blue light disrupts melatonin production—the hormone that whispers, “It’s time to sleep.” Also, the content you are viewing may only serve to excite rather than calm.

Mind Your Meals: Avoid heavy, spicy, or caffeine-laden foods close to bedtime. Your digestive system needs its beauty sleep, too.

Supplements to Aid Better Sleep During Menopause

The menopausal transition can bring about various challenges, including disrupted sleep patterns. Here are some recommended supplements that can promote better sleep quality during menopause:

Melatonin: This hormone is critical in regulating the body’s sleep-wake cycle. As melatonin production naturally declines with age, supplementation can help improve sleep duration and quality. If you experience insomnia or difficulty falling asleep, supplementing with melatonin can be beneficial.

Magnesium: Magnesium is known for its calming effects on the nervous system. It promotes relaxation, reduces anxiety, and may enhance sleep quality. Incorporate magnesium-rich foods (such as leafy greens, nuts, and seeds) or consider a magnesium supplement.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Omega-3s, particularly EPA and DHA, have anti-inflammatory properties and support brain health. Omega-3 fish oil capsules are a great option, benefiting brain, heart, and eye health. These can also help with menopausal joint pain.

Valerian Root: Valerian is traditionally used as a natural sedative. It may help reduce sleep latency and improve overall sleep quality during menopause. Consult your healthcare provider before using valerian supplements.

Ginkgo Biloba: Ginkgo is believed to enhance blood flow and cognitive function. While its primary use is not for sleep, improved circulation can indirectly benefit sleep quality by ensuring adequate oxygen supply to the brain.

Remember, supplements should complement a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, stress management, and a balanced diet. Always consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new supplements, especially if you have underlying health conditions or are taking medications.

Menopause is a time of change; Embrace the change and remember that overall lifestyle will play a key role in HOW you experience it. Remember, menopause is not just about hot flashes and mood swings; it is also about embracing the quiet moments under the moonlight.

By Este Bell



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Unveiling the Shapeshifter: **Your Shadow Is The Ultimate Mask**



Shadow work is a term first introduced by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung when he described the aspect of our unconscious mind where we bury the traits and desires, fears and darkness we deem unsuitable for conscious awareness. Those parts of ourselves we consider negative, socially inappropriate, harmful to others, or even damaging to our well-being. Or, to put it another way, the part of us that knows what we could be if we could take off the seatbelt of who or what we think we “should be”.

“The most intense conflicts, if overcome, leave behind a sense of security and calm that is not easily disturbed”, Carl Jung. On this promise, you may even be tempted to dig deep and hunt your shadow down for an intimate chat. However, it changes shape when it sees you coming and leaves the words “catch me if you can” hanging in the air. Our shadow is the ultimate mask. Buried so deep in our unconscious mind, sometimes the only way to bring its personality into consciousness is to project it onto someone else.

Shadow Work Benefits From The Gentle Touch

The shadow reveals itself indirectly, often through our interactions, emotional responses, and life experiences. Attempting to force the shadow into consciousness can result in frustration or misinterpretation. Shadow work requires patience, openness, and self-compassion. The shadow emerges when we are ready to confront it, often in response to life challenges or introspective practices such as meditation or journaling. Forcing the process can lead to resistance and hinder the natural unfolding of self-discovery.

Instead of actively searching for the shadow, allow it to reveal itself naturally. This gentle approach helps prevent over-identification with our negative aspects, cultivating a more balanced and constructive path to healing.

Four Ways To Catch Your Shadow Rising To The Surface

1. Emotional Triggers:

Imagine you're at a work meeting, and a colleague receives praise for an idea. You suddenly feel a surge of jealousy that seems disproportionate to the situation. This intense reaction might be your shadow surfacing, reflecting unresolved feelings of inadequacy or fear of being overlooked.

2. Projection:

Projection occurs when we attribute our unconscious qualities, feelings, or desires to others. For example, if we criticise someone for being selfish, it might reflect our repressed selfishness. By observing what we judge or dislike in others, we can gain insight into our shadow.

3. Patterns in Relationships:

Repeated patterns in relationships, such as recurring conflicts or the attraction to certain types of people, can also reveal aspects of the shadow. These patterns often mirror unresolved issues or unmet needs within ourselves.

4. Self-Sabotage:

Procrastination, unhealthy habits, or poor decision-making can be a sign your shadow is carrying hidden beliefs or unresolved emotional pain.

Shadow Work Benefits Mind & Body

Shadow work delves deep into the unconscious mind, where repressed emotions, unresolved traumas, and hidden aspects of the self reside. Deeply embedded, they can manifest physically within the body, often as tension, chronic pain, or unexplained illnesses. This connection between the psyche and the soma (body) is well-documented in psychosomatic research. Psychologist Wilhelm Reich, who explored the relationship between emotions and the body, developed the concept of “body armour,” where repressed emotions manifest as muscular tension.

Gabor Maté, in his work on mind-body health, emphasises that suppressed emotions can lead to physical ailments. By bringing these unconscious elements to light, shadow work can lead to psychological integration, physical relief, and well-being.

Integration involves acknowledging, accepting, and understanding these hidden parts of ourselves, which can lead to greater self-awareness, emotional healing, and personal growth. When we can bravely face the aspects we'd prefer to keep hidden and sit with the feelings that arise without the need to reject them, we're halfway to resolution.

Engaging with your shadow is a journey of self-discovery that requires courage, patience, and openness. By gradually integrating these hidden aspects, you can achieve greater self-awareness, emotional balance, and a more authentic sense of self. Every step forward, no matter how small, brings you closer to wholeness. Are you ready to begin this transformative journey?



About The Author

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The Body Talks

If you cannot Feel you cannot Heal

The body talks. However, looking around me these days, it doesn't look like there is much interest in what the body has to say. Our busy lives keep us distracted, or we ignore signals because we don't like what they say or the 'we have to's'.

The amazing thing about the body is, though, that when you don't listen to it when it whispers, it will become louder. Just imagine what a screaming body feels like. Or maybe you don't have to imagine because you're already experiencing it. These are the signals that are impossible to ignore and will stop us whether we agree with them or not.

Suppressing our urges can create a lot of unnecessary discomfort and suffering.

And I'm not just talking about the obvious burnout, anxiety, depression and illness kind of signals. It can all start by suppressing our urges, our basic living signals like hunger, thirst, yawning, sneezing and going to the bathroom. How often are you aware of these signals? Are you suppressing yawns and sneezes? When was the last time you were hungry or needed to go to the bathroom but postponed that because you were busy? Or those days when you go home and realise you haven't eaten, drank or gone to the bathroom all day, and the urge kicks in with a vengeance. I've certainly experienced these moments of unnecessary suffering.

You might be going to the doctor with discomfort, and he tells you, 'Well, according to the tests, you're fine; we can't find anything.' And there you are, stuck with the Thing. Not knowing what is wrong and suffering from it usually doesn't make you feel any better. Sometimes, it magically disappears, but other times, it just gets worse.

Understanding what you're feeling and how to work with it reduces the amount of pain or discomfort you're experiencing. And I'm not saying it's all in our head because if you feel it, it's very real. You can maybe imagine that when you don't know what's happening, you worry or feel scared, which expresses itself as tension in the body. If this natural reaction of your body continues for a longer time and becomes chronic, it is not within your conscious awareness anymore. This tends to create more pain and discomfort, not only physically but also mentally and emotionally.

Being able to stop and deeply relax is crucial to feeling better.

I've seen this in my practice with clients as a yoga therapist. It doesn't always mean that the illness itself disappears, but the symptoms and suffering most definitely can. Deeply relaxing doesn't mean chilling on the couch while binging on Netflix or taking a nap. Those can definitely have their benefits (depending on the genre you're watching).

I'm referring to practices that you can slowly incorporate into your life—practices where you listen to your body, honour its needs, and act appropriately. A body scan and just taking a moment to observe and sense your breath can already calm you down and relax your nervous system. This takes very little time and brings relief easily.

Guided yoga nidra, restorative yoga, and therapeutic practices take a bit more time. But with more time, you'll be able to sense your body longer, which will make it more likely to relax. Deep relaxation and letting go of those accumulated tensions are not something you can do; you can only create the circumstances that your body needs so that it can happen.

It comes down to slowing down and becoming aware of your body's needs and letting that be your guide. This can be done through rest but also through therapeutic, simple, and conscious movement. That all might appear like doing nothing and is too simple, but not suppressing natural urges, slowing down, practicing awareness, breathing, and active rest, either through movement or stillness, are incredibly potent.

It's not necessarily an easy or fast journey, but the benefits and outcomes of regular practice can be truly remarkable.

By Rianne Wolswinkel

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How to start your day less stressed

Two preschoolers in daycare.

Demanding corporate leadership role.

An immigrant couple living in Canada without the kind of village support that helps you raise your family.

Most mornings, by the time I was getting my kids out the door to daycare so that right after I could hop on a phone conference while driving to work, I was already irritated and stressed. I was also impatient with my little ones as they were practicing key life skills like putting on coats, hats, and boots.

The only thing that was saving me from a heart attack was my naturally low blood pressure. There's nothing worse than the guilt of a working mom of not being patient enough with her kids, of not spending enough time with them because of work. I could not just simply accept feeling like the worst mother in the world. I was starting to realize that this wasn't the way I wanted to continue living my life. Even though, at first, I had no idea how to change that. I just knew I had to.

Change starts with awareness of the need to change and the lack of acceptance of the status quo. I was ready. As per Buddha, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

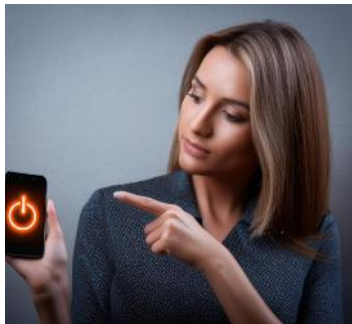
One summer, we visited my sister in Germany. One of her books called me out, so I started reading it: "Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World" by M. Williams and D. Penman.

It took me four months to complete the eight weeks, but it was worth it. Slowly but surely, as I implemented the small things suggested in the book, I changed how I operated every day. Instead of my days having control over me, I took control of them.

It started with my morning. How you start your day carries you through the rest of it. It all started slow and simple, yet within days, I felt the amazing results from the practices I implemented: feelings of calm, patience with my kids and work (no matter what was thrown at me), and a clear mind to make better decisions. This then gave me the motivation to keep growing.

Fast-forward a few years, and I cannot imagine starting a day without my morning practices. Being here, writing this column for you as a business and leadership coach, all started with me picking up a book and deciding to implement one small practice at a time to feel less stressed.

So today, I want to give you three simple ones. They won't take longer than 10 minutes of your time, yet the improvement of how you feel and experience your days will be invaluable.



1) If the first thing you do after waking up is look at your phone or listen to the news, stop. This is the main contributor to your stress, impatience, and irritability. Give yourself 10 minutes without a screen and no news. Most of my clients are astounded by how this one simple shift positively changes how they handle their days.

2) Take four deep breaths. It takes less than 30 seconds. It's called a box breath. You inhale through your nose while counting to four, then hold your breath while counting to four. Next, you exhale through your mouth while counting to four. Hold again while counting to four. Repeat it four times. Even if you stopped here and didn't implement the 3rd practice, your daily stress levels will decrease within a couple of days.

3) After the box breath, add 10 minutes of quiet time. Whether you're sitting with your cup of coffee and being present with it (smell the aroma, enjoy the taste), Or maybe you want to meditate. Because my brain barely stops, I use guided meditations so I can focus on listening to whatever is being said. Or try listening to relaxing music for 10 minutes or prayer. Whatever it is, give yourself 10 minutes of peace and quiet. That time will fill your emotional cup. You will better handle whatever comes your way during the day.



*Those three practices changed my life.
I hope they will help you improve yours.*

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Mapping out an effective personal brand strategy that stands you out



You may have heard before that you are building a personal brand, whether you are doing it consciously or not. And guess what? Your personal brand is like a reputation that precedes you, your business, or your profession. Now, the question is this - are you consciously building a personal brand? If yes, are you building the personal brand that you want? If not, why not?

Personal branding is essential to building a digital presence, whether you are a business owner, a career person, or someone who aspires to be either. It is no longer news that people like to do business with those they know, like, and trust. I also believe there is no personal branding without "impact" or "value." You need to deliver value and make an impact.



In my line of business, intentionality is critical to building a lasting brand. If you want your brand to stick, garner the right attention, and build a loyal audience, then you need to be strategic in building your personal brand.

Do you have a personal brand strategy? A personal brand strategy is essential to building an effective personal brand. As a personal brand strategist, here are some things I would have you include in your strategy.



● **About:** What is your brand about? What value do you want to add to the lives of others? Why should people pay attention to what you have to say?

These are some of the things you need to include in the About section of your personal brand strategy. The About section forms the basis of the direction of your personal brand.

● **Brand purpose:** Your brand purpose is the aim of your personal brand. In this section, the following are some of the questions you need to ask yourself. What do you hope to achieve with your brand? What is the overall goal of your personal brand? You need always to keep your purpose in mind so your personal brand is not derailed.

● **Brand goals:** Here, what you need to do is break down your brand purpose into actionable goals that are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. SMART goals are essential to the success of every personal brand as they give you clear directions as to what to measure, how, and when to measure it.

● **Vision:** The vision for your personal brand is where you see yourself as a personal brand. For instance, where do you see your personal brand five years, ten years, or even 20 years from now? You must have a clear picture of how you envision your brand and the impact that it would make.

● **Mission:** Your mission is how you see yourself achieving your vision. It is the things you see yourself doing to achieve your vision.

● **Brand positioning:** When people think about your personal brand, what do you want them to think about? What thoughts, perceptions, and opinions do you want them to form about it? Your brand positioning is critical to building a strategic personal brand.

● **Brand message:** Your brand message is what you want your audience to know. It is woven into your content and consistently highlighted when people interact with it across different channels. Your personal brand needs to have an overall brand message.

● **Content strategy:** Your personal brand needs a content strategy that harmonises the above points. Your content needs to reflect the key things your brand is about; otherwise, there will be dissonance in your brand. You need to have a plan and roadmap for your content.

● **Promotional/visibility strategy:** It is not enough to post great content; you need to plan how people can find the great content you produce and how more people can find out about your brand.

