

Mind & Thought

Issue 3

MAGAZINE



JUSTINE
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Founder of The Embodied Path



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FROM THE EDITOR

It's said we have tens of thousands of thoughts each day, some say as many as 70,000. Most come and go unnoticed, fragments of memory, worry, imagination, or repetition. If every thought demanded our full attention, we'd never get out of bed, let alone function in a noisy, demanding world.

Thankfully, the mind has a filter. And yet, not everything it lets through is worth keeping.

Awareness of thought, the ability to step back and witness what arises in the mind is a quiet but radical act. It's how we begin to notice which thoughts are useful, which are habitual noise, and which ones quietly shape how we see ourselves and the world around us.

Not all thoughts deserve the same weight. Some are merely echoes of yesterday. Some are helpful guides. Others are just static. Choosing which ones to follow is less about control and more about clarity, about watching without judgment and responding with intention.

To think is human. To notice that we are thinking? That's the beginning of something deeper.

Enjoy your Summer!



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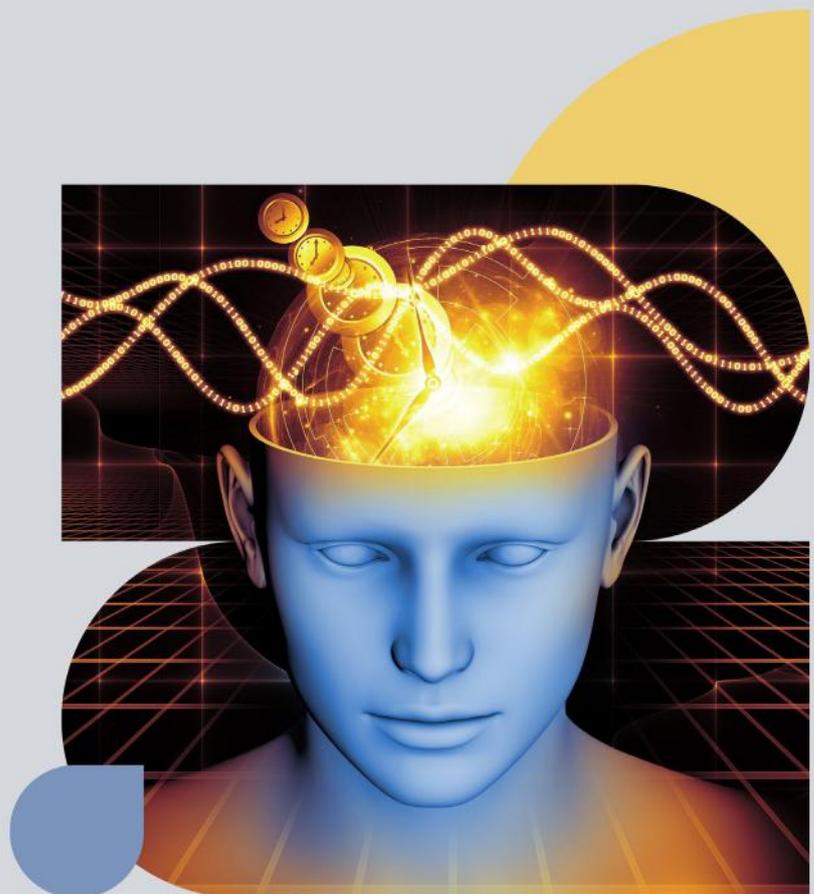
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Justine Allen is a Toronto-based therapist who embodies the integration of science and soul. As a Registered Psychotherapist (RP), Dance/Movement Psychotherapist (DMT-P), and Certified Reiki Master Practitioner, she integrates talk therapy, psycho-spiritual exploration, and somatic (body-oriented) modalities to support a holistic approach to healing—one that honours the complex interplay between mind, body, and spirit, and invites lasting transformation.

Beyond her private practice, Justine brings her passion for movement, children, and play to her work with the National Centre for Dance Therapy (NCDT) for Connected North—an initiative supporting Indigenous youth in remote communities through creative expression and embodiment. She has also collaborated with organizations such as Black Women in Motion (BWIM), Peel Children's Aid Society (CAS), Sexual Assault Centre Kingston (SAC), and the Abiona Centre for Infant & Early Mental Health.

As an active member of a therapist collective, Justine designs and facilitates workshops, professional training sessions, and community discussions related to mental health across diverse sectors. She is currently a member of the Board of Wonderfully Made, a youth empowerment initiative, and previously held several positions, including an elected Board member of the Dance Movement Therapy Association of Canada (DMTAC).

With a presence that is both grounded and intuitive, Justine invites others into a healing process that honors the depth and complexity of each individual—supporting the return to a more integrated and connected sense of self.

Imagine a young girl huddled in the corner of her classroom, sitting on the floor with her back against the wall. Her knees are pulled tightly to her chest, arms wrapped protectively around them. Her posture is curled inward, forming the shape of a ball. Every so often, she lifts her head to quietly scan the room as her classmates play around her. What comes up for you as you picture this scene? Does anything about her body language or movement tell you something about how she might have been feeling at that moment?



If you guessed that she was feeling afraid or overwhelmed, you would be right. And yes, in case you were wondering, that little girl was me. And in that moment, the shyness and social anxiety I often experienced were being expressed not through words but somatically, through my body and movement.

A few years later, I was enrolled in dance with the hope that it would help me realize and express my potential. It quickly became a foundation of my psychosocial and physical development, and my passion for dance deepened with each passing year. Eventually, I entered the competitive field, where I had the opportunity to compete across North America and join both a Regional Arts Dance Program and Worlds Prep Team—until a major injury brought me to a standstill.

During my recovery, which included surgery, a year and a half of physical therapy, and various mobility aids, I developed a deeper appreciation for dance. I didn't really understand how meaningful it was to me until it was gone. I'll never forget my high school dance teacher, Ms. Victoria Slager, gently reminding me that I could still dance, even if only within my spirit. Looking back, I realize she was my first introduction to a more therapeutic relationship with dance, a stark contrast to the rigorous discipline I was originally trained in.

When I was able to dance again, I approached movement with a newfound sense of gratitude, heart and soul. Over the years that followed (whether joining the university dance team, teaching through my post-secondary years, or performing on various stages), I always found my way back to dance, each time with a richer connection to both my body and my spirit. But as my connection to dance deepened, I also began to feel the wear and tear on my body.

I often joke that a dancer's body ages in dog years, because the aches, pains, and the snap, crackle, and pop of joints are, unfortunately, pretty normal for many of us from a young age. Not long after my final year on the university dance team, I began to wonder if my acrobatic past was catching up to me, when what started as occasional upper back tension gradually evolved into persistent, and at times, debilitating pain.

Four years, a general practitioner, chiropractor, acupuncturist, multiple physiotherapists—and more than a little medical gaslighting—later, I was still living with chronic pain. Then, I consulted with an osteopath who asked me a trauma-related question that changed everything.

That single question prompted me to reflect on the connection between the mind and body in a way I never had before. As soon as

I got home, I opened my laptop and began researching trauma and the body. Eventually, I landed on a familiar page: the Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT) program I had discovered years earlier.

Back then, someone had suggested I might be interested in learning about this therapeutic modality—maybe even becoming a practitioner. It hadn't fully landed with me at the time, but looking back, it felt as though the idea took a quiet seat in the back of my mind, patiently waiting for me to return to it.

It might sound surprising, considering my longstanding romance with dance and movement, but my plan had actually been to pursue a Social Work and Law degree. I was, in fact, studying for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) when I stumbled back onto this Dance/Movement Therapy path. And right on time, because now I was having a big 'aha' moment. I had engaged in traditional talk therapy in the past, and while it was helpful to a degree, I had always sensed something was missing when it came to true integration. I now realized that the missing link was the body. In therapeutic terms, this is known as somatic therapy, an approach that incorporates the body (soma) as an essential part of healing—recognizing that emotions, memories, and trauma are stored not just in the mind but also in the body.



Many people seek somatic therapy (or are recommended alongside talk therapy) if they've reached a plateau in their healing or become aware of feeling disconnected from their bodies and emotions. This might show up as a sense of dissonance between what they know and what they feel or in the aftermath of trauma, which is often stored as a sensory experience in the body. In these cases, including the body becomes essential.

It holds a wealth of information, just in its own language. Tightness in the throat, fogginess in the head, a racing heart, or feeling numb are just a few examples of the ways the body communicates. And in somatic therapy, the body is not only a source of information to explore but also a powerful mode of intervention.

The process itself always reminds me of alchemy—something about the element of transmutation deeply resonates with somatic work's unique ability to support internal shifts and transform our embodied experience. It invites us to befriend the body and the nervous system, recognizing that there is always a purpose behind every human behaviour. All parts of us—even the ones that feel conflicted, reactive, or self-sabotaging—are ultimately working toward safety and equilibrium.

Integration and partnership also come to mind, as somatic work offers an opportunity to develop a new relationship with the body: one that reflects collaboration rather than the sense that mind and body are at odds. It becomes a practice of working with, rather than against ourselves.

For myself, I had coped with various physical and

emotional challenges—things like anxiety, chronic stress, and even a gastrointestinal disorder—but I hadn't fully understood how interconnected my experiences truly were or how they reflected a nervous system shaped by the cumulative impact of chronic and traumatic stress. That day marked a turning point in my understanding of the significance of an embodied approach to healing. I decided to register to audition for the only DMT program in Canada, beginning my journey into the field of psychotherapy. The following year, I became a student of both Dance/Movement Therapy and Relational Psychotherapy. And what a journey it was. No blood that I recall, but plenty of sweat—and maybe a few tears.