● **Consistency mechanisms:** You need to plan how you want to enable and ensure consistency. Consistency is how you get your message out there. Your ideal audience may not remember your brand message if you are not consistent.

● **Offers:** Whether you intend to do it now or later, you need to start thinking about the kind of free or paid offers you want to provide your audience. It could be consultations, digital products, physical products, training, etc.



By Ayishat Olanrewaju

Do you want to learn more about building a viable personal brand?

Visit brandingwithayishat.com

or book a personal brand consultation with me today at calendly.com/ayishatolanrewaju.

The Mirror Effect

Unlocking the Hidden Power of Your Internal Blueprint

The universal law of correspondence which states 'As within, so without', suggests that the world and everything we experience in it is a reflection of us. If we're unhappy with what we see, it's like saying it's the mirror that's the problem - rather than us being reflected in that mirror. This intriguing concept raises a powerful question: How can we use this law to tap into its transformative power?

Understanding Universal Laws

Before delving into how the world is a reflection, it's important to understand universal laws, of which there are many. These laws govern our existence, even though we can't see them. Gravity, for example, is a universal law that everyone understands. We know that what goes up must come down, and we live according to this law - no stepping out of high-rise buildings in the hope we can fly!

Of course, we could attempt to work against the law of gravity and it would probably lead to a painful experience (quite literally). Similarly, working against any universal law, including the law of correspondence, can lead to unnecessary struggles. If we ignore how our inner world shapes our outer experiences, life may feel more difficult than it needs to be.

The Power of Perception

So, what does it mean that the world is a reflection of our inner state? More importantly, how can we use this understanding to our advantage?

The world we experience isn't actually real; rather, it's our perception of reality. Everyone's perception is different, shaped by our beliefs, memories, values, personality, attitudes, and the meanings we attach to external circumstances. Our entire life experience is filtered and interpreted through our unique internal lens, creating a reality that is distinctly our own.

For example, imagine two colleagues receiving the exact same feedback from their boss during a meeting. One sees the feedback as constructive, a sign that their boss recognises their potential and wants to help them grow. This interpretation leaves them feeling motivated.

The other colleague, however, interprets the same feedback as criticism, a sign of their inadequacy, which leaves them feeling defensive and disheartened. The same external event leads to two completely different experiences.

The Boss Is Just a Mirror

So, was the boss supportive or critical? Here's where it gets interesting; the truth is, it has nothing to do with the boss! The boss is simply reflecting to the employees what already exists within them. Every interaction, whether with a boss, a partner, or even a social media post, reveals something about our inner world.

Any emotional response triggered within us, must be present to begin with for us to experience it (as within, so without). Their boss reflects back to each of them what they already believe to be true about themselves.

Resistance and Responsibility

It's natural to resist this idea, especially when it seems like our emotions are caused by someone or something external. You may even question, what if the boss is just not nice and had ill intentions? Even then, how we feel and respond to the situation is more about us than the person who brought it into our awareness.

For instance, if someone is secure in their relationship, a passing comment about their partner being inattentive likely won't bother them. But if the same comment triggers anxiety, defensiveness or any other negative emotion, it may be highlighting an underlying insecurity that already exists. The external comment is merely reflecting a doubt they hold within.

Breaking Free from the Inner Prison

This perspective is powerful because it's constantly showing us where we are blind to our self-imposed limitations. These constraints prevent us from pursuing our dreams and experiencing the life we truly desire.

Imagine your inner constraints as a prison, with the door wide open and a flashing arrow pointing to the exit. Our responses to the outside world reveal what needs healing so we can walk through that door to freedom - freedom from negative thoughts, unhelpful behaviours, and the constant resistance to life as it is, always wishing it were different.





Taking Responsibility for Your Life

This way of looking at life can be uncomfortable. We're often taught to externalise responsibility, to blame others, society, or the world for how we feel about our lives. This approach, while common, gives away our power, making us dependent on others to change so that we can feel good.

It's not your fault if you've been living this way. We become a product of environment and adopting a victim standpoint whereby we have no control over our life is encouraged. However, while it's not your fault, it is your responsibility to change it. Only you have the power to create a life you're passionate about, and the first step in making that change is becoming aware of where you currently stand.

This is where the world as a mirror becomes the most powerful tool available to you, every second of the day.

Keeping an Open Mind

It's important to note that this perspective requires an open mind, and you may find yourself challenged at times. Interestingly, the more something challenges you, the more it's likely bringing a deep-seated issue into your conscious awareness - something ready to be acknowledged and worked through. Resisting it, or blaming others, only keeps you stuck.

Three Steps to Start Using the Mirror

Here are three practical steps to help you start using the world as a mirror for self-discovery and growth:

1. Recognise Your Triggers

Change begins with awareness - you must first know it exists. Many of our triggers operate on autopilot, falling outside our conscious awareness. Whenever you experience a negative emotional response, take a moment to acknowledge what you felt and the thoughts that accompanied it.

2. Turn the Mirror Inwards

Consider what the emotion is showing you about yourself. I invite to get curious about what causes the response you have to events and people, keeping in mind the earlier example - the bosses feedback is a neutral event - it's only the employees interpretation that gives it meaning.

Ask yourself: What is this experience showing me about myself? What must I believe is true for this to be my experience?

3. Shift Your Perspective

It's common for people to beat themselves up when they become aware of what many would call a shortfall - some way in which they see themselves as inadequate or not enough. This is adding fuel to an already roaring fire. Instead, approach these insights with compassion. Recognise that a limiting belief often stems from fear, hurt, or a desire to avoid pain. Understand that you're always doing the best you can with the resources available to you. With this new awareness, you can make different, more empowering choices.

This journey isn't about striving for perfection. As you grow and evolve, new triggers will emerge. The goal is empowerment - the ability to understand yourself and make changes that support your growth. By recognising the world as a mirror, you can unlock a deeper level of self-awareness and ultimately, create a life that aligns with your true desires.

By Sian Hill

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N a r c i s s i s m

Narcissism is the second-hand smoke of our time, if you stand too close to it, you are going to get sick!' Dr Ramani Durvasula. It is a word that is used a lot more frequently than it used to be and comes up a fair bit in my sessions with clients. The label "narcissist" is widely deployed to refer to people who appear too full of themselves, and there's also a growing sense that narcissism is on the rise around the world.

What may be seen as an increase in narcissism is the inability of people to be told they are incorrect or can't always have things their way. It is just an awareness of the term and behaviour in the past that wasn't labelled and is now being given this label, whether correctly or incorrectly.

Narcissism is properly viewed on a spectrum, with most people somewhere near the middle and a few at either extreme.

Traits of Narcissism

It's easy to describe someone who spends a bit too much time talking about themselves or who never seems to doubt themselves as a narcissist, but the trait is much more complicated than that. Narcissism isn't about having a surplus of self-esteem but is based on insecurity and fragility in self. There is a hunger for appreciation or admiration, a desire to be the centre of attention, and an expectation of special treatment reflecting perceived higher status, a grandiose sense of self-importance, a lack of empathy for others, entitlement, superficiality and a tendency to manipulate and exploit other people. A high level of narcissism can be damaging in romantic, family, or professional relationships.

What are the types of narcissists?

Overt Narcissism

Or 'Grandiose' narcissism is probably what most people think of when they think of a narcissist. Grandiosity refers to having an 'unrealistic sense of superiority' and involves overestimating one's abilities, asserting one's dominance over others and having a generally inflated sense of self-worth. Predatory in seeking vulnerability in others, highly competitive and showing aggressive tendencies. They are likely to feel good about themselves and overestimate their emotional intelligence. Overt narcissists can be charming but lack empathy. In conversations, they don't relate to people but rather aim to one-up them and enjoy seeing others hurt and confused.

Covert Narcissism

These tend to be shy and self-effacing despite still being highly self-focused. They can appear inhibited, manifestly distressed, hypersensitive and chronically envious. They crave people's recognition and get defensive in the face of criticism as they internalise a deep sense of not being good enough. Covert narcissists believe their suffering is worse than anyone else's, tending to present themselves as victims and stage crisis to gain attention. Their manipulative behaviours are exhibited as passive aggression.

Malignant Narcissism

These are manipulative and malicious, show signs of sadism and aggression, and are the most severe type. They are often mistaken for psychopaths and sociopaths due to their aggressive, hostile, paranoia, sadistic and dehumanising behaviour. This type of person will hurt you physically, emotionally, financially, and sexually and not have any remorse. They get pleasure from seeing people in pain and discomfort.

Subtypes of narcissism

Seductive

People with seductive narcissism understand the power of flattery, making someone crave positive attention. They'll freely shower targets with compliments and gifts to get admiration (love bombing). When they're not getting enough praise from someone, they have no problem dropping that person and moving on to a new target.

Communal

A common trait between many types of narcissists is a gap between the way they view themselves and how they behave. People with communal narcissistic traits perceive themselves as highly generous and altruistic but behave the opposite way. They can become outraged when they witness injustice but don't apply that same view to their behaviour.



Antagonistic

Competitiveness is especially noticeable with antagonistics. Low trust in others creates a tendency to see the people around them as rivals, arguing frequently with others and treating most social interactions as a competition.

Sexual Narcissism

They feel entitled to have their sexual needs met. They have a self-centred view of sex and not be skilled at emotional intimacy; therefore, they are not very interested in their partner's needs. They frequently overestimate their skills in the bedroom, yet need and expect a lot of praise for their performance and react angrily to sexual rejection. They expect sex in return for gestures and will pressure, trick, or manipulate you into having sex with them. They feel entitled to get sex elsewhere if you do not meet their sexual requirements and blame you for them doing so.

Exhibitionist Narcissism

They need constant attention and think they are better than others physically and intellectually. They look down on others, are very status-conscious, and are materialistic. They think they are very special and have an enormous need to be admired.

Hypervigilant Narcissism

These tend to be highly sensitive to the body language, facial reactions, tone, and reactions of others. They take things personally and are hypersensitive to criticism. Prone to feeling shame or humiliation, can be self-effacing and prefer not to be the centre of attention.

Narcissism falls into a spectrum, and in small amounts, it may even give you a healthy edge in getting ahead in the world. This is termed as: Healthy Narcissism Each person has a bit of healthy narcissism within them. They will feel proud of their accomplishments and want to share those accomplishments with others because it makes them feel good. Narcissism also includes the ability to feel a sense of entitlement and know that you belong in certain spaces and deserve good things. These feelings, though, are in line with reality. To big yourself up is very positive and can lead you to achieve in many areas of life.

By John Kenny

John Kenny is an award-winning Love and Relationship Coach to people who want to attract or create healthy loving relationships. He is also an Author, Speaker, Documentarian and host of The Relationship Guy Podcast.

He has been involved in the field of personal development for nearly twenty years and in that time has not only helped thousands of clients, but has also completely changed his own life.

John spent his life full of self-doubt, carrying negative beliefs from his childhood that impacted in every area - his relationships, his career and even his time as an International Athlete.

He noticed that when seeing clients, their relationships, past and present had the biggest impacts, whether positive or negative, on their lives. It has become his passion in life to help people find the healthiest, most fulfilling relationships possible and understand the complexities of human behaviour when it comes to how we relate to one another.

His approach is a fusion of Coaching, Counselling, Psychology and NLP and is used to unlock the things that keeps people stuck and unfulfilled in relationships and to finding the love that they want.

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Embracing Motherhood After 35, A Working Mom's Journey

In recent years, more women are choosing to have children later in life, with many embarking on the journey of motherhood in their late 30s. This shift reflects changing societal norms, career priorities, and advancements in healthcare. For many, the combination of established careers and newfound family life brings both challenges and rewards. As someone who had her first child at 38, I'm here to reassure and provide insights into the benefits and practical aspects of being a working mom after 35.

Breaking the Misconceptions

There are several misconceptions about having children after 35, including concerns about health risks and career setbacks. However, data shows a growing number of women successfully balancing late motherhood and professional success.

Thanks to advancements in medical care, later-in-life pregnancies can be just as healthy as those in younger women, providing peace of mind to many. Additionally, the economic challenges of the past decade have led many potential parents to postpone having children until they feel financially prepared.

Myth: Women who postpone motherhood prioritize their careers over family.

Contrary to common misconceptions, most working women are not choosing their careers over love, marriage, and motherhood. Many strive to excel in their careers to support their children better. Unfortunately, the current work system penalizes women who have children early by keeping their salaries low and limiting their advancement opportunities. This systemic issue forces many women to delay starting a family until they feel financially secure and professionally established. Moreover, societal pressures and stereotypes often compound their challenges, creating a need for better workplace policies that support work-life balance and recognize the dual roles women often navigate. Flexible work arrangements, comprehensive maternity leave, and affordable childcare are essential reforms that can help mitigate these challenges and enable women to thrive at work and at home.

Myth: Women who delay motherhood past 35 are unlikely ever to get pregnant.

It's true that women in their late 30s may experience more difficulties conceiving and, in some cases, face increased risks during pregnancy and delivery compared to women in their late 20s or early 30s. However, fertility decline is a continuum, not a cliff, and it varies from woman to woman.



While medical professionals don't necessarily recommend waiting to have children, many women appreciate having more flexibility in their family planning. Advances in fertility technology, such as in vitro fertilization, egg freezing, frozen embryos, donor eggs, and surrogacy, have made it more viable for women to delay motherhood until they are ready.

The Benefits of Late Motherhood

Research indicates that children of older mothers tend to stay in school longer, achieve higher scores on standardized tests, and are more likely to pursue higher education compared to those born to younger mothers. One significant advantage of having children later in life is the wealth of life experience and maturity that older parents bring to the table. These attributes contribute to making well-informed parenting decisions and creating a stable family environment. Additionally, being established in a career often means greater financial stability, which can significantly benefit the family. For many women, the satisfaction of having built a career before starting a family reduces potential regrets about missed professional opportunities. This career satisfaction can translate into a more balanced and fulfilling family life.

Balancing Work and Motherhood

Effective time management is crucial for working moms, especially those who start their families later in life. Creating schedules, prioritizing tasks, and setting clear boundaries can help manage the demands of both work and home. Exploring flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or part-time schedules, can also provide the necessary balance.

Building a robust support system is essential. Partners, family members, friends, and professional childcare services can all play pivotal roles in helping manage the dual responsibilities of work and parenting.

Health and Well-being

Maintaining physical health through regular exercise, a balanced diet, and routine medical check-ups is essential for older mothers. Equally important is mental well-being, which can be supported through mindfulness practices, yoga, and effective stress management techniques. Self-care should not be neglected, as taking time to recharge helps avoid burnout.

Many women have successfully navigated the path of late motherhood and a thriving career, myself included. I never really thought about having kids in my 20s or early 30s. The experience and stability I gained in my career allowed me to confidently provide my family with a better life and approach motherhood. Additionally, I feel that in my 20s, I lacked the self-awareness that I now consider essential for being a conscious parent. Waiting until I was older to have children gave me the opportunity to develop a stronger sense of self, which has positively impacted my ability to nurture and guide my daughter.

This balance between career and family has allowed me to model resilience and determination for my child. Moreover, I have found that being an older parent has given me a greater sense of patience and perspective, enabling me to handle the challenges of parenting with a calm and measured approach.

Furthermore, the advancements in medical care available today have revolutionized the possibility for many women to safely and successfully conceive later in life. The support systems and resources that exist now are far more accommodating than in previous generations, making late motherhood a viable and often preferable option for many.

Having children after 35 while maintaining a career is possible and can be immensely rewarding. With the right support system, effective time management, and a focus on health and well-being, late motherhood can be a fulfilling journey. Remember, you are not alone, and numerous resources and support systems are available to help you navigate this exciting new chapter of life. The journey has been immensely rewarding, affirming that there is no one right time for everyone when it comes to starting a family.

By Inna Mel



Imagination

The Lion looked at Alice wearily. "Are you animal—vegetable—or mineral?" he said, yawning at every other word. "It's a fabulous monster!" the Unicorn cried out before Alice could reply.

"Then hand round the plum-cake, Monster," the Lion said, lying down and putting his chin on his paws. "And sit down, both of you," (to the King and the Unicorn): "Fair play with the cake, you know!"

I did not quite know what I was getting myself into when I chose the topic of imagination for this month's column. I intuitively know and understand the dynamics and power of imagination and actually have it as one of the key pillars in my transformative wellbeing programme based on literature—Stories for Wellbeing.

So, I should know all about it.

But when I started to investigate, I realised that it is one of those 'big' words, like 'society' or 'culture,' that has no beginning and no end.

My academic mind kicked in, and before I knew it, I was halfway through an essay on imagination, referencing philosophers, psychologists, poets, and evangelists.

So, stripping back, I've decided to explore why imagination can be such a powerful tool in the world of wellbeing.

Imagination was a key part of my upbringing. With my mum as a teacher, there was no end of exciting make-believe things to do and play: teddy tea parties, tree house dens, dress-up discos, and mud cities, to name a few. We were also raised on Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, the Wizard of Oz, and Peter Rabbit...

But it was the Flying Doctor radio plays at 2pm Mon-Friday that really sealed the deal for me. I would rush home from school and gobble my lunch in keen anticipation of what dramatic situations would see me flying across the Outback to rescue and treat. The idea that I could escape at any time, into any world, that I can invent, has held me in good stead as I have navigated life's rich tapestry.

Yet imagination is an aspect that is rarely discussed in the wellbeing world, and I feel it can have huge ramifications for the workplace. So what is Imagination? It is a complex and nuanced concept that has occupied some of the greatest thinkers in history.

In its simple form, it is 'the faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses.' Imagination, therefore, is not dependent on external information that one can see, smell, touch, hear, or taste at the moment. It is something that is generated from within.

Through imagination, you can explore things familiar, such as an egg, to something never before witnessed, such as a horse being born from said egg. Thus, one can escape from the present realities simply by mentally self-generating thoughts and experiences that do not correlate with the actual present stimuli. This is powerful.

Humans have and express many types of imagined experiences on a daily basis. These include recollections, predictions, simulations, pretense, counterfactuals, fantasies, suppositions, mind wandering, dreams, ideas, creation, perceptions, and art.



Imagination is inherent within every one of us. It is a key faculty in the mind's capacity to acquire knowledge and experience of the world. It plays a critical role in early childhood development, increasing children's creative, cognitive, and social skills. It allows one to explore thoughts and feelings more deeply and learn how to problem-solve. It is essential to human experience, playing a major role in human creativity, everyday actions, and agency.

Though the concept is hard to define, Professor of Philosophy Kendall Walton asks, ***"What is it to imagine? We have examined a number of dimensions along which imaginations can vary; shouldn't we now spell out what they have in common? – Yes, if we can. But I can't."***

Imagination has occupied the minds of thinkers throughout the ages. First seen in Aristotle's *On the Soul*, he considered *Phantasia* (*Imaginatio* in Latin) as the capacity for making mental images and distinguished it from 'perception' and 'thinking.' 200 years later, Cicero referenced *mentis oculi*, 'the mind's eye' during a discussion of an orator's use of language to create visual imagery, and early Medieval psychologists saw imagination as an 'inward wit' which, along with memory and *sensus communis* (unification of senses) allowed recombination of images, e.g., gold and mountain, to obtain the idea of a golden mountain.

Imagination has been studied in psychology, sociology, religion, biology, and philosophy ever since.

Albert Einstein famously said, ***"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."*** This gives the example of not only imagining sitting on a space rocket but also the shape of the buildings as you zoom past them.

"When I get an idea, I start building it up in my imagination. I change the construction, make improvements, and operate the device in my mind. It is absolutely immaterial to me whether I run my turbine in thought or test it in my shop...the results are the same. In this way, I can rapidly develop and perfect a concept without touching anything," says Nikola Tesla, who has developed and fine-tuned his imagination so much that he can see the entire project in his mind's eye. This 'disciplined imagination,' where knowledge, experience, and learning come together, is a powerful productivity tool.

Sadly, though, the idea of using the imagination is often confined to that of children, where make-believe and imagination are encouraged, allowing creative play where new, uncommon ideas emerge—cutting an imaginary cake, and picking up the crumbs, having conversations with imaginary people, encompassing the body of a princess. It supports a child's learning and integration into society. But there comes a point in education where imagination is deliberately stamped out. I first noticed it at the art table of the mother and toddler group. The kids were making a daffodil from an egg box. Each of the parents insisted that their child copy exactly what 'the teacher' had done. I was astounded; these children were under 5. At kindergarten, mine was the only child who created a rocket herself – all others were parent-made in some unspoken competition. Why? Is allowing imagination dangerous? It's a free flow of thought, outside-the-box thinking, and what can a nation do with a whole swathe of people who are being creative and not following the conventional things-as-they-are line?

Britain has a history of maligning imagination and its creativity. King James's translators associated 'images' with 'false idols' and 'imagination' with 'idle, wicked thinking.' In the 17th century, imagination was deemed the "recourse of the unenlightened," and Sir Francis Bacon dismissed it outright, calling it "idols of the mind." British Empiricists' mission was to regulate those mental images called 'ideas.'



It was so sad to see my incredibly talented and gifted child's creativity die over the years. Told to depict herself on the cover of the art book handed out in the first week of secondary school, she cut the page diagonally, making one side black and the other white with a superimposed B&W image of herself reflecting the opposite shades. She was proud of this vision of who she was. The art teacher rejected it outright, sending her home saying, "Do you like pizza? Well, find a picture, cut it out, and stick it on." She never did another piece of artwork.

Our government is hellbent on destroying all of the arts in schools—cooking, art, drama, singing—any form for the individual to express themselves.

Schools are also very keen to stamp out one of the most effective tools an individual has – that of daydreaming. Often dismissed as a useless waste of time, it is anything but. Mind wandering occurs when the executive attention network and the default mode network collaborate, boosting creativity and self-control. The external environment is shut down, and the future self is visualised; seeing a different reality is motivating in the necessary steps to achieving success.

Victor Frankel survived three years in concentration camps. He realised he had only one freedom - the way to respond to the horrors surrounding him.

"Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space, we have the power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

He chose to imagine. He imagined his wife and the prospect of seeing her again, and he imagined himself teaching students after the war. These simple images kept him alive, and he went on to teach millions with his ***"Man's Search for Meaning."***

How often do you use your imagination? Really use it? Conjure something that is completely beyond your senses. I am not an artist, but it is a refrain that will be heard. But we all have the ability. Imagine a flower you have never seen – imagine it in your mind's eye. Really go deep into detail, colours, textures, smells, shapes. Imagine how tall it is, how it responds to the wind, what insects survive on it, what its bud looks like, and how many petals it has. It's not easy, but you'll see that you have imagined something that is truly unique to you. This is your light. The more open you are to the imagination, the more you find yourself, and the more you are able to 'receive.'

Michelangelo states he saw David in the block of marble, and then he just revealed him. Was this an act of the mind or from something other than himself? Inspiration – the process of being mentally challenged to do or feel something creative. It is always a flash, a moment, a lightbulb illumination. Artists and authors say things like ***'This came to me,' 'I was told to do this,' and 'I am just a channel.'*** ***This power is something that comes 'from beyond,'*** as Rumi would say, something connected to a higher purpose or meaning.

And this message can be, and is, shared. Language has the power to create the mental imagery in another, guided but at the same time unique to the reader, moving from one's mental imagination into another's visual perception. Christopher Collins, Professor of English at NYU, states that "because every literary image is also a mental image, and because each mental image is a representation of an absent entity, imagination is a poesis - a making up, an act of play for both the author and the reader."

So, when we read about the Lion and the Unicorn sitting down to plum cake, we have this image in our mind's eye. Your image will have the same content but be completely different from mine. To Collins, Imagination is "a noble and ennobling faculty that releases the mind from its earthy trammels to soar on the wings of such feeling that it alone can rouse."



With this noble faculty diminished within us, we are facing a mental health crisis.

Often, 'imagination' has been blamed for 'running riot' and making people fall into the black hole of fear, depression, and anxiety. Yet, this is not imagination but perception, moving to belief. Belief is generally when you assume or believe something to be true – a slim person who believes they are fat. They take this perception of themselves to be valid and true and then fire the arrows of suffering - ***"Nobody will like me, I have no friends, I am lonely, I am going to die."***

With imagination, there is no assumption that it is true or real. "I am fat. I am like a hippopotamus." One knows this is not true, but it is humorous and not so serious and ultimately aligns the thoughts with one's true natural self.

Without the ability to suspend disbelief, one lives in a totally real world. **An ugly world.**

In his *The Psychology of Imagination*, Jean-Paul Sartre explores the idea of imagination as an extension of the concepts of nothingness and freedom, both arising from the consciousness's ability to imagine objects as they are... and as they are not. These ideas form the base of his existentialism and the concept of human freedom.

Because we can imagine, we are ontologically free. A consciousness that could not imagine, would be hopelessly mired in 'the real' and will be incapable of perceiving unrealised possibilities. Thus, they would not be able to experience any real freedom of thought or choice. As the imaginary process is intentional, Sartre states, the world is constituted not from outside of our consciousness. Still, it is us in control, as we constitute the world based on our intentions. We create our own reality. And this is where it is so powerful in healing and wellbeing.

Psychologists engage in therapeutic imagery to help patients address concerns, including grief, depression, PTSD, stress, and anxiety. Some therapies go back into memory, revisiting it and changing the outcome to one more that aligns with oneself. Imagining new narratives gives the patient agency, enabling them to move on from traumatic events toward healing.

But how do we avoid that black hole? **By reading.**

The gift of imagination is something that authors are proud to bestow. Besides taking you on an adventure with the natural escapism where you are pulled from a pirate ship to Middle Earth, from unrequited love to illicit passion, stories work on the range of our personal imaginations, which relate to self and those around us.

By sharing the subtle emotional shading of elements such as shame, rage, and greed, a powerful novel or piece of verse can take what you may already identify with and relate to and stretch and shape it so that you are able to recognise and identify with another person's situation and imagine how they feel from the inside. In this way, you gain intimacy and empathy with others, making us more human and understanding of them and ourselves.

Imagination is a subtle and complex concept—it is wholly ours, and we can work with it the way we want to ultimately derive the benefits we need. It needs to take a prominent position in the wellbeing space, which is why I have included it in my *Stories for Wellbeing*, a comprehensive, transformative wellbeing programme.

By **Cecile Trijssenaar**

www.storiesforwellbeing.com





A Comprehensive Guide To Understanding and Managing Stress:

Stress is a common experience in today's fast-paced world, affecting individuals across all walks of life. It's the body's response to any demand or threat, whether real or perceived.

While a certain level of stress can be beneficial, motivating us to perform better, chronic stress can have detrimental effects on our physical and mental health. Understanding stress and learning how to manage it effectively is crucial for maintaining overall well-being.

The Nature of Stress

Stress triggers the body's "fight or flight" response, releasing hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. This reaction prepares the body to face or flee from danger, leading to physical symptoms like increased heart rate, heightened alertness, and muscle tension. While this response is essential for survival, chronic activation can lead to health issues such as anxiety, depression, heart disease, and a weakened immune system.

Common Sources of Stress

Stress can stem from various sources, including:

- **Work Pressure:** Deadlines, workload, and job insecurity.
- **Financial Concerns:** Managing expenses, debts, and financial planning.
- **Relationships:** Conflicts with family, friends, or partners.
- **Health Issues:** Chronic illness or injury.
- **Life Changes:** Events like moving, changing jobs, or losing a loved one.

Symptoms of Stress

Stress manifests in various ways, including:

- **Emotional Symptoms:** Anxiety, irritability, depression, and mood swings.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and muscle tension.
- **Cognitive Symptoms:** Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, and negative thoughts.
- **Behavioural Symptoms:** Changes in appetite, procrastination, and increased use of alcohol or drugs.

Strategies for Managing Stress

Effective stress management involves a combination of techniques that address both the mind and body. Here are some strategies to help manage stress:

- **Exercise Regularly:** Physical activity can significantly reduce stress levels. Exercise releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Activities like walking, jogging, yoga, and dancing are excellent ways to relieve stress.
- **Healthy Diet:** A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains can improve overall health and reduce stress. Avoid excessive caffeine, alcohol, and sugar, which can exacerbate stress.
- **Adequate Sleep:** Quality sleep is essential for stress management. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Establish a regular sleep routine, create a comfortable sleep environment, and avoid screens before bedtime.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Practices like meditation, deep breathing exercises and progressive muscle relaxation can help calm the mind and reduce stress. These techniques enhance self-awareness and promote relaxation.