Each program was rigorous not only for its academic demands but also for the depth of personal transformation it asks of its students. By integrating theory with weekly group process, personal therapy, practice therapy, and weekend intensives, the learning goes far beyond intellectual understanding. Students are invited to become the instruments of their work—engaging in deep introspection, emotional vulnerability, and embodied awareness to cultivate the presence, self-awareness, and relational depth that is essential to the therapeutic process. It often surfaces personal history, traumas, relational patterns, and long-held beliefs, requiring an open and honest exploration of one's own wounds, values, and blind spots.

It can be mentally and emotionally demanding, as it asks you to hold space for these complexities, sit with uncertainty, and stay present to both your own experience and that of others. In other words, this kind of training doesn't just teach the science of psychotherapy but also cultivates the art of it: how to be with and feel with another person, wherever they are, in their depth and complexity—with presence, attunement, and care, without losing oneself. It stretched me in ways that were, at times, messy and emotionally taxing but ultimately transformative. I remain deeply grateful for how this training both challenged and equipped me, fostering growth I may not have reached by another path.

It allowed me to get to know myself more deeply and reclaim parts of myself I had once learned to suppress. I learned to hone my intuition and embrace the heightened sensitivity and deep empathy that had often felt like double-edged swords since childhood but that, in truth, had always been gifts. Gifts that now serve me in meaningful ways as a therapist. I can still clearly recall the sense of belonging that emerged as these pieces came together in my practice—a profound recognition that I was exactly where I was meant to be.

I began to notice what neuroscientist Antonio Damasio refers to as "somatic markers"—subtle but powerful bodily sensations that signalled significant moments unfolding in the therapeutic space and guided me toward meaningful interventions. Not by guesswork, but by a refined, intuitive, body-informed awareness—an internal sensing process that helps guide ethical and attuned responses in therapy and are often the moments I've come to trust most.

Tapping into this embodied awareness begins with presence. It asks the therapist to stay grounded, open and curious, listening not just with the mind but with the body—attuned to subtle shifts in energy, emotion, and connection. In other words, somatic work doesn't just involve engaging my clients' bodies as a therapeutic resource; it also requires me to engage my own. It invites me to stay tuned in and to keep returning to the embodied path.

In this blog reflection, I share one of the ways I engage with that path through embodied exploration:



Have you ever experienced self-doubt to the point of feeling frozen, stuck, or stagnant?

The "just do it" mentality doesn't always suffice here, despite the well-intentioned slogan.

A while ago, I found myself in a moment of immobilizing self-doubt (we therapists feel these things, too). Moments later, I stumbled across a newsletter by the beautiful writer Hannah Eko, titled "Self-doubt & the Artist," buried among a flood of emails. The timing was wild! As I began to read, it felt as though her words spoke directly to the deep, pit-like sensation that had formed in my chest—and in feeling seen, that sensation began to soften.

After sharing a note of gratitude, I decided to move with and through the sensations to further shift my embodied experience. So I put my headphones on, pressed shuffle, and no joke... "Believe in Yourself" by Lena Horne began to play. Seriously! I had to laugh out loud with love to the universe for the synchronicities. I let Lena play because, of course, it's Lena. Then I rewound to move with a song that was more attuned to the weight I had sensed earlier, to fully feel and process that emotion—because they all deserve space.

So, I started with a song that often evokes a kind of weighted tenderness within me. Its quality met the immobilizing self-doubt and allowed me to gently begin metabolizing it rather than bypassing it, in which case it likely would have lingered beneath the surface, its needs unmet.

I noticed a heaviness in my movement, too, similar to the resistance you might feel swimming through water. Yet it remained strong, carrying a sense of "working through" something—an emotional weight. I also remember the feeling of strength in my legs, which offered a sense of groundedness as I felt and moved through my emotions.

Gradually, I began to take up more physical space in the room and engaged in different levels with my body, reaching high, medium, and low. My authentic movement was, at a deeper level, expressing a part of me that longed to stop playing small in my everyday life. A release—both physical and emotional—began to unfold through movement.

How apt, then, that a song about freedom soon followed. By this time, I had experienced a shift through movement. There was lightness where there had once been heaviness—in both the quality of my movement and my felt sense—but strength remained. And, a time was had! There was jumping, smiling, and experiencing a genuine sense of freedom through movement.

I'm recognizing now, in real-time, just how powerful that last part (the jumping around and such) really was because it indicates that a nervous system shift had occurred, allowing me to access playfulness. Playfulness, in addition to requiring mobilization, also depends on a felt sense of safety and connection.

Lena then brought us full circle, naturally, as this movement session came to a close.

Take a peek at a small moment of moving from self-doubt to a sense of spaciousness here.

Curious to Keep the Conversation Going?

Whether you'd like to learn more, share reflections, or simply follow along, I'd love to connect:

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WHAT IS IT TO BE A MAN?



What is masculinity, and how is it defined in modern culture? Unfortunately, masculinity still follows past interpretations of what Society States a man should be. Past generations and the current generation still work off the idea that a man should be strong, not show emotion, can deal with anything, has to be a protector, rescuer, successful, and unflappable. This creates a lot of pressure/ stress to live up to these unrealistic expectations, hence the problems men experience with their mental/ emotional well-being.

If society changes its perspective on masculinity and what it means to be a man, a man could be defined as emotionally intelligent, supportive, open, and show vulnerability and insecurities while still feeling confident. I feel that men at present are confused about their role in society. In my opinion, there is a certain level of Fear that comes from this confusion.

How can society change so that current and future generations of men feel different, supported, and heard and that it's okay to ask for help, be vulnerable, and show insecurities?

It's a domino effect.

1. Education in schools - mental health and emotional well-being lessons become part of the curriculum, taught from reception through to leaving school at 18.
2. More funds, infrastructure, resources, and emphasis are put on the importance of mental health in creating a healthier, vibrant, and successful society for both men and women.

Working in therapy over the last four years running my own counselling practice, the things that keep coming up working with all clients, not just men, are our learnt behaviours given to us as children by parents/ caregivers, the social environment we grew up in and society as a whole, and the effect these have negatively on clients mental/ emotional well-being in adulthood. Some people adhere rigidly to learnt behaviours instilled in them in childhood and continue to follow these learnt behaviours throughout their lives, much like pillars or foundations.

The reality is they were given to us as children, and we aren't children anymore. Some of these learnt behaviours don't work for us as adults or in this modern, ever-changing world. As we grow up and, our world expands, and we experience more, some people lose and replace learnt behaviours that no longer work for them. They replace them with behaviours from experiences in life that work more in line with the life they lead now as an adult. Some people don't do this; they get stuck and continue using learnt behaviours from their childhood because they feel safe and familiar.

‘Some of these learnt behaviours don’t work for us as adults or in this modern, ever-changing world.’

No one is in control of our choices other than ourselves as adults. We Are In Control to change things if they are not working for us. However, some people see a problem, a challenge, or a difficult period in their life and feel like it’s a dead end, that they’re stuck, and have to accept the situation they find themselves in, as they don’t feel they can change it.

Others see a challenge, problem, or difficult period in life, and instead of seeing a roadblock, they see a crossroads with options. They have a choice of which direction to take; there is no wrong option because no one else is in charge apart from them. If they make a choice and it doesn’t work out further down the road or changes, they simply come to another Crossroads and have options and choices again.

If we live life from a perspective that a challenge, problem, or difficult situation means there is no way out, feeling stuck and trapped, this can feel scary and have a negative impact on a person’s mental and emotional well-being. But if we know that no one else is in control of what we do other than ourselves, and we have a choice no matter whatever situation we find ourselves in. Imagine how much that would positively impact our mental and emotional well-being.

Books to read related to this article:

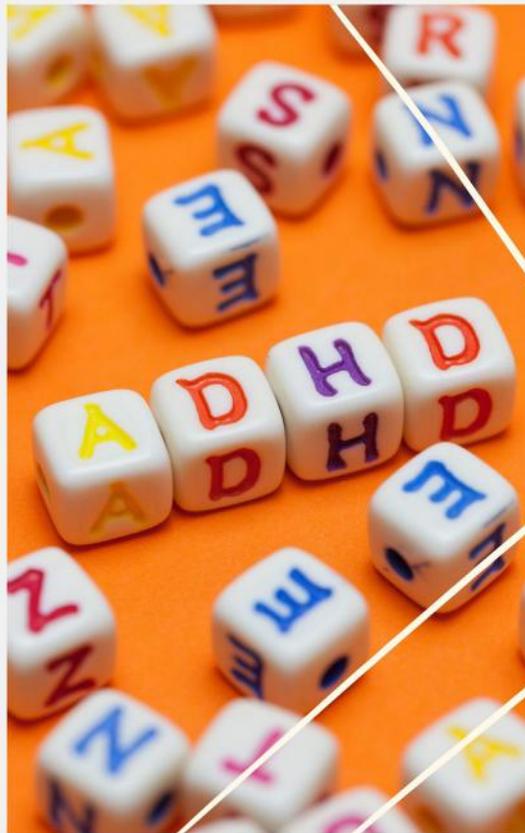
1. *Of Boys and Men* - Richard Reeves
2. *Billy no mates* - Max Dickens
3. *What about men?* - Caitlin Moran

By Keith Roe



ADHD Coach, Career and Life Coach

BY FIONA TIMOTHY



Have you ever found yourself struggling with concentration, focus, procrastination and task initiation?

Maybe you have found yourself watching a movie and then find yourself having to rewind it multiple times, because you realise your mind trailed off and you can't remember what one of the characters said, or if the plot took a sudden turn.

Do you often find yourself struggling to be on time, even with the best of intentions and planning, and still struggle to get out the door on time? Do you find that you underestimate time, how long it takes to organise to go somewhere, or to get a task done? How are you with deadlines? Do you find yourself procrastinating and only being able to get the work done on the day of the deadline, but then can hyperfocus under pressure?

It's fair to say that most people experience one or more of the above at some stage in their lives. However, what if this happens more frequently? Is it a symptom of something else? ADHD has received more coverage in recent years. However, there is still very much a lack of awareness about the condition. Many people who are now in their 40s and 50s have only been diagnosed in recent years. This is because there was no awareness about ADHD when those individuals were in primary or even secondary school.

So why has there been a recent surge in people being diagnosed? As there is more coverage in the media and on social media, people are beginning to recognise that they struggle with ADHD symptoms. Many employees who were working from home during the Covid pandemic realised they were having real issues with concentration, focus and applying themselves to tasks.

Many women are also diagnosed as they experience hormonal changes during Perimenopause, the stage leading up to Menopause, as the decline in the hormone Oestrogen affects cognition, which in turn can heighten and expose ADHD symptoms further. Many years ago, ADHD was considered as something that only affected young boys.

ADHD was considered to relate to hyperactivity only. However, this is not the case, as ADHD has two types: Inattentive and Hyperactive, or Combined Type, which is a combination of both those types.



Many young girls who had Inattentive ADHD would have slipped under the radar during their school years. As someone with Inattentive type, I was one of those people who only got diagnosed as an adult. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a genetic neurodevelopmental condition in which the brain's neurotransmitter chemicals do not work properly. It is characterised by symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, and emotional dysregulation that impact an individual significantly on an everyday basis.

Every person with ADHD has symptoms unique to them. But typically, people with ADHD experience Executive Dysfunction. Execution Function controls everything we do in terms of organisation and planning; behind every decision we make is our Execution Function. Essentially, the prefrontal cortex of the brain, which controls executive functioning, is not structured the same way in people with ADHD, as neurotypical individuals.

This is why people with ADHD struggle with all those elements that require planning, organisation, focus, time management and decision-making. It can also affect impulsivity, and hyperactivity can be displayed not just as being on the go all the time, but also in Inattentive ADHD type individuals as overthinking.

As more people are getting diagnosed now due to the increase in awareness, often people say, "But doesn't everyone have ADHD now?". This is a statement which does not reflect the true reality. Yes, we can all be forgetful or lack focus at times, but not everyone experiences executive dysfunction every day to the extent that it impacts every aspect of your life.

I heard someone recently say that ADHD is "like a TikTok trend", which is not only a misleading statement, but only adds to the stigma for people who are in the process of getting diagnosed or already have ADHD. Even deciding to get diagnosed can be difficult for people. If people are receiving a diagnosis as adults, it can be difficult to accept that you didn't know this your whole life.

However, over time, the new awareness about your condition really helps you to understand it. ADHD Coaching allows individuals to understand their ADHD so that they can manage it better, and find effective strategies and techniques which help to work with the condition rather than against it.

Over the course of my upcoming articles, I will explore in more detail how to understand and work with your ADHD, rather than against it, in all aspects of your life.

If you are someone in the process of being diagnosed, or have a partner, spouse, child, sibling or friend with ADHD, the first crucial step is building your knowledge of the condition. This arms you with more understanding to either help you manage the condition yourself, or support a loved one with ADHD.

Certified ADHD Coach, trained by The ADD Coach Academy (ADDCA), an internationally recognised coach training program.

Email: hello@fionatimothycoaching.com

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS (0-5)



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The early years of a child's life are full of wonder, discovery, and rapid emotional growth. From their very first cry, children aged 0-5 are constantly learning about themselves, the world around them, and how to relate to others. These foundational years lay the groundwork for emotional resilience, self-regulation, and secure relationships throughout life. Importantly, the 0-5 years is also critical to predicting later mental health outcomes.

For parents, supporting a child's emotional development during this stage can be both deeply rewarding and, at times, bewildering. Big feelings are often displayed by young children, and knowing how to respond to tantrums, separation anxiety, or emotional outbursts can feel overwhelming. Becoming a parent doesn't come with a manual, and parents often don't feel they know all the answers. But the good news is – you don't need them! What children need most is a consistent, caring adult alongside them as they grow.

This article will explore the key aspects of emotional development in children aged 0-5 years and offer practical guidance for two common challenges – tantrums and separation anxiety. I aim to equip you with compassionate, evidence-informed strategies that support both you and your child during this important stage of parenting.

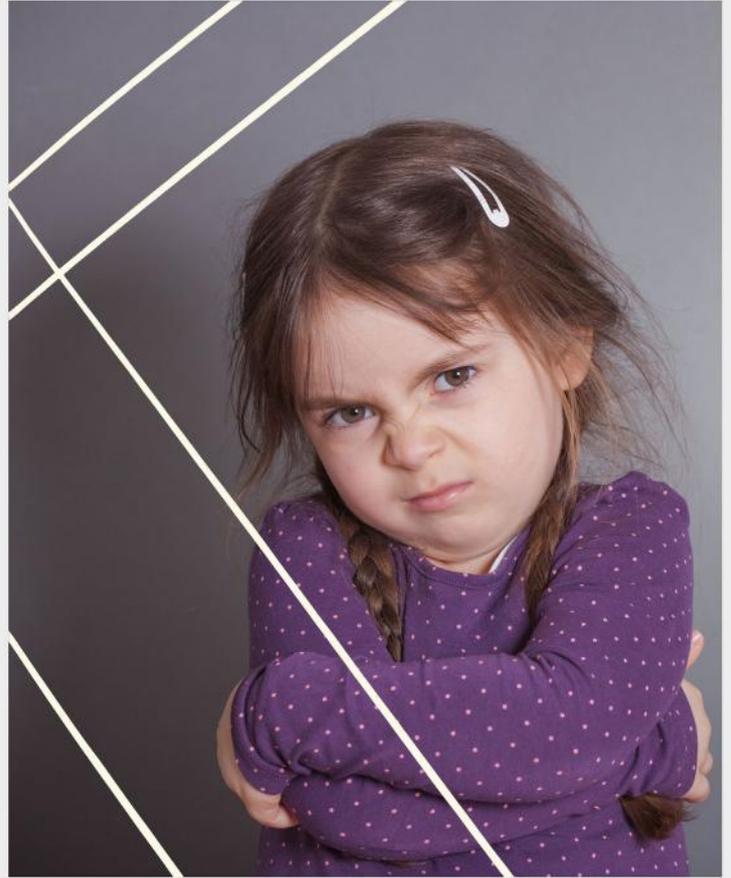
Understanding Emotional Development (0-5 years)

From the day your baby is born, you watch them grow and change in many ways – the outgrowing of an outfit, the babbling, the first few steps. But your baby is also growing in ways which are not so easy to see but are just as important. Emotional development is a process shaped over time by the child's brain development, temperament, environment, and, most importantly, their connection with caregivers. Like with any type of development, all children grow in different ways, but I will highlight some common developmental milestones and needs across the early years.

0-12 months: Building Trust and Emotional Safety

In the early months of life, babies learn the answer to a powerful question: Can I trust that my needs will be met? Babies' emotional development is primarily focused on attachment at this stage. Babies will form a secure attachment if their primary caregivers provide a nurturing environment and are consistently responsive to their baby's needs. The eye contact, feeding when baby is hungry, soothing the cries, the loving responses – these all help a baby feel emotionally safe.

When the primary caregiver does this consistently, the baby learns that the world is safe and they can depend on the relationships they have. Even if you do not 'fix' the problem when your baby cries immediately, just being with them sends them a message of 'You are not alone. I am here.'



1-3 Years: Expressing Feelings and Testing Boundaries

Throughout the toddler years, children begin to experience a wide range of emotions, often in very intense ways. Autonomy emerges, and your child has the strong desire to do things 'by myself'. However, their language and impulse control are limited, and so this can lead to those big emotions exploding out, usually in the form of what we call 'tantrums'.

These tantrums are a normal part of development. This is due to the part of the brain responsible for managing emotions, the prefrontal cortex, not yet being fully developed. As caregivers, you play a crucial role in co-regulation. These toddlers and young children do not yet know how to manage their emotions independently – they cannot identify feelings or know how to cope with them when they arise. They look to you to name their feelings and need your presence to feel safe enough to calm down.

3-5 Years: Developing Emotional Awareness and Social Skills

At this preschool age, children begin to show a greater awareness of their own emotions and those of those around them. They can begin to express how they feel in a basic way, for example, 'I am sad' or 'He's being mean'. Empathy also begins to form.

However, managing difficult feelings, such as anger or disappointment, remains challenging for this age group. It's essential for young children to learn that all feelings are acceptable to have – even the uncomfortable ones – but it's about learning to express these in safe and respectful ways.

Furthermore, it is at this age that wider social interactions become very important for emotional development. Friendships begin to matter more at this age as social-emotional skills such as sharing, turn-taking, and problem-solving start to be practised. These valuable opportunities are further supported when a patient, reflective adult is alongside the child.