- **Time Management:** Effective time management can prevent the overwhelm that leads to stress. Prioritise tasks, break them into smaller steps and set realistic goals. Use tools like planners or digital apps to stay organised.
- **Social Support:** Building strong relationships with friends, family, and colleagues provides emotional support and can help buffer against stress. Talking about your feelings with someone you trust can provide perspective and relief.
- **Hobbies and Interests:** Engaging in activities you enjoy can be a great stress reliever. Whether reading, gardening, painting, or playing a musical instrument, hobbies provide a mental break and joy.
- **Professional Help:** Sometimes, stress can be overwhelming, and seeking professional help is necessary. Therapists, coaches, counsellors and psychologists can provide strategies and support to manage stress effectively.



Long-Term Strategies for Stress Reduction

In addition to immediate stress relief techniques, adopting long-term strategies can contribute to sustained stress reduction:

- **Develop Resilience:** Building resilience involves developing the ability to cope with adversity. This can be achieved through positive thinking, setting realistic goals, and maintaining a hopeful outlook.
- **Healthy Boundaries:** Learn to say no and set boundaries to avoid taking on too much. This is essential in both personal and professional settings.
- **Self-Care:** Regularly engage in activities that promote self-care and relaxation, such as taking baths, listening to music, or spending time in nature.
- **Continuous Learning:** Equip yourself with stress management techniques through books, workshops, and online resources. Being proactive about learning new ways to handle stress can be empowering.



Stress is an inevitable part of life, but it doesn't have to control you. By understanding the nature of stress and implementing effective management strategies, you can reduce its impact on your life. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, adequate sleep, mindfulness practices, time management, social support, engaging hobbies, and professional help are all valuable tools in your stress management toolkit. Remember, the goal is not to eliminate stress completely but to manage it in a way that enhances your overall well-being and quality of life.

By Beverley Shatliff
Green Tree Holistics





Choosing to Parent— How do you know you're ready?

As people continue to plan for the future, many consider parenthood in their decisions. According to a 2023 survey conducted by Pew Research Center, when asked about having children, 51% of young adults who were not yet parents said they would like to have children one day. Their decision factors include age, health, partner willingness, and financial means.

The survey also covered other topics, such as marriage and respondents' relationship with their parents. Although the analysis suggests that people desire parenting at some point, it did not indicate their readiness for this change. If your next step is to become a parent, how will you know if you are ready?

Knowing why you want to become a parent is one of the most critical steps to take in life. Ask yourself why you feel this desire. Is it a personal wish, or are you influenced by outside pressures or cultural expectations?

Imagine what your life will be like as a parent versus reality. Your expectations can often differ from day-to-day life. Raising a child involves both incredible joy and serious challenges. Having honest conversations with current parents about their experiences provides a lot of wisdom. Their parenting style, successes, and mistakes can be beneficial. Think about what works for you and what you want to do differently. Understanding and learning from their experiences can help you better decide how you might approach parenting.

What Does It Take to Become a Parent?

Becoming a parent is much more than a title; it's an ongoing journey requiring emotional, financial, and practical preparedness. This means developing patience, resilience, and the ability to handle stress. Being financially secure goes a long way. Raising a child involves various expenditures, from basic needs like food and clothing to education and leisure activities. Having a financial plan and savings is essential for a stable and nurturing environment. Practical readiness involves making changes to one's daily routine and lifestyle. Parents often rearrange their schedules and endure personal sacrifices to meet their children's needs.

Becoming a Parent Changes You

Everything takes on new meaning when you're responsible for another person. This shift changes how you see your career, hobbies, and social life. Suddenly, everyday decisions are weighed differently, all through the lens of what's best for your child. Your relationships will also experience changes. Friendships evolve as your priorities shift, and the relationship with your partner will transform. Navigating parenthood as a team can strengthen your bond or require more adjustments.

Personal interests and hobbies might take a backseat, but you'll discover new joys in the time spent with your child. Activities like playing at the park or reading bedtime stories become some of life's most cherished moments. Caring for a child requires endurance and resilience.

These traits will help you through sleepless nights, tantrums, and the inevitable ups and downs. Each obstacle you overcome builds confidence and adds depth to your character. Whether it's figuring out how to soothe a crying infant or guiding a teenager through tough times, these experiences shape who you are in profound ways. They will expand your capacity for love and empathy. You'll find yourself more compassionate, patient, and understanding. Overall, these attributes don't just make you a better parent; they make you a better person.

Making the Decision: Are You Ready to Be a Parent?

The best thing that you can do is take the time to evaluate your current situation. Consider your emotional, reproductive, financial, and practical readiness.

Are you in a stable relationship or prepared to parent solo? Do you have a support network? Answers to these questions will play an essential role in your decision. There are resources available on parenting: books, parenting classes, experienced parents, and coaches focusing on families, all of which can offer valuable insights. If you're looking at movies and celebrity lifestyles, they provide entertainment but often need more authenticity of real-life experiences. Instead, seek advice from people you trust.

Try this: Make a list of the pros and cons of parenthood and discuss the possibility with your partner or a close confidant. Moreover, consider speaking with a mental health professional for an unbiased perspective.

Lastly, remember that choosing not to become a parent is entirely valid. Parenthood is a different path for everyone. Sometimes, the choice that seems like an omission is a powerful, deliberate decision. Embrace whichever route makes you happiest and most fulfilled.

By Maxcine Watson
Life & Fertility Coaching

Maxcine combines her expertise as a Certified Life Skills Coach and international-level Professional Coach with her advocacy for quality fertility care. She incorporates evidence-based research and knowledge from her parenting experiences into her unique coaching style. The result is a client-centered approach that ignites deeper personal awareness while targeting goals. Maxcine helps men and women improve their chances of creating the family they want in their future.

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Time is Limited

How a colour-coded calendar can help you reclaim your time

Many people are not intentional with their time. They let their inbox dictate their schedule and do not plan ahead days and weeks in advance.

One of the first steps to shifting from a reactive approach to a proactive one is to get clear on your future vision and core values and create some short—and long-term goals. This will help you prioritise your workload, which we should do according to importance, not just urgency. What quickly follows from this is planning your time in advance, which is the topic of this article. Time blocking

Time blocking is a time management technique that involves breaking your day into distinct blocks of time and assigning specific tasks or activities to each block. By allocating time in advance, you can create a structure for your day and ensure that your most important tasks are given the attention they deserve.

A little tip: it can be helpful to schedule the time to plan each week!

The benefits of time-blocking

Time blocking can help you focus on one task at a time (multitasking is a myth!) and minimise distractions. It can also force you to assess your priorities and help ensure that the important but not urgent tasks get done.

“Sometimes people ask why I bother with such a detailed level of planning. My answer is simple: it generates a massive amount of productivity. A 40-hour time-blocked work week, I estimate, produces the same amount of output as a 60+ hour work week pursued without structure.” - Cal Newport, author of *Deep Work*.

I time block my work and personal life, and by doing so, I have been able to intentionally create a healthier work-life balance. Many people don't plan their leisure time or evenings after work, and because they don't think about this time, it can feel like it doesn't exist.

People who feel they have enough time are intentional with their time and know where it goes. Time blocking can help us achieve this.

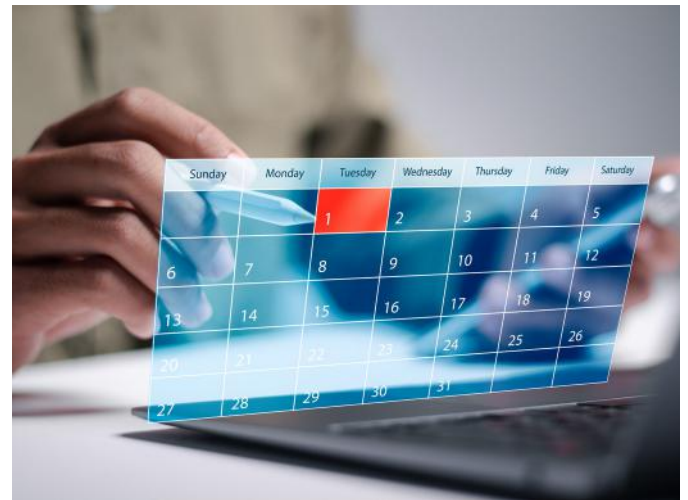
“My stress levels have dropped, and I don't feel so overwhelmed because I can see, clearly mapped out, where everything I need to do fits into my week.” - Ellen Scott, *Stylist* magazine.

Sarah Stewart is a Scottish time management coach and mindfulness practitioner. She helps people get more time for the things that matter through her one-to-one online coaching and her signature programme Project Manage Your Life. Find out more here:

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Where to start with time blocking - choosing a calendar

I encourage my clients to start on paper if they are new to time management strategies. It can be easy to neglect your schedule if it's not visible and front of mind, so with a paper plan, it can be located next to them as they work.



That said, having an electronic calendar is very useful as it makes it easier to move your time blocks around—a bit like a game of Tetris where you try to fit everything in! An electronic calendar also means that you can leverage the systems. For instance, you can use the recurring function to schedule blocks of time for activities that you do regularly.

It's also easier to colour-code your blocks in an electronic tool. I have a few different colours for work, family, self-care, exercise, etc. At a quick glance at my week, I can see if I have enough time for each area of my life.

I've got some homework for you! Create your time blocked plan for the week, but then also track your time to see if you stuck with it. The process of tracking your time can be very insightful, and it's an activity I do with all my clients.

By Sarah Stewart





Mysterious Illnesses and the link to your DNA found in Human Design

The journey towards healing is never a straight path. For me, it began with an insatiable curiosity about my ancestry and unfolded into a deeply personal story of transformation. In this article, you'll get a glimpse into how I harnessed the power of Gene Keys, Human Design, 23andMe, and ancestral information, and personal healing work to rewrite the story of my inherited genetically activated illnesses.

The Power of Ancestral Information

The idea that our health is influenced by our DNA is not new. However, what intrigued me was how much of my family's story was written into my genes. I turned to 23andMe as well as genetic markers from vitamin deficiencies to uncover the genetic details of my lineage. The results painted a picture of my heritage, revealing not just geographic origins but also potential health predispositions. Among them were a predisposition for autoimmune disorders, anxiety, and chronic inflammation—illnesses that had been in my family for generations.

Armed with this information, I was ready to dig deeper. I explored my family tree, gathering stories from my relatives and finding patterns of health challenges. It was clear that these inherited conditions were not just genetic; they were also woven into the fabric of our familial beliefs, traumas, and behaviors.

Understanding My Blueprint: Human Design and Gene Keys

As I delved into my genetic blueprint, I stumbled upon the Human Design and Gene Keys systems. Each offered profound insights into my unique, energetic makeup and how I relate to the world.

Human Design: This system, a blend of the I Ching, astrology, Kabbalah, and the chakras, gave me a comprehensive map of my unique strengths and challenges. As a Manifesting Generator, I learned that my energy was designed for versatility but also that I had to be careful not to overcommit and exhaust myself. My chart also pointed to specific health vulnerabilities, which correlated with my genetic findings.

Gene Keys: This synthesis of astrology, the I Ching, and genetics helped me dive even deeper. In particular, the Gene Keys illuminated my inherited shadow patterns, showing me how my family's fears and unresolved traumas were playing out in my life. The contemplative practice of Gene Keys empowered me to shift from these shadows to their higher expressions, the "gifts." I also learned to harden the shadow states, which often have hidden power in them and should not be judged.

Transforming My DNA

With this knowledge, I developed a personal healing strategy that addressed my inherited patterns and choices.

- 1. Detoxifying with Self-Love: I practiced radical self-love and forgiveness, recognizing that my inherited patterns were not my fault. By releasing guilt and embracing compassion, I created space for healing.*
- 2. Diet and Lifestyle Adjustments: At first, I started to take foods that I thought were inflammatory away, like dairy. However, as a disruptor, I also needed to allow my wholeness and not try too hard to be "good". Once I let go of perfectionism and embraced the fullness of my emotional range, I spontaneously started to feel better. Once I began to stand up for myself, trust my instincts fully, not judge myself for my mistakes and be more truthful in my interactions in the world, my health and inflammation subsided. It was as if my inflammation and anxiety were more tied to trying to be good, and when I stopped trying so hard, it went away. I can now eat foods I was depriving myself of and partake in activities that I enjoy, like an occasional drink out with friends and not feel sick.*
- 3. Energy Healing and Trauma Release: I explored various healing modalities to release trapped emotions and traumas.*
- 4. Creative Expression: Writing poetry, journaling, and photography became therapeutic outlets. I used these mediums to express and transform pain into beauty, freeing myself from the constraints of inherited beliefs.*
- 5. Integrating the Gene Keys Gifts: Through contemplation, I shifted my perspective on challenges like anxiety, viewing them as opportunities to develop resilience and empathy. Embracing the gifts of my Gene Keys allowed me to rewrite the narrative of my life.*

A Journey Continues

Healing is not a one-time event but an ongoing journey. I continue to work with my genetic blueprint, refine my practices, and embrace both my inherited gifts and shadows. The fusion of ancestral knowledge, Gene Keys, and my personal healing journey has empowered me to rewrite my story and transform my health.

If there's one truth that stands out from this journey, it's that health is a dance between our DNA and our choices. We can honor our ancestors by healing the wounds they could not and by choosing to live our lives fully and authentically.

May this story inspire you to uncover and embrace your ancestral legacy and to heal and thrive in ways that transcend generations.

By Ariel Grace

Ariel Grace Snapp is a coach for creatives, tech creative director, podcast host, intuitive and artist. She uses Gene Keys and Human Design with her clients to help them unlock their higher potential in their creative calling. She is particularly interested in co-creating new, collaborative ways to solve social challenges across different sectors. Connect with her online on Instagram or Facebook @ArielGraceFull





Body Positivity

Men have fat days too

self-reflection, coaching, and eliminating addictive foods. To be completely transparent, those old obsessive thoughts appear occasionally; most of the time, I can tell them a long time, no talk, and go about my day. When I am tired, or life isn't going as it should, I am not as strong, but I know it is just a passing thought, and I try to replace it with one that serves me better.

However, there are many men who have a very different relationship with their bodies. The National Association for Males with Eating Disorders estimates that men account for between 25 and 40 per cent of those with eating disorders.

“Our findings reflect the way in which stress and anxiety impact men’s relationships with their bodies, particularly in terms of masculine body ideals. Given that masculinity typically emphasizes the value of toughness, self-reliance, and the pursuit of status, COVID-19-related stress and anxiety may be leading men to place greater value on the importance of being muscular.” - Viren Swami, Researcher and Professor of Social Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University.

It makes sense as so many of us had extreme feelings of stress during Covid, and for those with body image struggles, they were exacerbated by lockdowns, concerns about vaccination safety and feelings of zero control.



Negative body image is one of the most frequent causes of eating disorders, and that’s true for men as well as women. However, because men are less likely to talk about these issues, it’s difficult for researchers to determine accurate rates of eating disorders in males. What is clear is that the numbers are higher than commonly believed. In fact, One study found that about a quarter of young adult men reported disordered eating behaviors related to body dissatisfaction.

Having a boy and a girl, is well...different. Not just the obvious anatomy, or that my 15 year old son is now 9 inches taller than me, it is that he also has such a very different relationship with his body.

My son was always the tallest in his grade. In all the class pictures, the kids are all about the same size, and then there is the tallest poppy child—mine! From the time he was in utero, I knew he was going to be on the large side. His father is 6’4, and I am slightly above average for a woman’s height, but 5’7 1/2 isn’t anything to write home about.

They had yearly physicals for years at the same time, and I could tell the difference in how they each would receive the information; my son was thrilled he was taller than 99% of boys his age, but my daughter was not so much.

Last year, after a bad bout of mononucleosis, aka glandular fever, he was incredibly sick, in addition to an allergic reaction to the meds and started high school underweight. Once he felt better, he started weight training, counting his macros, and he had intentionally gained 60 lbs by the end of school. He looked like the Incredible Hulk when he was about to tear apart his clothes. As I write this, he is currently 6’3 and 200 lbs and very low body fat. In addition, he has zero emotions or feelings about it other than how it relates to his chosen sport.

I found it fascinating, as he was simply observing the data. After a lifetime of dating, restricting, overexercising, and obsessive thoughts about food and everything else, the number on the scale was never just a number for me. It was my self-worth, the determining factor in whether I was a good person, what told me if I “deserved” to eat carbs that day or if I would feel confident enough to wear a bikini or a one-piece.

Only in the last few years have I been able not to make the scale hold such importance; this is with a ton of



In my own work, many male clients have reported not feeling comfortable taking their shirts off at the beach or while intimate. In a sense, they have the dreaded fat days as well. This is not to be attributed to hormonal fluctuations and premenstrual bloating but likely based upon how “good” they have been or even how accepting their partners are.

In general, males are more likely to struggle with binge eating disorder and Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) as opposed to anorexia. Experts say that about a quarter of people with anorexia are men, but they are at higher risk of death due to their reluctance to seek help. And other disordered eating behaviors, such as purging, fasting, and laxative abuse, are almost as common in men as in women, some researchers say. While women with eating disorders and body image issues are typically focused on being thin, men tend to focus on gaining muscle. Research shows that 90 percent of teen boys exercise with the specific goal of “bulking up,” this behavior often continues into young adulthood. Hence, researchers have coined the phrase “muscle dysmorphia,” also known as “reverse anorexia” or “bigorexia.” These terms describe male body image disorders that are focused around the obsessive desire to have a bigger, more muscular body.

Male body image disorders like muscle dysmorphia can lead not only to eating disorders in men but also to exercise addiction. Young men become obsessed with bodybuilding. Bigorexia statistics are hard to quantify because many young men don’t recognize that their muscle obsession is a mental health disorder. One study in the UK estimated that one in every 10 gym members struggle with muscle dysmorphia. Research on freshmen university students taking Exercise and Sport Sciences courses found that they were ten times more likely to have muscle dysmorphia compared to a control group. I have a male client who has struggled with his body image since he was a teen; I spoke to him about this story with the spin on body positivity and forgetting about men.

He saw the issue as, while many mass market retailers will have billboards with women who twenty years ago would never be in Times Square, the same change isn’t happening for men. There are no drop-downs on websites where the models wear four different waist sizes, as many women do.

Where does body positivity live for men?

A few years ago, when I was attending Overeaters Anonymous meetings while writing my book *Why Can’t I Stick To My Diet*, I can say there were men in attendance, but body image was rarely discussed. Even in a relatively safe space like a 12-step group devoted to disordered eating, male body positivity never came up. Granted, this was a while ago, but it isn’t as if feeling good in one’s skin is a new concept.

There are a few influencers who focus on male body positivity. The theme amongst them is terms such as “dad bod” only make things worse, as many overweight or obese men have struggled since they were children with disordered eating, the most common one being binge eating. Male body positivity space is still sorely underdeveloped, with many men suffering from eating disorders and mental health conditions caused by the lack of diverse traditional male role models. Due to the culture around men and stereotypes about sharing feelings and eating disorders, it is severely underreported.

What can we do to help the men and boys in our lives?

- Practice and encourage intuitive eating at home.
- Eliminate the clean plate club and any talk of negative body issues. Don’t presume only girls need to feel good about their bodies. We all do.
- Focus on the enjoyment, health benefits and fun of physical activities, not the caloric burn or potential six-packs

Body positivity is constantly evolving, and I believe it is positive as long as we work towards health, understanding, and compassion. Life is too short for self-loathing, constant dieting, and obsessive thoughts.

“You have to stand up and say, ‘There’s nothing wrong with me or my shape or who I am; you’re the one with the problem!’” -Jennifer Lopez

By Erin Wathen



The Seven Biggest Mistakes People Make Trying to Deal with Personal Insecurity

Insecurity is a universal issue. No one survives their childhood without developing limiting beliefs about themselves, and so the fear of not being good enough is something we all deal with on some level.

The good news is that insecurity is a solvable problem when you know how. Unfortunately, most people make one or more of the following seven mistakes instead, which only makes their insecurity worse.

1. Running and hiding

Everyone desires to be seen as a good person, but we are just afraid that if we are fully exposed, we'll be found to be somehow bad instead. This is the human condition.

For this reason, most humans run and hide. Some are on heroic quests to demonstrate their goodness by how hard and fast they can run and how extraordinary their performance is, while others are solving the problem by hiding instead. They seek out safe corners of the world where no one is even looking at them in the first place.

Both running and hiding only make things worse. Fear, unexamined, only grows. To truly solve the insecurity problem, you must step into the light, turn, and face it instead. You will also need to name the fear accurately, as your worst opinion of yourself is being confirmed by the world.

2. Become confused through misdirection

When people finally tell the truth about what they are afraid of, the next mistake is to misunderstand what caused this fear in the first place. Most people incorrectly assume that it was the painful words and experiences of their past that caused the insecurity, which leaves them forever positioned as victims. The only course of action is to manage the fear and try to distance themselves from the pain of it all.

This is a mistake simply because it leaves you misdirected to where the real action occurred. The true source of the wound was NOT in what happened to you but entirely in what you made it mean about you.

3. Mask, medicate and manage

The next mistake is to try to live with the pain caused by insecurity through a range of management solutions. This can seem like the only option when you are still stuck in the previous mistake of misunderstanding what caused the insecurity in the first place. This pain avoidance only leads to short-term wins and band-aid solutions. While it is possible to escape pain in the short term, the long-term pain only escalates and compounds.

The insecurity problem gets solved when we stack the pain instead. Feeling crappy about yourself is supposed to feel bad. That's the point. It's not the way we were designed to feel. When you listen to the pain instead of avoiding it, you receive all the motivation you need to deal with the fear for good.

4. Dreaming in the dark

To overcome insecurity, you must have a compelling vision of how you want your life to be. However, the big mistake here is to let your insecurity dampen and dial down what you truly desire. It is as though some people have been in a dark room for so long that they forgot what the sun looks like. Their dreams are so watered-down, shallow, and insipid that they don't have the power to motivate them out of their current

state.

Being crystal clear about what you've always wanted for your life is the only thing powerful enough to give you a reason to change. To desire is human. When you tell the truth and are prepared to listen to your heart instead of trying to protect it, you discover these desires are still there as they have always been.

5. Seeking help from the wrong people

At some point, we all need some assistance to face our deepest fears about ourselves. However, the big mistake here is getting help from the wrong people. This is tricky because most of those who describe themselves as helpers do not know the way. Worse still, the greatest problem with these therapists/counsellors/psychologists is that they confuse the world about who the hero is. Unless these individuals have solved the insecurity problem in their own lives, how could they possibly know how to help you solve it?

Every hero needs a guide, but you must find one who knows the way and yet will not get in your way.

6. Hoping to be rescued

It is a huge mistake to look outside yourself for this problem to be solved. If this could have been fixed by someone nice telling you how wonderful you are, your mum would have fixed this for you years ago.

The problem is that you are the bully in the story, not the victim. You betrayed yourself by accusing yourself of being the reason your world wasn't working the way you desired. No one is coming to save you. You'll be stuck in this fear forever until you are ready to be wrong about your worst opinion of yourself, go back to the beginning, and completely change your mind.

7. Just be positive

The final mistake is to try and rewrite a new story over the top of the old one. The common belief is that positivity fixes everything. This leads to affirmations in your mirror and constantly reminding yourself that you are enough in an attempt to override years of negativity or fear. While this thinking is very mainstream, it cannot bring about lasting change. As always, the old insecurity narrative takes over when you get tired or stressed.

To effectively rewrite your story, you must first clear the slate. This means fully deconstructing limiting beliefs back to their origin and rendering former opinions obsolete.

By Jaemin Frazer

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Embrace and Empower

Navigating the Menopause with Self Love Mastery

Perimenopause and Menopause signify an ending in our lives, an ending of who and what we are.

Our bodies change, our periods stop, and for most women, this will signify the ending of the chapter, where they will no longer be able to bring life into this world. As women, we will go through the motions; we won't grieve or hold ourselves or each other during the discomfort of this ending. We won't honour ourselves but will do what we're conditioned to do and just get on with it. We will experience this time of change in silence and secret, hiding from not only ourselves but also the judgements of others.

We lose more of ourselves in the process, losing confidence and self-worth, which then perpetuates more feelings of disconnect, not being enough, and tears to shred any remaining self-esteem. But there is another way that isn't taught in classrooms or passed on from woman to woman, grandmother to mother, mother to daughter.

But one I have learnt and would like to share with you.

You can honour yourself by embracing this empowering time with self-love mastery.

You can embrace this time of change by stopping to reflect on your life so far.

You can show yourself love by beginning to heal a lifetime of limiting beliefs that have been keeping you stuck from feeling free, happy and loved.

You can begin to celebrate and honour yourself and your strengths and connect, maybe like me, for the first time, with your true authentic self.

You can leverage the changes and use them as a springboard toward the future you have always been dreaming of.

Following my hysterectomy and starting a surgically induced menopause at 41 was what forced me to stop and reflect on my life. During this time of reflection, I realised that I didn't know who I was or what my values were.

A lifetime of taking on other people's beliefs as my own and people-pleasing left me so disconnected and filled with negative emotions that I was unable to appreciate and love myself as I was.

My inner critic was my own personal bully, leaving me incapable of recognising my strengths and achievements, and she would beat me up on a daily basis. I had kept myself from feeling loved by feeling unloved. But by honouring this new chapter in my life, I have experienced a deeply transformative healing journey, at the heart of which is learning to love myself unconditionally.

My self-love journey has been powerful, empowering, and limitless. It has given me the opportunity to embody feelings I never knew existed, learning how it feels to be in alignment, happy, joyful, and connected.

I had been taught that I needed to receive other people's validation, support, words of approval and appreciation in order to feel loved. I had been conditioned to believe my worthiness came from accolades, achievements, success and recognition. I allowed my worthiness to be conditional, which gave my power away.

But I only needed to look within to find the love I needed, which is something that everyone can unlock for themselves. This is why I am passionate about helping and supporting women through their menopause transition.

By providing them space to reflect on their lives and honour this ending in an empowering way. It allows them to learn who they are and recognise their strengths, resulting in a deep sense of self-acceptance.

I create a safe space, free from judgement and other people's opinions, so they can begin healing the limiting beliefs that have kept them from feeling they are enough.

I empower women to embrace self-love mastery, so they begin to feel worthy of creating the lives they had only dreamed about.

Is it time to connect with you and learn who you are? Are you ready to honour this time in your life the way it deserves - with love? Are you ready to navigate menopause with self-love mastery?

By Sarah Hunt

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The Digital Revolution's Toll

Why Unplugging is No Longer Optional



How is it that our world grows busier by the day, overflowing with endless activities and distractions? The pre-COVID era feels like a distant blur, yet somehow, we have seamlessly transitioned into our current reality—The Now.

Have we unknowingly plunged into the depths of the Digital Revolution without fully grasping its impact? These thoughts often cross my mind as I observe the world around me. We're now grappling with intensified issues like mental health struggles, cognitive fatigue, and an overwhelming flood of content delivered through a device that fits in the palm of our hand. Unplugging from this digital world is shifting from a mere desire to an essential need. Like any habit, anyone can unplug with the right blend of intention and mindfulness.

The Digital Revolution: A Silent Invasion

The Digital Revolution, often compared to the Industrial Revolution, has seeped into every aspect of our lives with remarkable stealth. Unlike past societal shifts that were more visible—like the rise of factories or the advent of the automobile—the digital transformation has occurred largely behind screens. We've seen our workspaces, social interactions, entertainment, and even our sense of self-worth become deeply intertwined with our devices. The result? A society that is perpetually connected, always available, and constantly consuming.

This pervasive connectivity has not come without costs. Research shows a significant increase in mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders, much of which can be traced back to our digital habits. The endless scroll of social media feeds, the barrage of notifications, and the pressure to stay updated have created a culture of constant comparison and information overload. Our brains, which evolved for a slower pace of life, are struggling to keep up with the rapid-fire demands of the digital age.