Managing Common Emotional Challenges

Tantrums

Tantrums are something ALL parents struggle with in their young children and are a normal part of child development, particularly around the ages of 1-3 years old. Tantrums are intense emotional outbursts, often involving crying, screaming, kicking, or refusing to cooperate. Children of this age are still in the early stage of social, emotional, and language development.

Their brains are still maturing, especially the prefrontal cortex, which, as mentioned before, is responsible for impulse control and emotional regulation. Interestingly, the prefrontal cortex is not fully mature until around 25 years old (meaning that older children can still experience tantrums).

Because of this, young children cannot effectively communicate their needs and feelings, including their desire to do things themselves, and so they can become frustrated. And this is where the tantrum comes in. A tantrum is often the only way a young child knows how to express and manage their feelings, as their brain has not yet developed enough to allow them an alternative way. They rely more on the amygdala (known as the emotional centre of the brain), and this leads to more intense emotional outbursts when frustrated or overwhelmed.

While your child is having a tantrum, you are also experiencing a rollercoaster of emotions with them. Something to remember here is that although tantrums can be challenging to cope with, there is always a reason why your child is having one. These might seem trivial to you, but to them, it is really big and important. Common triggers might include hunger, fatigue, overstimulation, a desire to do things alone, or not getting their own way (to name a few).

Parents may often feel helpless at these times of tantrums, but there are actually strategies that can be used to de-escalate them. The first one I like to talk about is about you. Try to stay calm and regulate your own emotions before responding to your child. This is probably the hardest strategy to implement, but also very important.

If you are also ramped up with emotion and respond to your child in a way which may heighten their emotions, the tantrum will continue. By taking a moment, taking a deep breath, and stepping away to compose yourself, it means that when you turn back to your child, you are more emotionally ready, calm and supportive as a parent.

Your tone is important when responding to your child in a tantrum. A gentle, reassuring tone is best – try not to shout or react harshly. You can also consider lowering yourself to your child's eye level. This can help create a sense of connection and security with your child, showing them that you are right there with them through their emotions. You could offer them a comforting touch, such as a hug or a gentle hand on their back.

Furthermore, validation is crucial in helping the child feel heard and understood. We want to validate the child's feelings by acknowledging their frustration or distress. For example, you could say, 'I see that you are upset because you want the toy'.

A last tip which can help both you and your child in these moments is to do a deep breathing exercise together. By doing this, you are not only regulating your own emotions but also modelling a healthy coping mechanism for your child. Pretend you have a square window in front of you, and trace it with your finger (or your child's), breathing in for 4 seconds as you go left to right at the top, hold for 4 seconds as you go down the right-hand side, let it out for 4 seconds as you go down the bottom and pause for 4 seconds as you go up the left-hand side. Do this 3-4 times and see how much calmer you both feel.



Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a completely normal, developmentally appropriate and expected part of early childhood – particularly between 9 months and 3 years – though it can appear at any point during the 0–5 years. It makes sense to think that a child who has formed a strong bond with you (healthy attachment) finds comfort in your presence and is distressed when you leave.

The distress they show when you leave isn't a sign something is wrong – it's a sign that you matter to them. That said, watching your child become upset at drop-off or even when you step into another room can be distressing for all involved. It's important to remember that this phase is temporary and manageable, especially with consistency and support.

Separation anxiety emerges as your child begins to understand object permanence – the awareness that things (and people) continue to exist even when out of sight. This means they now realise that when you leave, you're gone – but they don't yet have the emotional maturity to trust that you'll always return. This can create real feelings of fear, uncertainty, or panic for them.

I commonly see young children with separation anxiety in the therapy room. Here are some of my top tips to help your child through this time.

Prepare and practice: Talk about separations ahead of time using simple, reassuring language. Role-play with dolls, read books about saying goodbye or use visual timetables to prepare for transitions like starting nursery.

Create predictable goodbye rituals: Whether it's a special hug, a kiss on each hand, or a wave at the window, rituals help children feel grounded and give them a sense of control.

Stay calm and confident: Your tone and body language send important signals. A gentle but firm goodbye – rather than sneaking away – builds trust and shows that you believe they can manage.

Acknowledge the feeling: Say, "I know it's hard to say goodbye. I'll miss you too, and I'll be back after snack time." Validating their emotions helps your child feel seen and supported.

Keep goodbyes short and consistent: Lingering often increases distress. Over time, brief, predictable goodbyes help your child learn that they can cope. If the anxiety continues for an extended period or begins to interfere with daily life (e.g. ongoing panic, refusal to sleep alone, excessive clinginess beyond typical phases), consider seeking guidance from a child therapist.

Final Thoughts

The 0-5 years is an emotional journey with many highs and lows – new discoveries, intense tantrums, moments of connection and much, much more. If you ever feel you are unsure what to do to support your child, feel overwhelmed or wonder if you are getting something wrong – you are not alone, and you are not failing!

Emotional development isn't about doing everything perfectly. It's about being present. Your child doesn't need a flawless parent; they need a consistent, caring one.

Every time you pause to listen, offer comfort, name a feeling, or hold a boundary with kindness, you are building their emotional foundation. Importantly, remember that it's the small, everyday moments – not the grand gestures – that shape a child's emotional world.

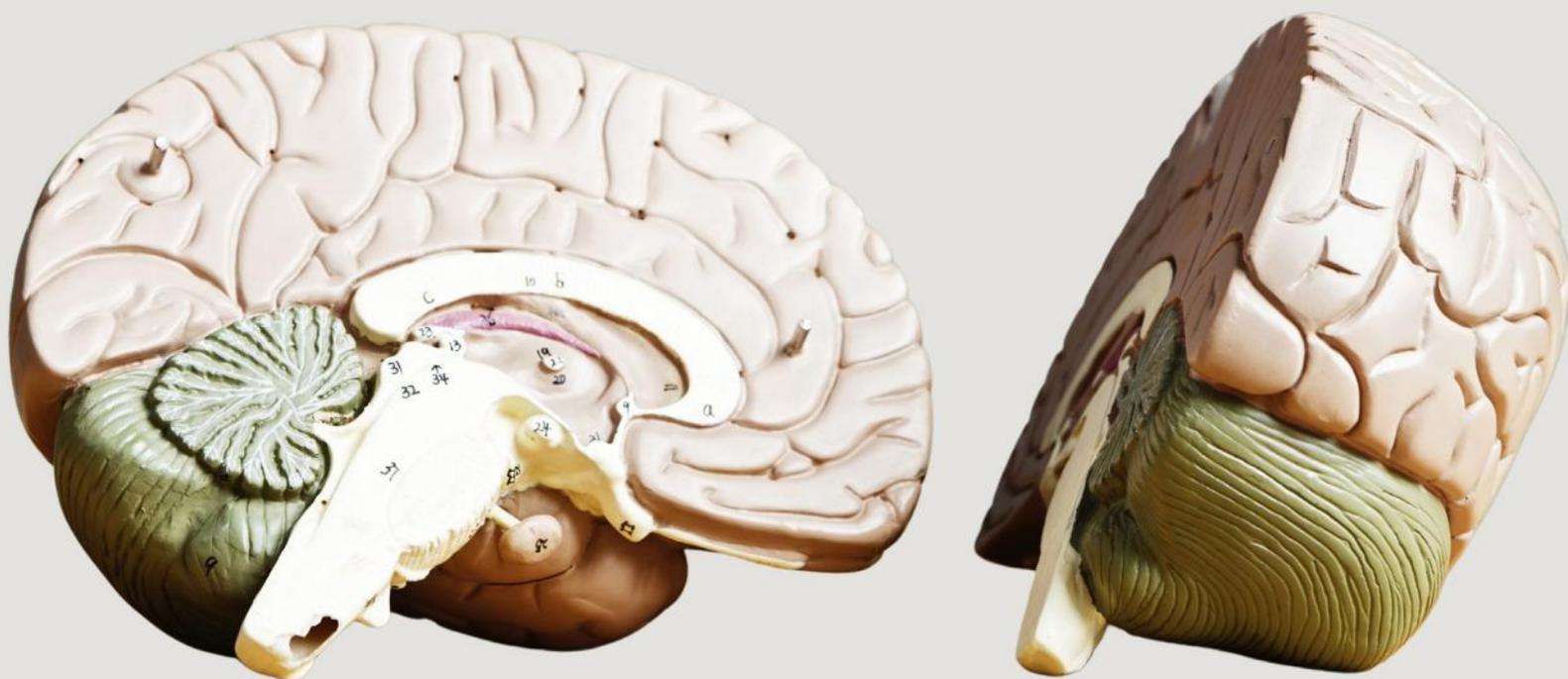


By Luisa Harris

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The Year I Broke My Brain



Once, I got the job of my dreams. It was a leadership role. I had responsibility. I was earning well. I had a seat at the table in important conversations. But I was, in almost every way that mattered, entirely useless.

That year, I had burned out. And I don't mean I was just tired or overwhelmed. I burned out in the bone-deep way that strips you of clarity, confidence, and any real sense of usefulness. I kept going, of course. I turned up. I sent emails. I nodded in meetings. But the energy it took to hold myself together left almost nothing for the work itself. I was showing up in body but not in spirit. Eventually, it turned out this wasn't just a rough patch. It was clinical. I was signed off work. My brain had, quite literally, broken.

Presenteeism

There's a term for this: presenteeism. It's when you're technically there, in the room, on the call, but none of the good stuff is—the spark, the insight, the collaboration, the capacity to see or shape the bigger picture. At the time, I had no name for it. I just thought I was failing. And that I had to try harder.