The Psychological Toll of Being Plugged In

The omnipresence of digital devices has led to a phenomenon known as “cognitive exhaustion.” Our brains are bombarded with information at an unprecedented rate, forcing us to process and respond to stimuli faster than ever before. This constant stimulation leaves little room for rest or reflection, leading to burnout and decreased productivity.

The digital world encourages a fragmented attention span. Notifications, emails, and social media updates pull our focus in multiple directions at once, making it difficult to concentrate on a single task for an extended period. This fractured attention can impair our ability to think deeply, solve complex problems, and engage in meaningful conversations. In essence, the tools designed to enhance our lives erode our cognitive abilities and emotional well-being.

Social media, in particular, plays a significant role in this dynamic. Platforms are designed to be addictive, leveraging psychological principles such as intermittent reinforcement to keep users engaged. The “likes,” comments and shares we receive on our posts create a dopamine-driven feedback loop, encouraging us to repeatedly return to the platform. This cycle can lead to a distorted sense of self-worth, where our value is measured by our online presence rather than our intrinsic qualities.

Unplugging from the digital world is not just about turning off your devices; it's about reclaiming your time, attention, and mental space. It's about consciously choosing to step back from the noise and re-engage with the world in a more meaningful way.

But how can we effectively unplug in a world that is designed to keep us connected?

1. Set Boundaries with Technology:

One of the most effective ways to unplug is by setting clear boundaries with your devices. This could mean designating specific times of the day when you check emails or social media or creating tech-free zones in your home, such as the bedroom or dining area. By setting these limits, you can reduce the constant pull of digital distractions and create space for more intentional activities.

2. Practice Digital Minimalism:

Digital minimalism is the practice of curating your digital environment to reduce clutter and focus on what truly adds value to your life. This might involve unsubscribing from unnecessary newsletters, deleting unused apps, or limiting your social media use to a select few platforms. The goal is to be more deliberate about your digital consumption, ensuring that your online activities align with your values and priorities.

3. Cultivate Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is the practice of being present in the moment and fully engaged with your current experience. In the context of unplugging, mindfulness can help you become more aware of your digital habits and the impact they have on your well-being. Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or simply taking a few moments to pause and reflect can help you break the cycle of mindless scrolling and re-center your attention.

4. Reconnect with the Physical World:

One of the best ways to unplug is by reconnecting with the physical world. Engage in activities that don't involve screens, such as reading a book, going for a walk, or spending time with loved ones. Physical exercise, in particular, is a powerful antidote to the effects of digital overload, helping to clear your mind and boost your mood.

5. Embrace Solitude:

In a hyper-connected world, solitude can be a rare and precious commodity. However, spending time alone, away from the noise of the digital world, can be incredibly restorative. Solitude allows for introspection, creativity, and the opportunity to process thoughts and emotions that are often drowned out by constant connectivity.

Unplugging from the digital world, even for short periods, can have profound benefits for your mental and physical health. Studies have shown that reducing screen time can lead to better sleep, improved concentration, and reduced stress levels. It can also enhance your relationships as you become more present and attentive in your interactions with others.



Unplugging can foster a more profound sense of fulfillment and purpose. When you step back from the constant barrage of information and distractions, you create space for the things that truly matter—whether pursuing a passion, spending quality time with loved ones, or simply enjoying the beauty of the present moment.

The digital world is not inherently bad; it offers countless opportunities for connection, learning, and entertainment. However, like any tool, it must be used wisely. By setting boundaries, practicing mindfulness, and making intentional choices about how we engage with technology, we can harness its benefits without falling victim to its downsides.

Unplugging is not about rejecting the digital world entirely; it's about finding balance. It's about reclaiming your attention and energy and using them in ways that enhance your life rather than detract from it. In a world constantly trying to grab your attention, the ability to unplug is a powerful skill that can lead to greater clarity, peace, and well-being.

by Joseline Carballo

Positive Psychology Practitioner, Coach & Mentor



The Complex Dance of Betrayal

A Woman's Experience with Infidelity

Infidelity often evokes images of clear divisions: someone cheats, someone gets hurt. Yet, beneath these simplistic views lies a more intricate reality, where the lines between the betrayer and the betrayed can blur. Through one woman's experience, we gain insight into the tangled emotions and relationships that characterize infidelity. In her committed relationship, she and her partner had built a life together over the years, filled with shared dreams and unspoken promises. However, their relationship faced a severe downturn. It wasn't just a matter of frequent arguments; it was a profound sense of detachment. Communication broke down, and the person she once knew intimately now felt like a stranger.

During this period of emotional distance, she found unexpected comfort in a new person. It wasn't a premeditated decision but rather a source of emotional connection in a time of loneliness. The new relationship brought a sense of excitement and attention that had been missing, but it also introduced a painful realization: she was betraying someone she had vowed to remain loyal to.

The guilt she felt was intense, yet she tried to justify her actions by focusing on the aspects she believed were missing in her primary relationship. This internal struggle was consuming and made her question the essence of betrayal.

Her situation took a dramatic turn when she discovered that her partner had also been unfaithful. The news was devastating, and she felt a mix of anger and sadness as the pain she had caused was reflected back at her.

This revelation brought a crucial understanding: infidelity is not just about physical acts or emotional bonds but also about deeper needs for connection, validation, and understanding. It often arises from feelings of neglect and unmet needs, with decisions driven more by self-preservation than intentional harm.

Recognizing why she made those choices offered a clearer view of her vulnerabilities. While her actions were inexcusable, understanding her motivations provided context for the difficulties she faced. She realized that she was not only a perpetrator but also a victim of her own unmet needs and challenges. This acknowledgement did not excuse the betrayal but offered a fuller picture of what led it.

Facing her partner's betrayal required her to confront her own shortcomings within the relationship. Both partners contributed to the breakdown of trust, with poor communication and unmet emotional needs playing significant roles. They sought comfort outside their commitment, revealing a mutual breakdown rather than a one-sided issue.

For those dealing with infidelity, whether as the one who cheated or the one who was betrayed, consider the following advice. First, avoid rushing to blame. Understand that relationships are complex and infidelity often reflects deeper issues, such as communication problems and unmet emotional needs. Second, engage in honest communication. Though difficult, addressing issues openly can help find resolutions and move forward. This approach is crucial for rebuilding trust or making informed decisions about the future of the relationship.

Lastly, focus on personal growth. Infidelity often highlights areas where individuals need improvement, such as addressing past trauma, intergenerational patterns in one's family, communication skills, and/or self-awareness. Addressing these areas can lead to healthier relationships in the future, whether with the current partner or someone new. Ultimately, this woman's experience with infidelity highlights an important perspective: that women, too, deal with the complexities of betrayal. While societal views often suggest that infidelity is more associated with men, this woman's story shows that women can also face the challenges and emotional struggles involved in cheating.

This situation illustrates that infidelity is not confined to one gender or a specific pattern. Just as men can find themselves both committing and experiencing betrayal, women also navigate these difficult emotions and circumstances. Both genders can end up in situations where they betray a partner or betray themselves, dealing with deep conflicts and personal vulnerabilities.

The experience through this woman's eyes shows that cheating can take many forms and arise from a variety of circumstances. It's not a single story but one of many possible scenarios. Whether involving men or women, the core

issues—such as poor communication, unmet needs, and personal insecurities—can lead to infidelity in different ways. Each story adds to our understanding of how betrayal can occur and how it might be addressed, reflecting the wide range of experiences with infidelity.

As a professional and a woman who has also experienced both sides of infidelity, I deeply resonate with this woman's story. As a marriage and family therapist, relationship coach, and speaker, I have worked with many couples facing the challenges of infidelity. My personal experience with the intense emotions that come from such situations has given me a profound understanding of the difficulties involved.

This empathy and insight have been crucial in helping others navigate their journeys through betrayal and healing. Understanding firsthand how hard it is to overcome the emotional turmoil of infidelity has enriched my work, allowing me to offer more compassionate and effective support to those in similar situations.

Meet Allisha, the ultimate relationship guru and inspiration for couples worldwide. As a Marriage and Family Therapist, Allisha has helped countless individuals and their partners overcome their relationship struggles and create a strong and lasting bond. But her passion for helping others doesn't stop there.

Through her powerful motivational speeches and coaching, Allisha empowers couples to work through their relationship issues and become stronger and more connected. Her warm and inviting tone makes it easy for couples to open up and feel comfortable sharing their deepest fears and vulnerabilities.

But Allisha's expertise in relationships doesn't come from textbooks alone. As a wife and mother, she brings a personal touch and understanding to her work, drawing from over 20 years of her own relationship experience. Her journey has not been without its challenges, as she courageously battles a rare form of diabetes. This experience has only deepened her empathy and compassion for those facing adversity in their relationships.

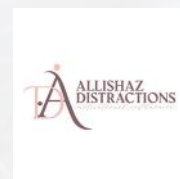
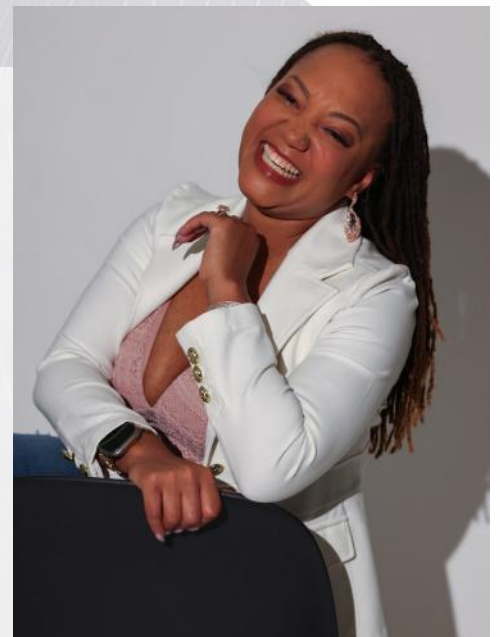
As a lesbian woman of color, Allisha has faced her fair share of unique challenges in her personal and professional life. But she uses her platform to break barriers and promote love and acceptance in all forms. Her authenticity and inclusivity make her a trusted ally and confidant for couples of all backgrounds.

Not only is Allisha an expert in relationships, but she is also a published author, sharing her wisdom and insights through her poetry book. Her relatable and down-to-earth approach makes her writing a must-read for any couple looking to strengthen their bond.

Whether you are facing co-parenting struggles, relationship traumas, or simply want to improve your connection with your partner, Allisha is here to guide and support you every step of the way. She is proof that any relationship can thrive with determination, love, and a little bit of professional help. Please let me know if you need anything else from me.

Allisha Minor-Gaines, M.A.MFT, M.S.NML
Motivational Influencer & Coach

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Transformative MUSIC by Sally Arnold

Are there days when a piece of music gets stuck in your head? And you just can't get rid of its beat, rhythm, and sound. It is so intoxicating, perhaps bringing back memories from your past or present. Maybe an outstanding performance, show, or concert that excites and inspires you, similar to meeting up with a good friend that you see irregularly.

This is one of the many ways music affects our lives. When neuroscientists start pulling apart the effect of music on our brains, life gets interesting because the structure and function of music affect the mechanisms of Neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. Listening to music, in all styles and forms, is a key factor that reduces anxiety, stress, and day-to-day challenges in our lives. Or, add Music Therapy into the equation with the Medical world, confirming deeply moving results from Patients with Dementia to returning Veterans.

Here is an example that has been seen frequently on Social Media. A former Dancer in a wheelchair appears almost asleep. Then, a track from Swan Lake is played, and her face comes alive. She shows recognition of the music, with her hands and fingers coming to life. She creates beautiful dancer movements that are so different from the stiff, almost lifeless woman in a wheelchair. I watched this video with tears streaming down my face. She is back as a dancer in the Ballet!

The Military uses Music and Songwriting to help veterans reclaim their lives after war injuries, mental and physical. Part of the program asks veterans to write songs with a musician accompanying them. This project aims to help service people voice deep, repressed, traumatized parts of their lives. These psychological blocks are brought out into the open, thus significantly reducing their inner challenges. You can see two very different medical-based situations where music is the conduit to transformation.

Are you curious now to explore how immersing yourself in music powers up your brain and shows brain plasticity at work again? A great way to get going is by listening to more music daily, whether relaxing at home, with your favourite tracks swirling around, or walking the dog during the day. But the best and ultimate immersion is attending a live performance of your choice, which could be Orchestral, Rock, Musical theatre, Ballet, Opera or Jazz. They are all different styles of music, so trust your instincts. During these experiences, there can be an energetic connection between yourself, the performers and the music.

It's similar to being drawn into a beautiful piece of art that beckons you and makes you stop to engage. Music has a pull that reminds us of our inner desires to let go, dance, sing and be happy as if we are on stage performing!

I'd like to introduce a Metaphor that quickly shows Musical transformation. I call it the Superpower of Music. Imagine driving along a familiar highway. Suddenly, the traffic slows to a stop. You can't move and see masses of cars ahead in the same predicament. You turn your head, and to the side, there's a winding road leading off this highway never seen before. Maybe you've been driving on automatic? Anyway, it's time to get off the highway onto this road. And WOW, suddenly, a new vista opens up. One that resembles the story of **"The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe"**. You have opened a locked door that reveals an intoxicating vista.

One of potential, new directions, inspiring scenery, and more. It was time to move off a familiar path in your (Brain/Mindset) and let music open up new neural directions towards inspired solutions and answers to stuck challenges. Many times, a solution appears without much effort. And here is a strong story to elaborate on.

Several years ago, I headed The Australian Ballet Business Team, which was responsible for millions of dollars worth of Sponsorship. CEOs of major companies enjoyed coming along to performances. One day, I was astounded when the CEO of the company, which was the Major Sponsor, said to me in a quiet voice that "he had just solved a massive problem that had been challenging him for weeks. And it happened during a ballet performance". Not in his office, but when he was relaxed and away from the situation.

The solution literally popped into his head! He said he felt relieved, less stressed and a little unsure of "how and why" this had happened; I'd had been a professional Flautist, so I quickly told him that he had joined the club of individuals who use music to transform their lives, challenges especially.

Here's a quick way to experience the Power of Music. Listen to a short piece of your favourite music when you are tired, exhausted, or stressed. No more than 5 minutes. When the music finishes, remember how you felt at the start, so how do you now feel now? Less stressed, peaceful, perhaps?



www.creatingcores.co

Fall into Somatics

The Body Talks

"My body knows," I shared in response to a colleague who had asked what my tagline would be if we were part of a therapist reality show. A chorus of agreement from himself and the other psychotherapists we were gathered with followed, because among them, I am known for my knowledge and passion for the integration of somatics in therapeutic practice.

What is Somatics?

The word somatic is defined as that which relates to the soma or the body. In a therapeutic context, somatics refers to body-oriented forms of therapy that look at the mind-body connection. Today, it is a multidisciplinary field with increasing substantiated research; however, it's important to acknowledge through a decolonizing lens that many somatic therapies are rooted in ancient embodiment practices, which many cultures around the world have engaged in for centuries.

Our bodies are a valuable source of information. Somatic modalities allow us to access this information while safely processing emotions and traumatic experiences. The process itself always reminds me of alchemy, as there is an element that resonates as transmutation in terms of somatic work's ability to transform our embodied experience.

Somatic Prompt for the Fall Season

We can begin to explore somatics this season by tracking our internal landscape as we shift externally from Summer to Fall.

What do you notice during this transition? Do you feel energized by the cooler weather? Does it feel like part of you shuts down or turns inward as the hours of daylight decrease? Once we tune into our internal landscape, we can explore what might feel supportive to meet these arising needs. Perhaps it's sitting near a window to soak up more natural light, or like myself, indulging in a warm, sensory-rich bath to soothe the nervous system. Tuning into our bodies and sensations can serve as a foundation for this exploration.

Engaging in this practice offers an opportunity to become more attuned to the different ways in which our bodies communicate with us, and is just the beginning of our ability to connect more deeply to ourselves with somatics.

By Justine Allen

Justine Allen is a Relational and Somatic Dance/Movement Therapist located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. As an integrative practitioner, she engages talk therapy and cognitive approaches with psycho-spirituality, expressive arts and somatic modalities for a holistic approach.

Outside of her practice, she facilitates movement sessions through the National Centre for Dance Therapy (NCDT) for Connected North, an organization geared towards fostering student engagement and enhanced education outcomes in remote Indigenous communities. She is also a Board member for Wonderfully Made, a youth empowerment initiative, and has served as an elected Board member for the Dance Movement Therapy Association of Canada (DMTAC).



How to feel safe in your body

By Carola Goedeke

One of the most fundamental human needs is the sense of security. To guarantee this essential requirement, it is necessary to comprehend the human body as a complex system and an intelligent natural- network of cohesive biophysical and biochemical components. Especially in a world that is becoming increasingly artificial, it is essential to reconnect with one's natural balanced state as much as possible.

Living safely within its own natural network is inherently about reestablishing equilibrium. It is essential to restore balance at every level, from the smallest particle to the outermost component of the human body.

The following biohacking and self-love strategies are designed to help you cultivate a sense of safety within yourself and your body.

Become an inner networker and alchemist.

1. Protect your cells

Humans respond to their environment on many levels through various senses, ensuring their survival and well-being by enabling them to adapt. Sometimes, the body needs conscious input and support in new environments or stressful situations. Support your body's microcosm on a cellular level by taking electrolytes. Their positive and negative charges allow the body to return to homeostasis easily. To protect your cells from cellular stress, provide your body with antioxidant nutrients such as astaxanthin. It helps your body become more resilient and safer.

2. Stabilize your blood sugar

Blood sugar levels are linked to the adrenal glands, which regulate resilience by producing the appropriate stress hormones and promoting a stable emotional state. Therefore, it is important to maintain stable blood glucose levels for as long as possible. This can be achieved by having a warm porridge in the morning and eating regularly. Avoid sugar, alcohol, and caffeine. Feeling physically balanced contributes to feeling safe.

3. Regulate your nervous system

Your vagus nerve, the data network of your body, runs directly from your brain to the left and right sides through your stomach and into your gut, helping you regulate your nervous system and regeneration. Use meditation to fade out external triggers, such as noises, lights, and other people's energies, before or after going to crowded places. Massage your vagus nerve on your neck's left or right side while turning to the opposite side. This can reduce anxiety and increase resilience to stress, fostering a sense of inner calm and safety.

4. Balance your microbiome and emotions

The microbiome comprises approximately 2-3 kg of gut bacteria, regulates the digestive and immune systems, and is directly linked to the brain. It is recommended to support this inner network component by utilizing lactic acid bacteria. This ensures the production of the happiness hormone serotonin in the small intestine, which plays a pivotal role in regulating mood and behavior. Moreover, you can stabilize your inner network by releasing negative emotions such as anxiety or panic

that occur in certain situations. Find out what is programmed in your subconscious mind and release it through energetic tools and affirmations to let emotional blockages and negative beliefs go.

5. Become the natural network

Before going into a stressful situation, walk barefoot. While doing this, your body, which is made from 70% of water, can be charged with negative electrons. This reduces body inflammation and makes you feel calmer.

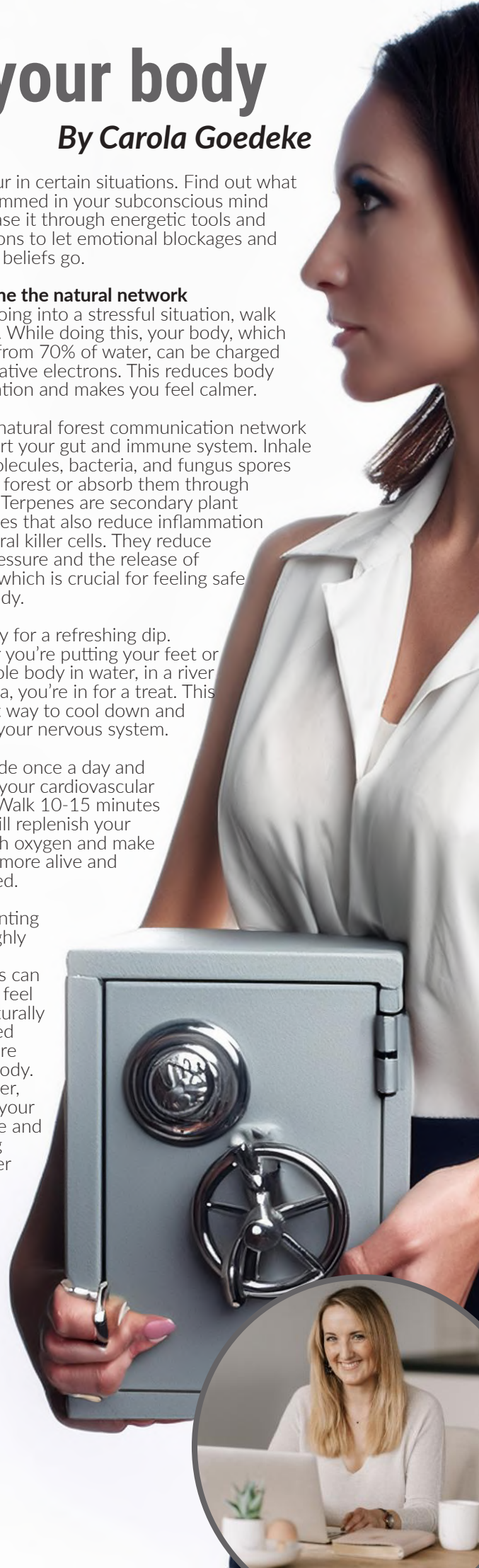
Use the natural forest communication network to support your gut and immune system. Inhale macromolecules, bacteria, and fungus spores from the forest or absorb them through the skin. Terpenes are secondary plant substances that also reduce inflammation and natural killer cells. They reduce blood pressure and the release of cortisol, which is crucial for feeling safe in the body.

Get ready for a refreshing dip. Whether you're putting your feet or your whole body in water, in a river or the sea, you're in for a treat. This is a great way to cool down and support your nervous system.

Go outside once a day and exercise your cardiovascular system. Walk 10-15 minutes fast. It will replenish your body with oxygen and make you feel more alive and connected.

Implementing these highly alchemic strategies can help you feel more naturally connected and secure in your body. Remember, going at your own pace and following your inner network needs is key.

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3rd Eye Opening

“Who looks outside dreams, who looks inside awakens”

The Third Eye, a mystical energy centre of intuition and insight, resides on the forehead. According to Hinduism and Buddhism, it is a gateway to the soul and higher consciousness. When the veil of illusion falls off the third eye, your intuition comes online, and you get access to your soul's wisdom. It is a unique experience, sometimes caused by traumatic events.

In the spring of 2008, I couldn't pinpoint what wasn't right in my life. It felt like everything came crashing down. My thoughts and emotions were running on a loop, taking me on a never-ending roller-coaster ride with no escape or relief. I was desperate to find help to get me out of the prison of my own mind whilst waiting for my talk therapy to commence, as I was diagnosed with depression. I felt like I reached a dead end.

Amidst a whirlwind of emotions and struggles, I embarked on a quest for solace. I came across a website that led me to the discovery of angels as energy beings and the spiritual concept of the Universe.

Out of the Blue, I was presented with two choices: to keep relying on knowledge and the outside world or to explore this inner wisdom I suddenly had access to.

A chance encounter with angel oracle cards marked the beginning of a transformative journey of spiritual awakening, pushing me towards exploring energy healing. It only made sense later when it turned out this was my mission. Although I wasn't aware of my 3rd Eye-opening at the time, I paid more attention to nudges and signs from then on.

Sixteen years later, I am fully aware that the third eye-opening is walking through a portal to recognise our true nature, our magical soul self, and slowly but surely shifting from the human perspective to the soul's perspective.

By Eva Maria Hunt

www.spiritual-wonders.com



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How To Activate Your Creative Flow In All Areas of Life

Manifest Your Best Life in 5 Simple Steps

Activating your creative powers instantly upgrades your quality of life and allows new energetic exchanges. Everyone has a different and unique essence and being. Every human is born with creative powers and capacities to manifest their dreams in alignment with their higher self.

Are you afraid to leap?

Shifting from a reactive to a creative mindset and energetic state is possible and is a unique process of awakening oneself. When you create, you tap into your imagination, higher self, and the celestial realms of thought potentials. This can be done in meditation, in a moment of “zoning out”, in a relaxed state. When you manifest your dreams, desires, goals, etc., you switch from autopilot to driver. You consciously choose to live in alignment with your intuition while using logic to move and build. It's a mix of feeling and thought—inner knowing.

You were born with an imagination and creativity. Walt Disney said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” It's critical to visualize or see what you want to experience. Your subconscious mind thinks in images, not in words. Your sacral chakra, associated with the color orange, is your center of creativity, sensuality, and pleasure. To create beauty, you must feel that vibration or frequency of beauty. Then, you can integrate that energy to embody it in your everyday life.

1. Discerning between the thinking and feeling mind or the analytical and intuitive brain centers of perception and understanding takes time and patience based on each individual. Your brain's right and left hemispheres are responsible for different areas of cognition and skills. The right side of your brain is your creative side. The left side is the analytical side. Hemisync is a unique state where the brain processes waves in harmony on both sides, resulting in altered states of awareness and consciousness. You may begin exploring different brain wave frequencies via meditation. Transcendental meditation is non-denominational. There are many different forms and schools of meditation. You may want to explore on your own to find out what's best for you and your path.



2. Diving into the senses brings vitality and romance to your life instantly. Enjoying the aroma of freshly ground coffee beans or savoring the steam from a cup of tea, your life experience is an opportunity to create your peace of heaven on Earth. By setting an intention to live more mindfully, you might begin to notice yourself wanting to change or shift things in your life, environment, or inner landscape. The brink of change is discomfort and mental anguish, most often in life. Humans are still evolving to a level of consciousness where change is welcomed and accepted easily and seamlessly. Thought paradigms must shift before the actions and the reality shift.

3. Taking time to rest, reflect, and review your life and yourself is an excellent way to heal the past and breathe new life into new timelines that spark your creativity and imagination. You can use what you've already experienced as your muse. You are your muse. When you look at yourself and your life, what are the things you've experienced holistically, regardless of whether they were perceived as good or bad? Good and bad are binary opposites but are two sides of the same coin. Shame, guilt, worry, and doubt can clog our creative centers - our hearts, minds, and roots. Trauma also gets stored in the body - in the hips. Everything you need is already within yourself. It's a process of unlocking, unblocking, and allowing you to heal at your own unique pace. Good things take time sometimes.



4. Get visual and spiritual! See with all of your eyes. Your physical and your mind's eye. Your intuitive or perceptive eye can sense and discern things from another on a subtle level. You are intelligent. You are important. You are human. We are all constantly learning and evolving. True growth and creativity come from fertile soil and strong foundations. Give yourself time to unfold naturally. There's no use in rushing the process. Organic intelligence has its own innate wisdom. Some may call it magic!

become electrically charged and regain your natural vitality, energy, and zest. You are capable of transformation and amazing things.

5. Let go of the weight. When you clear, purge, and detox, you create space and lightness. You change the quality of the air. When you can heal trauma, forgive, and move on, you



Lauren West Coaching

The Extraordinary Life of ADHD

ADHD isn't what people often assume it to be. We're misled and muddled by stigmatized views, misguided by deficit-based understanding models. When you think of ADHD, I imagine the first images conjured still depict disruptive young boys or daydreamy girls.

What if I told you it's far more complex and exponentially more exciting?

Whilst I don't want to minimize the very real challenges that ADHD can impose on one's life, such as differences in executive functioning capacity, emotional dysregulation and huge difficulties navigating workplaces and relationships, all of which I have personally suffered devastating consequences with, I want to highlight that it's not all doom and disorder.

Many of us lack awareness of neurodivergence's duality. Herein lies a treasure trove to be unlocked, with vast possibilities stretching to every domain.

You see, ADHD has both broken me and rebuilt me anew. It's threaded throughout every fibre of

my being as a neurodivergent person, and now that I've learnt to embrace and harness it, I wouldn't change it for the world. I attribute my struggles, strengths and achievements to it. One of the mistakes I see time and again when I'm working with organizations is that they tend to label ADHD as a detriment rather than a difference and, in doing so, miss out on the multiple ways that truly neuro-inclusive practice could benefit them.