What I've learned since is that burnout isn't a weakness. It's the body's last resort. A physiological protest when all other signals have gone unheard: the sleep issues, the stress headaches, the loss of joy in things you once loved. If I seemed withdrawn or irritable, it wasn't because I didn't care. It was because I had cared for too long and too hard in conditions that made that care impossible to sustain.

The Rise of Cynicism

One of the most insidious things about burnout is how care curdles into cynicism. I'd once been at the top of my game: leading in my discipline, shaping strategy, pushing for better practice, and manoeuvring brilliant but overlooked women into roles they deserved. I was fuelled by purpose and belief that things could be better and that I could help make them so.

But slowly, that energy turned. The things I'd once found meaningful started to feel performative. I became quick to roll my eyes, slow to contribute. My hope thinned into resignation. I started to believe that nothing really changed, that good ideas went nowhere, and that I had been naïve to try.

That version of me didn't help anyone. Not myself. Not the people I worked with. Not the people I was once so determined to support. Worse, I may have done harm. People who had once been met with warmth and encouragement were now receiving short, snappy replies. I imagine some were left wondering what they'd done wrong.



This is why it matters, not just for our own wellbeing, but for the health of the whole. Feeling OK isn't indulgent. It's essential. We are more useful, more creative, and more generous when we are well. Cynicism might pass for cleverness, but it doesn't build anything lasting.

Coaching Caring People

One of the unexpected upsides of sharing your burnout story online is that people come and share theirs with you. Lots of people. From different industries and levels of seniority, but with striking commonalities.

I've noticed that the people who seek me out are often the most deeply caring. Often, though not exclusively, women. People who've spent years holding things together. The emotional load-bearers. The glue.

It's also shown me what kind of advice actually lands. "You need to rest, or your long-term health will suffer" is usually met with a tired nod and then quietly ignored. But reframing it into terms that talk about the effect on other people, "the cynicism people are starting to feel from you might be making them doubt their own abilities" gets through. That framing has been the only thing that convinced several friends to take time off. Caring people respond when you show them that looking after themselves is also a way of looking after others.

The Solution? Constructive Selfishness

An early facilitation mentor of mine, Allen Gunn, taught me the phrase "constructive selfishness." It's the idea that doing what's good for you, with one eye on what's good for the group, is one of the most generous things you can do. Post-burnout means choosing actions that protect my capacity to care over time.

Burnout taught me that recovery isn't the opposite of leadership. It's what makes it possible.

That experience didn't just shape me; it transformed me. It redirected me. I became a facilitator because I wanted to help shape the environments I once needed. Spaces where people can turn up as they are. Where meetings replenish rather than deplete. Where work is a place we bring our energy to, not one that drains it away.

Because when we feel OK, we do better. Together.

By Lucy Chambers

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HOW LEARNING TO TRUST MY INTUITION

Changed My Life...

What can I say about this subject? It's such a personal experience for each of us.

Have you ever had that gut feeling to take a different route to work, only to hear later that there was a car accident on your usual path? Have you ever forgotten something at home, ended up running late for a meeting—and then discovered you'd unknowingly avoided a major event, like the collapse of a building?

The delay wasn't just a coincidence—it was your angels at work protecting you. Have you ever had a strong feeling not to board a flight without knowing why, only to later discover that there was a crash or hurricane?

For the ladies reading this—have you ever sensed that your partner was seeing someone else, only to find out later that your intuition was right? These are everyday examples of intuition in action.

Often, you can't quite explain it, can you? Our intuition is always there, working quietly in the background—guiding, protecting, and nudging us. But the real question is: are we listening?

You don't need to be deeply spiritual to receive signs. The universe communicates with all of us. Sometimes, our 'logical minds' get in the way. Intuition isn't always rational—it's a feeling, a knowing.





How Do We Strengthen That Intuitive Muscle?

If you have a feeling about something, follow it through. I often do this and go with what I feel.

Pay attention to your body. I know this might sound “a little out there”, but our bodies often give us physical signs when something is off. It could be a headache, tingling sensations, or feeling nauseous—your body has its way of warning you. You can ask God, Source, or the Universe for signs and start jotting them down. For me, it’s angel numbers—but everyone’s signs are different. If you want a clear “no” from the universe, choose something obvious, like seeing a purple cat.

Let me share a moment when listening to my intuition changed the course of my life completely...

Back in 2021, I was deeply in love with my partner following the pandemic. We had been together for three years, heading into a fourth. I shared my dreams with him—getting engaged, buying our dream home, having children. But life doesn’t always unfold the way we expect.

Wedding planning became incredibly stressful. Arguments over money, mortgages, and savings for children became frequent. I had a ‘spender’ personality, and he was a cautious saver—he was also an accountant. I found myself overworking, trying to make everyone happy—my parents, who wanted a big wedding, and my partner, who preferred something small.

Tensions grew. One evening, after a particularly difficult argument involving my parents, I couldn’t sleep. That night, I had a vivid dream. My partner and I were standing on opposite sides of a beautiful garden. I asked myself, how would I feel if I wasn’t with him? And in that moment... the stress and anxiety all lifted. To give you context, I had been experiencing chest pain and headaches for over a year, to the point where I had a device fitted to

monitor for medical issues.

In the dream, the image that appeared was of Clapham Common in London, with the sun shining down. I woke up knowing, without question, that I would be okay. That dream was my sign. I returned the engagement ring the next day. We broke up a few days later.

I took the dream as a warning. It was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made, but I know it was for my greatest good. The chest pains stopped, and my headaches eased. I began to heal. The universe truly removes people and situations that are no longer meant for us. Now, I feel like the most healed version of myself I have ever been.

So, if you’re reading this little article, I hope it reminds you to trust your gut instinct over anyone else’s voice. Although it can be difficult, when your intuition is right, you will be in perfect alignment.

The answers you’re seeking are already within you.

By Crystal Johns

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THE 'NEXT-LEVEL' FREEDOM TRAP: WHY YOUR NEXT FINANCIAL MILESTONE WON'T SET YOU FREE AND WHAT ACTUALLY WILL!

I can still vividly picture that moment. I was sitting on my balcony, sipping a glass of wine, watching the sun setting over Sydney Harbour. From this apartment—the one I'd dreamed of for years—I had the perfect view of everything I'd spent decades building. A thriving business. Multiple revenue streams. The entrepreneurial success others envied.

Yet, instead of contentment, a gnawing, empty feeling crept in. "Is this IT? I mean, I hit every target I set and more! But is this IT?! What's next??"

That question marked the beginning of a journey that would shatter everything I believed about entrepreneurial success, financial milestones, and what it means to be truly free as a business owner. What I discovered—and what I now help other entrepreneurs understand—is that we've all been chasing an illusion. The next revenue target, the perfect profit margin, the streamlined systems, the scalable team—none of these financial achievements will give us the freedom we started our businesses to find.

In fact, they often trap us deeper in patterns that keep us working longer hours, carrying more stress, and constantly reaching for the next milestone that promises to finally set us free.

If you're an entrepreneur who's achieved significant financial success but still feels like you're running on a hamster wheel that keeps spinning faster, this article is for you. It's time to understand the next-level trap that's been keeping you stuck—and discover the path to real entrepreneurial freedom.



The Next-Level Trap: The Illusion That Keeps Entrepreneurs Chasing

“Once I hit six figures consistently, I’ll finally have enough financial security to take real time off without panic.”
“When I reach seven figures, I’ll have the resources to hire a proper team and won’t have to wear every hat in the business.” “After I build these systems and processes, the business will run itself, and I can finally step back and have a holiday.”
“When I get to eight figures, I’ll have enough money to do whatever I want, and I won’t need to work any more!”

Sound familiar? I spent years trapped in this exact cycle. Each financial milestone promised the freedom that drew me to entrepreneurship in the first place but instead brought new pressures, bigger problems, and more chasing. The goalposts kept moving, and the “freedom” always remained just out of reach.

The cruel irony is that the more financially successful our businesses become, the more trapped we often feel. That six-figure breakthrough brings tax stuff and cash flow management stress. The seven-figure business requires more sophisticated operations and bigger decisions that keep you up at night. The team you hired to free up your

time requires training, effective management, and ongoing guidance. The systems require maintenance, optimization, and someone to oversee them—usually still you.

We hit our revenue targets only to discover that we’ve climbed the wrong mountain entirely. And somehow, despite our financial success, we feel more exhausted and overwhelmed than when we were bootstrapping from our kitchen table.

This is the next-level trap: the belief that the next financial milestone will transform our daily experience as business owners. We think we’re building wealth to buy freedom, but we’re actually creating more sophisticated forms of imprisonment.

I’ve seen entrepreneurs who make multiple seven figures become more stressed than when they were earning \$ 50,000. I’ve worked with business owners who have achieved every financial goal they set yet feel more trapped than their friends with a traditional job. But here’s what I learned through my own journey—and what I now see with every entrepreneur I work with: The problem isn’t that we need to make more money. The problem is that we’re building our businesses from an energy of “I’m not enough”.

The Real Problem: Fear-Based vs. Sacred Desire in Business

One of my clients, Jeannie, built her business to over \$2 million in annual revenue but was convinced her business would collapse without her constant involvement. She was working seven days a week and hadn’t had a holiday for 10 years. During the week, she spent her time worrying that others would not do a good job, so she was chasing them up, making sure they were on top of things, and her weekends were reserved for “her” work.

She was checking emails at midnight, waking up at 3 am, unable to fall back asleep, and then the cycle continued. From the outside, her business was the entrepreneurial dream—growing revenue, expanding product lines, and gaining market recognition. But Jeannie was exhausted, frustrated, and trapped in a business that felt more like a prison than the freedom vehicle she’d envisioned.

“I thought I was being strategic,” she told me months later. “I thought my relentless drive was what made me successful. I didn’t realize I was actually being driven by fear of losing everything disguised as working hard ambition.”

This distinction—between building from fear-based desire versus building from authentic desire—is the key to understanding why hitting financial milestones never delivers the entrepreneurial freedom they promise.

When we build businesses driven by fear-based desires, every decision feels urgent, pressured, and never quite enough.

This energy shows up in our businesses as:

- Constantly checking revenue dashboards and panicking when numbers dip
- Working longer hours because “that’s what it takes to be successful”
- Making decisions based on what competitors are doing rather than what feels right
- Saying yes to opportunities out of fear of missing out, even when they don’t align
- Feeling like the business will fall apart if we’re not constantly monitoring everything
- Chasing revenue milestones because we think they’ll prove our worth as entrepreneurs

Fear-based desire in business sounds like: “I need to prove this was worth the risk.” “I can’t let my family down financially.” “If I don’t keep growing, someone else will take my market share.” “I should be further along by now compared to other entrepreneurs.” “I have to work nights and weekends—that’s just entrepreneurship.”

This energy is exhausting because it’s ultimately driven by what we don’t want rather than what we DO want. We’re running away from financial insecurity, business failure, or judgment from others rather than running toward something that genuinely excites us as creators and leaders.

Sacred desire in business, on the other hand, feels completely different. It’s the energy that flows through you when you’re building something that truly matters to you—not because you think you should want it, but because it lights you up from the inside and serves something greater than just your bank account.

Sacred desire in business shows up as:

- Excitement about the problem you’re solving, not just the money you’re making
- Natural energy for work that doesn’t require constant caffeine and willpower
- Decision-making based on what feels aligned rather than what looks most profitable
- Joy in the process of building, not just anticipation of the exit
- The feeling that you’re being pulled toward opportunities rather than forcing them
- Sustainable growth that honors both your ambitions and your well-being
- The feeling that you ARE enough

Sacred desire in business sounds like: “I can’t wait to help more people solve this problem.” “This work feels like the perfect expression of my gifts.” “I’m excited to see what we can create together.” “This business feels like it’s growing me as much as I’m growing it.” “I love the challenge and the process, not just the outcomes.”

The difference isn’t just semantic—it’s the difference between sustainable entrepreneurial success and exhausting business ownership. When Jeannie learned to distinguish between these two energies in her business decisions, everything changed. She realized that most of her “strategic” choices had been driven by fear of not being successful enough, fear of falling behind competitors, and fear of losing what she’d built.

Once she started making business decisions from sacred desire instead, her company didn’t collapse—it thrived in ways she hadn’t expected. She took her first real vacation in three years (in fact, 3 of them in a year!) Her team stepped up and made decisions independently.





FREEDOM

And...her revenue doubled to \$4 million in less than a year, and her profit margin increased by 50%. She was focusing on what truly mattered to her customers rather than trying to compete on every front. More importantly, she started ENJOYING herself again.

The Sovereignty Solution: True Entrepreneurial Freedom

Real entrepreneurial freedom doesn't come from reaching the next financial milestone—it comes from transforming your relationship with money, success, and business ownership itself. This is what I call Sovereign Entrepreneurship: the ability to build and lead from your authentic power rather than from fear-based patterns.

Sovereign Entrepreneurship recognizes a fundamental truth: You already have everything you need to be free. The freedom you're seeking through the next revenue target already exists within YOU.

The question isn't how to make more money faster. The question is how to access the entrepreneurial freedom that's available to you right now, regardless of your current revenue or margin.

This shift requires recognizing when external pressures—market expectations, investor demands, competitor actions, and industry standards—are driving your business decisions rather than your authentic vision. It means learning to distinguish between “I should launch this product because everyone else is doing it” and “I'm genuinely excited about this solution because it solves a problem I care about.” Most entrepreneurs have spent years—sometimes the entire life of their business—making decisions based on what they think successful businesses should do rather than what they actually want to create. We've been conditioned to chase metrics that don't necessarily align with our authentic desires as creators. We pursue revenue milestones because they represent success, not because the work required to achieve them feels fulfilling. We scale because growth is what successful entrepreneurs do, not because bigger necessarily means better for our specific vision.

Sovereign Entrepreneurship invites you to step back and ask: “What do I actually want to create in the world through my business? What kind of company would I build if I weren't trying to impress investors, competitors, or industry publications? What would my business look like if I trusted my own instincts more than market research?” When I work with entrepreneurs through this shift, something remarkable happens. They discover that they can trust their instincts and intuition more than they ever imagined. Decision-making becomes faster and clearer - even CHOICELESS - because they're no longer filtering everything through fear-based criteria.

Their teams respond differently because authentic leadership naturally inspires higher performance than fear-based management. The business challenges don't disappear, but the entrepreneur's relationship to those challenges undergoes a complete transformation. Instead of feeling overwhelmed, they feel energized by opportunities and see something not working out as a massive learning. Instead of being driven by what competitors are doing or what OTHERS tell them to do, they're pulled by their own vision of what's possible. Most importantly, they remember why they became entrepreneurs in the first place—not just for financial freedom but for the freedom to create something meaningful in the world.

The Sacred Desire Framework for Entrepreneurs

The path to sovereign entrepreneurship begins with learning to recognize and follow your sacred desires as a business owner—the authentic pulls that emerge from your deepest knowing about what you want to create. Here's a framework you can start using immediately in your business:

The Business Decision Body Check

Before making any significant business decision, pause and notice where you feel the desire in your body. Ask yourself:

- Does this opportunity feel expansive or contracting in my chest?
- Am I being pulled toward this or pushed by fear of missing out?
- Does thinking about this project create excitement or anxiety?
- Would I pursue this even if no one would ever know about my revenue from it?
- Am I making this decision to prove something or to create something meaningful?

The Sacred vs. Fear-Based Business Test

Sacred desire in business often involves:

- Creating solutions that genuinely solve problems you care about
- Building in ways that feel sustainable and energizing for you personally
- Making decisions that honor both profit and purpose
- Choosing growth strategies that align with your values and lifestyle
- Serving customers in ways that feel like a natural expression of your gifts

Fear-based desire in business often involves:

- Chasing opportunities primarily because they're lucrative
- Competing from a place of scarcity rather than abundance
- Making decisions that sacrifice your well-being for financial gain
- Scaling in ways that disconnect you from the work you love
- Pursuing strategies that work for others but don't fit your strengths because you think you SHOULD.
- Doing it

The Entrepreneurial Transcendence Practice

Each week, make at least one significant business decision from sacred desire rather than fear-based urgency. It might be turning down a profitable opportunity that doesn't align with your vision or investing time in a project that excites you, even if the ROI is uncertain. Notice how differently these decisions feel in your body. Notice how your team responds when you're operating from authentic passion rather than market pressure.

Notice how your customers react when your products or services come from a genuine desire to serve rather than a desperation to hit revenue targets. Track not just the financial outcomes but also how you feel about your business when making decisions from this energy. Many entrepreneurs discover that their most profitable decisions were the ones that felt most aligned, not the ones that looked best on paper or a fancy spreadsheet.

The Ripple Effect: What Changes When You Build from Sovereignty

When entrepreneurs make this shift from fear-based building to sacred desire, the ripple effects extend far beyond their personal experience and bank accounts. Jeannie's transformation illustrates this beautifully.

Within three months of learning to operate from sacred desire, her team began innovating in ways she hadn't seen before. "They stopped just executing my ideas and started bringing me solutions I never would have thought of," she told me. "It's like they suddenly felt permission to be creative instead of just productive."

Her profit margins increased by 50% over the next six months, even though she was working fewer hours than ever before. "I'm focusing on the products and tasks that actually matter to us instead of trying to spin all the plates".

Her customer retention improved dramatically because she was serving from authentic passion rather than just trying to maximize lifetime value. "When you genuinely care about solving someone's problem, they can feel it".

This is the promise of sovereign entrepreneurship: your business becomes an expression of your authentic self rather than a means prove your worth or escape financial insecurity.



“The path to entrepreneurial transcendence isn’t about building your way to freedom.”



You’ll make decisions faster because you no longer have analysis paralysis. You’ll lead more effectively, and you’ll attract better team members, customers, and opportunities because sacred desire has a magnetic quality that fear-based hustle lacks. Your business becomes sustainable because it’s energizing rather than draining. And perhaps most importantly, you model for other entrepreneurs what it looks like to be financially successful without sacrificing your soul or your sanity.

Your Next Step: Breaking Free from the Next-Level Trap

The next-level trap keeps us running toward freedom that we think exists somewhere “out there”, but real entrepreneurial freedom begins the moment you recognize that you already have the power to choose how you want to build, lead, and create.

Today, I invite you to take one small step toward sovereign entrepreneurship. Before your next important business decision, pause and ask yourself: “Am I choosing this from fear or from love? Am I being driven by what I think successful entrepreneurs should do, or am I being pulled by what I authentically want to create?” Trust whatever answer emerges, even if it means turning down a lucrative opportunity or pursuing something that doesn’t fit the typical success playbook. The path to entrepreneurial transcendence isn’t about building your way to freedom—it’s about discovering the freedom that becomes available the moment you stop running from yourself and start creating from your authentic power.