If we reframe our understanding of ADHD, we can expect truly extraordinary outcomes. Here are just a few examples of remarkable ADHD-related strengths:

Creative problem-solving skills due to the different ways in which we can process information. Spontaneity and adaptability due to the variations in our nervous systems, executive functioning and neurotransmitting chemicals such as dopamine. High levels of resilience developed from many years of navigating a world that forgot to design us into it.

By implementing appropriate support and creating psychologically safe spaces, we embrace the exponential talents and strengths of a diverse cognitive kaleidoscope for one of the most fulfilling and rewarding investments yet.

BY BETH THOMAS



www.neuroinclusivelink.co.uk

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Finding Wisdom In the Temporary Elements Of Life

In Autumn, the seeds we planted in the Spring have grown and are ready for harvest, and the leaves that served their purpose drop. The cycle then shifts into winter, where we feel the cold, the sun hidden behind the clouds, and the evening darkness comes early. Spring brings back the sunshine, and the soil is nourished and ready for planting new seeds. In summer, the sun's light shines longer, the fauna's and flora's colors bright as the days draw out into the warm and starry nights.

Life, like nature's cycles, is inherently transient. Seasons change, flowers bloom and wither, and time marches forward without pause. Understanding and accepting this impermanence unlocks a great reservoir of wisdom, and we can reap the rewards of appreciation for the fleeting moments that make up our existence.

Our world is filled with constant distractions and ever-changing circumstances. It's easy for us to lose sight of the beauty and wisdom found in the present moments of our lives, and this can slowly diminish our wonder.



When we allow ourselves to be fully present in the now, we open ourselves up to a world of possibilities and insights that would otherwise pass us unnoticed. The laughter of a loved one, the warmth of the sun on our skin, and the gentle rustle of leaves in the wind are the gems of existence that too often go unappreciated yet hold the key to our fulfillment.

Recognizing the parallels between human life and the rhythms of nature, we begin to see the interconnectedness of all living beings and the inherent beauty in the ebb and flow of existence. As the seasons transition seamlessly from one to the next, so must we learn to navigate the inevitable changes and challenges that come our way with grace and resilience.

It is during these moments of transition and uncertainty that our true strength and character are revealed. Like a tree weathering a fierce storm, we can stand tall in the face of adversity, drawing upon our inner reserves of courage and determination to see us through the toughest times.

Embodying a mindset of resilience means acknowledging that life's challenges are not meant to break us but to shape us into stronger, more resilient individuals. By cultivating gratitude for the joys and hardships that come our way, we can glean valuable insights and lessons that contribute to our personal growth and evolution.



Through self-reflection and introspection, we can better understand ourselves and our place in the world. In these moments of quiet contemplation, we uncover hidden truths and revelations about our innermost desires, fears, and aspirations.

As we journey through life's ever-changing landscape, let us remember to pause, breathe, and appreciate the fleeting beauty of the present moment. Let us embrace the temporary elements of our existence with an open heart and a curious mind, knowing that each experience, whether joyful or challenging, is a stepping stone to self-discovery and enlightenment.

I invite you to reflect on the profound wisdom found in life's transience and embrace each moment with a sense of wonder and gratitude. May you walk this journey with an open heart and a resilient spirit, knowing that the lessons you learn along the way are invaluable treasures that will guide you toward a life filled with purpose, passion, and fulfillment.



As the seasons change and the winds of change blow through your life, may you find solace in the knowledge that you are a brave and resilient soul capable of weathering any storm that comes your way.

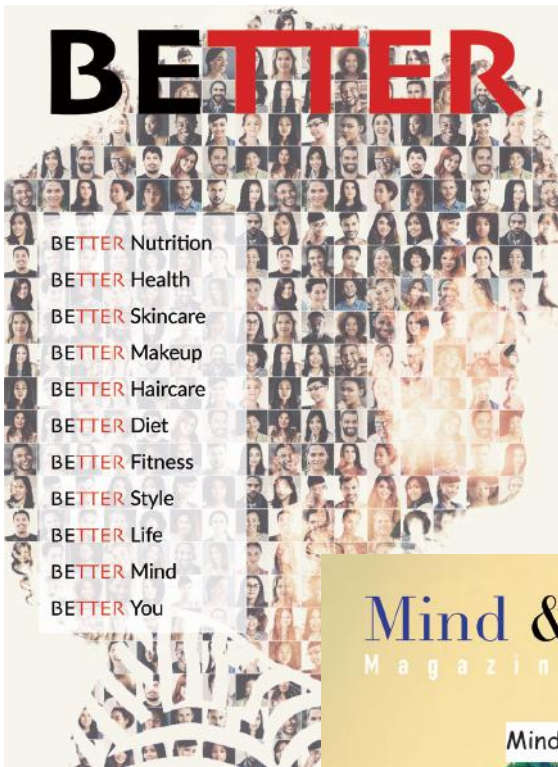
Embrace the temporary elements of life, for within them lies the greatest lessons and the most profound truths of our existence. Our lives and the Universe are interconnected and flow in cycles. Each moment affects our health and wellness and the overall health and well-being of the earth, the Universe, and all its species.

By Tania Abouzaki



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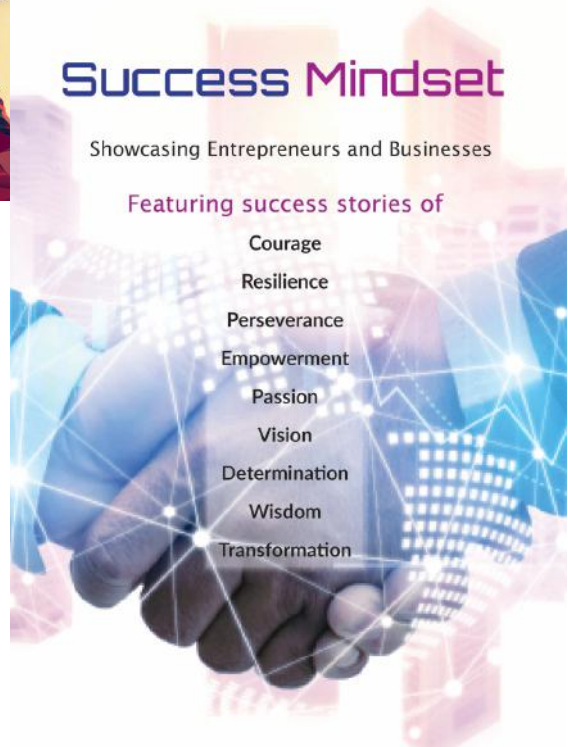


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The Imperative of Stillness

Enhancing Clarity and Wellbeing in the modern world and professionally.

Finding moments of stillness these days can seem impossible.

Everything seems so fast-paced. Gone are the days when we had to wait patiently for most things. Now, with everything being so accessible, often at the touch of a button, we have become familiar with our lives being rushed.

Embracing stillness is not a luxury but a necessity for enhancing clarity and wellbeing. Throughout my life, I have had various corporate roles, each demanding and each pulling me in multiple directions. Today, I run my own spiritual business, and this shift has illuminated the profound impact that stillness can have on our daily lives, regardless of our circumstances.

My life was a whirlwind of deadlines, meetings, and constant connectivity for many years. With its relentless pace, the corporate world often left little room for pause. Each job came with its own set of challenges, requiring quick thinking and even quicker actions. While I thrived on the adrenaline and the sense of accomplishment, I could never quite shake off an underlying current of stress and fatigue. The constant pressure to perform and deliver often led to burnout, leaving me yearning for a respite that never seemed to come.

The turning point came when I decided to follow my passion and start my own spiritual business. This transition was not just a career change; it was a transformation in how I approached life. The nature of my work now requires a deeper connection with myself and others, having a space where stillness is not only welcomed but essential. Running a spiritual business has taught me the invaluable lesson that true productivity and fulfillment are rooted in moments of quiet reflection and stillness. Through my journey, I have learned that stillness is a powerful tool that can enhance clarity and wellbeing, no matter where you find yourself. Here's how:

Quieting the Mind

Stillness allows us to quiet the constant chatter in our minds. In moments of silence, we can sift through the noise and find clarity. This is crucial in both personal and professional settings. For example, in my corporate days, taking even a few minutes to sit in stillness before a big meeting would often bring forth clearer insights and solutions. The ability to pause and reflect can make the difference between a reactive decision and a thoughtful, strategic one.

Heightened Awareness

When we allow ourselves to be still, our awareness sharpens. We become more attuned to our surroundings and our inner thoughts. This heightened awareness can lead to better decision-making and a more profound understanding of our goals and values. In my spiritual practice, this awareness is the cornerstone of meaningful interactions with clients and the development of services that truly resonate with their needs.

Creative Solutions

Stillness fosters creativity. In moments of quiet, our minds are free to explore new ideas and perspectives. This was particularly evident when I was transitioning to my spiritual business. The clarity that came from stillness helped me develop innovative ways to connect with clients and grow my practice. Creativity often thrives in the spaces between actions, in the quiet moments where the mind is free to wander and

One of the most immediate benefits of stillness is stress reduction. We allow our bodies and minds to reset by taking time to pause. I struggled with this during my corporate career, but incorporating stillness into my routine has significantly improved my overall stress levels. The act of being still, even for a short period, can lower cortisol levels and bring about a sense of calm and balance. Stillness helps us connect with our emotions in a non-judgmental way. It provides the space to process feelings and find balance. This emotional equilibrium is vital for maintaining healthy relationships and a positive outlook on life.





In my spiritual practice, encouraging clients to embrace stillness has led to remarkable transformations in their emotional wellbeing, helping them navigate life's challenges with greater resilience. Numerous studies have shown that practices involving stillness, such as meditation and mindfulness, can lead to better physical health. These benefits include lower blood pressure, improved sleep, and a stronger immune system. Personally, I have experienced these benefits firsthand, and witnessing similar improvements in my clients reinforces the importance of integrating stillness into daily life.

A few minutes of meditation each day can make a significant difference. Find a quiet space, focus on your breath, and let your thoughts come and go without attachment. This practice can be done anywhere, anytime, making it an accessible way to incorporate stillness into your routine. There are plenty of apps to help with this. I often have clients say they find meditation difficult as they start to think of things like their shopping halfway through. That's the whole point; we begin to catch ourselves in the thought. We recognise when we are doing it; by recognising it, we are able to change it. Eventually, it becomes easier.

During the day, take short breaks to practice mindfulness. This could be as simple as closing your eyes, taking deep breaths, or paying attention to your surroundings. These brief moments of stillness can reset your mind and provide clarity amidst a busy schedule. Set aside time to disconnect from technology. This could be during meals, before bed, or a nature walk. Allow yourself to be present in the moment. Disconnecting from the constant barrage of information and stimuli allows your mind to rest and recharge.

Writing down your thoughts and feelings can be a powerful way to cultivate stillness. It helps to clear your mind and provides insights into your inner world. Journaling can be particularly helpful in processing emotions and gaining clarity on complex issues. This particular practice is one I credit for helping me transition from stress to reflection. I journaled daily and saw a fast improvement. I was able to see that many of my anxious thoughts didn't actually come to fruition.

Spending time in nature is also a natural way to embrace stillness. The tranquillity of natural settings can have a calming effect on the mind and body. Whether it's a walk in the park or a hike in the mountains, nature provides a perfect backdrop for stillness and reflection. When I worked in an office, I started prioritising stepping out of the building, taking a quick walk, and changing the scenery.

Simple breathing exercises can induce a state of stillness and calm. Techniques such as deep breathing or box breathing can be practiced anywhere and provide immediate benefits in reducing stress and enhancing focus. One of my jobs was pressured with lots of responsibility. When I had a stressful day, taking three deep breaths at my desk immediately helped. Simple but helpful.

Embracing stillness has transformed my life, providing me with the clarity and wellbeing needed to navigate both the demands of corporate roles and the rewarding path of running my own spiritual business. Regardless of your circumstances, integrating moments of stillness into your daily routine can lead to profound improvements in both mental clarity and overall wellbeing. In a world that constantly pushes us to move faster, taking the time to be still and slow down might just be the most powerful step towards a healthier, more fulfilling and calmer life.

By Lisa Andrews

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The path of bravery is a thrilling adventure full of unknowns and surprises.

Believing in something through self-repetition is an act of bravery. Keep telling yourself positive stories, even if you can't see the positivity now.

Your subconscious mind will believe whatever you feed it. The remote control is in your hands. It is possible to mold and reposition your mind to be in your favor. Picture a potter using a wheel to create a mug. The potter's wheel represents the stories you tell yourself, while the clay symbolizes your mind. By consistently telling yourself the right stories, you can mould that lump of clay into a usable mug. The clay may never form into a mug if you constantly tell yourself negative stories. The starting point might deviate from its intended purpose as a mug.

Taking risks is a constant part of our lives. Every morning, leaving home involves a certain level of danger. It's unclear if you'll return by train or stroll down

the street. We take risks without even realizing it. When we encounter something unfamiliar, we perceive it as a threat. Taking a tremendous risk is like stepping out of your home in the morning—it can have positive or negative outcomes.

Opening a business after leaving your nine-to-five job takes courage, even though the outcome is unknown. To me, having courage means being willing to take risks. Bravery in life lies in taking risks, whether familiar or unfamiliar. The false narratives we have ingrained in ourselves cloud our perception of courage. If someone tries to share a story to uplift us, we quickly shut them down to maintain our ignorance. We're so comfortable in our own vomit that we don't want anyone to tell us otherwise.

The negative narratives I experienced as a child have stayed with me,

shaping my life and hindering my self-love. Although the woman praised my appearance on the train, I couldn't accept it because the bullies' perception of me had already affected my subconscious. It took me a long time to shape the mug with my pottery wheel. On certain days, I struggled to believe in my beauty and charm, but I persevered in telling myself a particular narrative. The process of creating the mug to my liking was anything but simple, even though it took me a long time.

The script given to me by the woman on the train in Edmonton, Alberta, stating, "You are beautiful and gorgeous," ignited a transformative shift in my mindset about myself, life, and my environment. Life doesn't always turn out how you expect. Moving to Canada helped me change my thinking and mindset, allowing me to grow into my true self. The affirmation I've been saying has transformed my life for the better. We're all distinct and extraordinary in our own ways. If you are reading this, tell yourself you are beautiful and gorgeous..

By Cleanne Johnson

www.cleannejohnson.com



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