Your next financial milestone will never set you free. Are you willing to transform your relationship with money, success, and business ownership? That’s where real entrepreneurial freedom begins. The question isn’t whether you can make more money. The question is: Are you ready to discover what becomes possible when you stop chasing financial freedom and start embodying it?

By Kirsty Verity

Kirsty Verity is a transformational coach who guides high-achieving women entrepreneurs through the journey from fear-based business building to sovereign entrepreneurship. After building multiple seven-figure businesses while working seven days a week, she discovered a different path to success—one that honors both profit and purpose. She now helps women business owners transcend limiting patterns and build companies that express their authentic power while delivering sustainable financial success.

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THE SEASON OF LETTING GO

BY MARSHA PARCOU

There are moments in life when we are called to release something deeply woven into our identity - something that once gave us meaning, security and belonging. But what happens when that very thing begins to keep us small, silent or stuck?

Letting go can feel like betrayal - not of the other, but of the version of ourselves we promised we'd never leave behind. And yet, to walk in purpose, wholeness and peace, release becomes sacred.

Every soul will eventually pass through a season of pruning - a divine trimming of what no longer aligns with who we're becoming. Pruning is never painless, especially when it touches long-standing emotional bonds, shared dreams or years of investment.

Sometimes, we don't even realise how much of ourselves we've lost trying to keep something whole. We call it loyalty. We call it endurance. But beneath it all may be a quiet compromise that disconnects us from our truth.

This kind of letting go doesn't come with celebration or applause. It often comes with tears, doubt and the slow rebuilding of a self we once forgot. However, it also brings with it freedom—the kind that only truth can offer.

When we're faced with the possibility of letting go, the fears begin to rise:

What if I'm alone from here on?

What if I've wasted the best years of my life?

What if no one ever sees me the way I long to be seen?

What if this is all there ever is?

These questions are not signs of weakness - they are echoes of our humanity. As a coach and a woman who's walked through the valley of these fears, I can tell you this: what you're afraid to lose might be the very thing God is trying to release so you can reclaim yourself.

There is no shame in admitting that you've outgrown a space, even one built with love. Growth does not always mean going forward together. Sometimes, growth means moving forward alone but not empty-handed. You leave with lessons, wisdom and a deeper knowing of who you are.



Not every bond is meant to last a lifetime. Some connections arrive to awaken, teach, or prepare us. And once their purpose is fulfilled, clinging out of fear keeps us from receiving the next blessing. If you're finding it hard to release someone you once deeply cherished, consider this: What if their role in your story is complete? What if continuing to hold on is costing you the peace, alignment and growth you've been praying for?

Letting go is not abandonment. It is reverence for yourself, for your healing, for your wholeness.

This decision isn't made once - it's made again and again. Some days with tears. Other days with clarity. But always with courage.

You may find yourself having to reclaim your worth, rewrite your beliefs or reestablish your routines. You may have to reintroduce yourself to yourself—and that's okay. This is the work of becoming. And you are not alone in it.

This season, as hard as it feels, is holy. You're not falling apart - you're falling into alignment.

You are worthy of love that is whole, mutual and safe. You are worthy of peace that doesn't require pretence. And you are worthy of a life that reflects your core values - not just in public but also behind closed doors.

This isn't about giving up. It's about honouring yourself enough to walk away from anything that no longer reflects the fullness of who you are.

May you trust the wisdom of your soul. May you choose courage over comfort. May you stop pretending for the sake of peace and start living from a place of truth.

You are not letting go to lose. You are letting go to live the life ahead, which is far greater than the one you're leaving behind.

The Tangled Thread

When Independence Meets Identity



*Helping Young Adults Find Belonging, Balance,
and Self-Worth in a Loud, Fast World*

We teach independence as if it's a finish line—but for today's young adults, the path is tangled in pressure, perfectionism, and a fear of falling behind. What if independence isn't about standing alone but learning how to stand in your truth—even when the world tells you to shrink?

The truth is that independence isn't always about doing everything alone. Sometimes, it's about finding your people, setting boundaries, and learning how to ask for help without shame.

In my work with emerging adults—especially those navigating neurodivergence or mental health challenges—I see the same pattern: a desire to grow and thrive, tangled in a fear of being “too much” or “not enough.” And somewhere in that messy middle, they start losing their sense of identity.

The Summer Thread: Identity in the Face of Expectation

Summer often symbolizes freedom, possibility, and growth. However, for many young people, especially post-graduates or those in transition, summer can also feel like a period of limbo. “What now?” becomes the question that loops in their head.

They scroll social media, comparing paths. They see classmates getting jobs, traveling, moving forward—and begin to wonder if they're already falling behind.

But identity isn't built in comparison.

It's built-in intention.

In choosing who you want to be—even if the world has told you something different.

Unraveling the Noise

“I know I should be doing more... but I don't even know who I am without the pressure,” a client once shared during our session. That moment stuck with me.

Let's pull on the thread that feels tightest:

- Is it the fear of not knowing what's next?
- The weight of family expectations?
- The internalized voice that says, "I should be further along by now"?

Young adults—especially those who are neurodivergent or healing from anxiety, trauma, or burnout—need room to breathe. Not just freedom from expectations but freedom to rewrite their identity on their own terms.

A Moment That Changed Everything

I remember sitting across from a young woman who had just turned 23. She was autistic, non-verbal, and had recently aged out of the school system. Her mother sat beside her, tearfully explaining how the routine and structure that once anchored their lives had vanished overnight. "We feel invisible now," she told me.

They had called multiple programs, waited for lists that never seemed to move, and navigated a maze of "resources" that felt more like roadblocks. She wasn't asking for a miracle. She just wanted to know how to help her daughter feel seen, included, and capable.

That conversation reminded me why this work matters. Independence doesn't always look like moving out or managing a bank account. Sometimes, it looks like creating a supportive environment where someone can thrive in their own way.

That family didn't need more red tape. They needed compassion, direction, and hope. Together, we created a plan that honored her daughter's communication style, built daily anchors for consistency, and connected them to a local support network. It didn't fix everything overnight, but it gave them a thread to hold onto.

Their story is one I carry with me often because it reminds me that support isn't a service—it's a relationship. It's a commitment to hold space for others while they rewrite the rules for themselves.

“The truth is that independence isn't always about doing everything alone. Sometimes, it's about finding your people, setting boundaries, and learning how to ask for help without shame.”





“When the focus shifts from doing to becoming, growth happens naturally.”



My Message to Young Adults (and the Families Who Love Them):

You don't have to become someone else to succeed.

You don't have to be the loudest in the room to lead.

And you are not behind—you're becoming. Support looks like slowing down, being curious instead of critical, and celebrating progress over perfection.

For families, this means shifting from “fixing” to “understanding.” It means building a safe foundation for young adults to explore their truth without fear of judgment. When the focus shifts from doing to becoming, growth happens naturally.

Weaving Something New This Summer

What if this summer wasn't about “getting it all figured out”... but instead about:

- Reconnecting with your values
- Building rituals that support your growth



- Surrounding yourself with people who see your worth
- Unlearning what was never yours to carry

True independence isn't just about paying bills and meeting deadlines—it's about knowing who you are when the noise fades and choosing to love that version of yourself anyway.

The Emotional Labor of Identity Work

For neurodivergent and highly sensitive individuals, forming an identity can feel like swimming against the current. They are constantly processing the world at a different rhythm, often forced to adapt to systems that were never designed for them.

This emotional labor takes energy. And when young adults are met with pressure instead of patience, they disconnect.

But when they are offered compassion, flexibility, and opportunity for self-exploration, they flourish. They don't need a rigid timeline—they need room to explore what independence means for them. Let's teach them to:

- Honor their energy levels and sensory needs
- Set boundaries without guilt
- Express their voice even when it shakes
- Trust that their path—no matter how nonlinear—is still worthy

Final Thought: The Thread Was Never Broken

The thread of identity might be tangled, but it isn't broken.

With intention, support, and self-compassion, it can be rewoven into something stronger—something that reflects the truth of who they are.

So, if you are a young adult in transition or a parent watching from the sidelines, know this:

You don't have to have it all figured out.

You just have to keep choosing yourself—and keep weaving your thread, one choice at a time.

Again. And again. And again.

By Nicole Rolon-Caro



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THE SUMMER RESET



Redefining Goals, Values, and Perspectives

By **Taneka Johnson**

Introduction

We've reached the midpoint of the year—a natural pause in the rhythm of time that invites us to reflect, reset, and realign. For many, summer brings with it a strong desire for clarity, space, and a new burst of energy. Some are just now beginning to realize what they truly want out of the year after navigating the ebbs and flows of the first half. Others are in stride, steadily making progress toward the goals they set on January 1, 2025.

Wherever you find yourself right now—whether you're thriving in alignment or struggling to find your flow—this season offers a golden opportunity. Summer gives us permission to reset our rhythm, reconnect to what matters, and reimagine how we'll finish the year. Here's how you can use this seasonal shift to support your #bodyandbusiness goals and create meaningful momentum.

For the Individual in Flow...

There's something magical about waking up in alignment—when your direction is clear, your daily habits are intentional, and your results reflect the work you've put in. If you're in that space right now, that's a beautiful thing. Still, even when things are working, it's wise to slow down and take inventory.

1. Revisit Your Vision and Goals

Even if you're on track, revisit your original goals with fresh eyes. You're not the same person you were six months ago—and that's a good thing. With growth comes refined clarity. Ask yourself: Does this goal still align with who I'm becoming? If the answer is «yes,» amazing—lean in deeper. If not, give yourself the freedom to pivot. Your evolution deserves to be reflected in your vision.

2. Document What's Working (and What Isn't)

Take time to reflect on your systems, habits, and results. What's been a game changer? What hasn't served you? This kind of honest reflection isn't just productive—it's a powerful form of self-awareness. Knowing what supports your natural rhythm enables you to focus on strategies that move the needle and let go of those that drain you.

3. Build a Rewards System

Even as adults, we still thrive on incentives. Creating meaningful rewards for personal and



professional milestones builds motivation and deepens self-trust. Think beyond material gifts—consider experiences or time-based rewards. Whether it's buying yourself that new wardrobe after a fitness goal or booking a solo retreat after hitting a revenue milestone, make the win feel worth it.

For the Individual Out of Flow...

If the first half of the year didn't go as planned, take a breath—there's still time. Summer is the perfect moment to recalibrate, not criticize. You're not behind; you're simply being invited into deeper alignment.

1. Re-Center Your Values

You may have started the year with one set of values, but life has a way of reshaping our priorities. This is a good time to ask: What truly matters to me now? If your current direction doesn't reflect your current values, it's no wonder you feel off. Alignment begins with honesty. When you reconnect to what you value, your clarity and confidence return.

2. Quiet the Noise

Let this be your reminder to quiet the mental, digital, and emotional noise. You already know what's taking up unnecessary space in your mind and spirit—it's time to let it go. That might mean reducing screen time, unfollowing content that drains you, distancing from energy-draining people or decluttering tasks that aren't urgent or necessary. Protect your mental real estate like it's sacred—because it is.

3. Re-Strategize with Intention

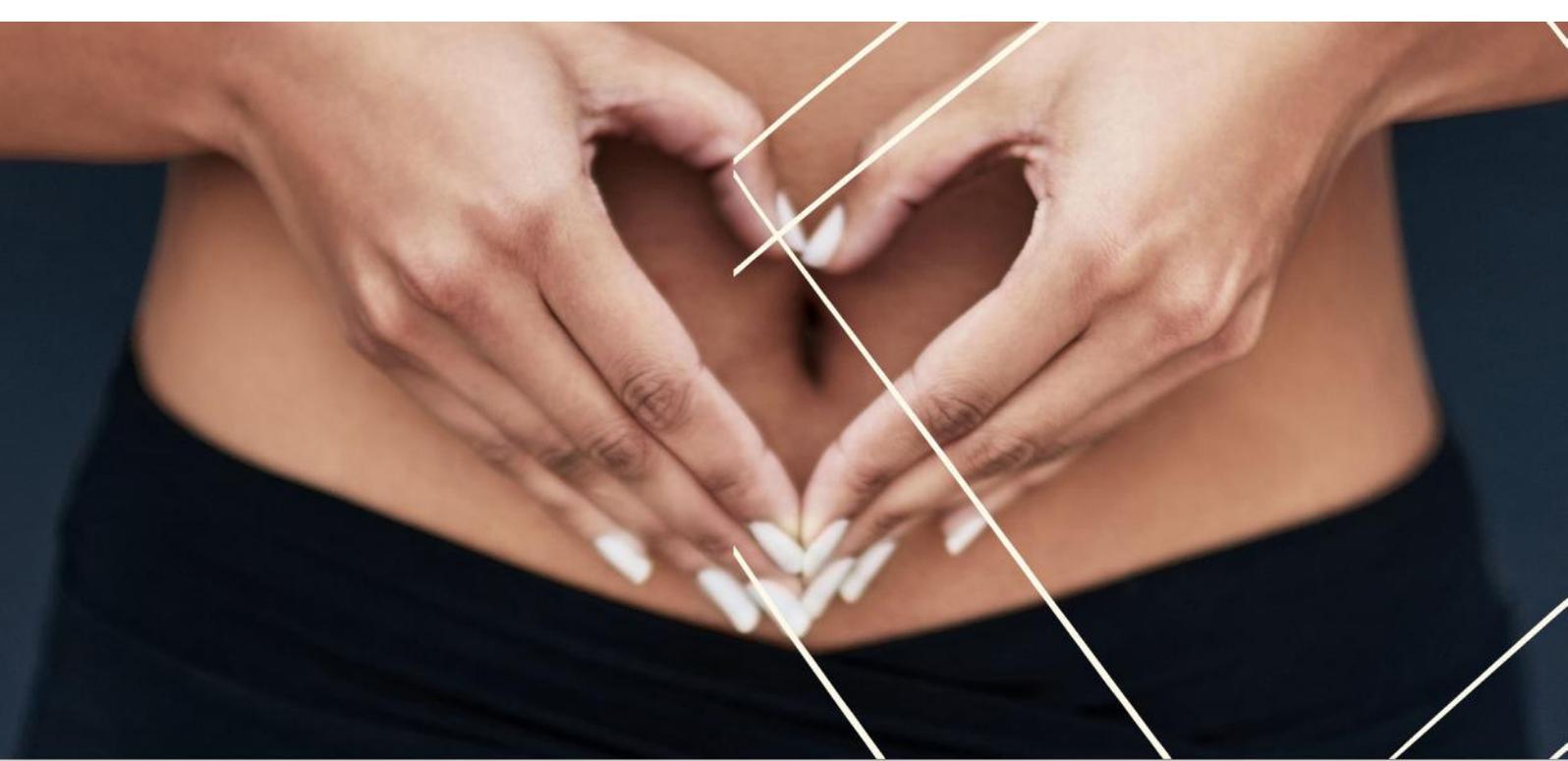
Once you've made space, rebuild with intention. Consider how your day-to-day life can support your peak energy and creativity. Do you work more effectively in the morning or the evening? Do you need a different environment to spark inspiration? From adjusting your workspace to reorganizing your daily schedule, small tweaks can lead to significant breakthroughs. Incorporate productivity strategies like the Pomodoro Technique, and fuel your body with food that enhances brain function. This isn't just about getting things done—it's about flowing with more ease and less force.

Final Thoughts

Your Mid-Year Moment Matters

Whether you're cruising or course-correcting, summer is your invitation to realign with purpose and power. Let this be your mid-year mirror—a moment to check in, clear the clutter (mentally and emotionally), and recommit to your goals.

The beauty of #bodyandbusiness is that it honors both your humanity and your ambition. It reminds you that how you feel in your body, your mind, and your spirit is connected to how well you show up in your business. When one is off, the other follows. When one is nurtured, the other thrives. This season, give yourself permission to reset with grace. You're not behind. You're not off track. You're just being called to bloom differently.!



The Gut-Brain Connection

How Clean Nutrition Supports Mental, Emotional and Physical Wellness

Nutrition is something that is both underrated and misunderstood when it comes to supporting the body and mind to have optimal health. In the world we live in today, it can be a challenge to eat clean all the time, and as I tell my clients, it's not always the food you're choosing but the way you cook and prepare it that makes a difference in how it impacts your body and mind.

In recent years, scientific research has shed light on a fascinating relationship between the digestive system and brain function—often referred to as the “gut-brain connection.” This bidirectional communication network illustrates how the health of our digestive system directly impacts our mental well-being, cognitive function, and emotional balance. At the heart of this relationship is nutrition, particularly clean, wholesome foods that nourish both the gut and brain simultaneously.

Understanding the Gut-Brain Axis

Your gut contains over 100 million neurons connected to your brain through the vagus nerve, forming what scientists refer to as the “gut-brain axis.” This neural highway facilitates constant communication between your digestive system and your central nervous system. Perhaps more surprisingly, your gut microbiome—the trillions of bacteria living in your intestines—produces neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, the same chemicals responsible for regulating mood, sleep, and cognitive function in your brain.

When your gut microbiome (gut bacteria) lacks diversity or becomes imbalanced (a condition called dysbiosis), this communication pathway becomes disrupted. Research has linked poor gut health to anxiety, depression, brain fog, and even neurodegenerative conditions. Conversely, nurturing your gut health through proper nutrition can enhance mental clarity, emotional resilience, and overall brain function.

Clean Nutrition: The Foundation for Gut-Brain Health

“Clean eating” is not just another wellness trend—it represents a return to wholesome, minimally processed foods that support our bodies’ natural functions. For gut-brain health specifically, this approach provides:

- 1. Essential nutrients that feed beneficial gut bacteria.*
- 2. Anti-inflammatory compounds that reduce neural inflammation.*
- 3. Fibre-rich foods that promote digestive health and microbiome (bacteria) diversity.*
- 4. Antioxidants that protect both gut and brain cells from oxidative damage (an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants, which can cause cell and tissue damage, leading to various health issues).*



Practical Examples of Gut-Brain-Supporting Foods

Fermented Foods

Incorporate foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, kefir, and yogurt containing live cultures. These probiotic powerhouses introduce beneficial bacteria directly into your digestive system. Studies show that regular consumption of fermented foods can reduce inflammation markers and improve symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Just check the sugar content in yoghurts, and if you don't eat much-fermented food or none at the moment, start with small amounts and build up from there.

Colourful Plant Foods

Fruits and vegetables with vibrant colours contain polyphenols—plant compounds that act as prebiotics, essentially feeding your beneficial gut bacteria. Blueberries, red cabbage, pomegranates, and dark leafy greens offer particularly potent gut-brain benefits.

Omega-3 Rich Foods

Wild-caught fatty fish, such as salmon, as well as foods like walnuts, chia seeds, and flaxseeds, provide essential omega-3 fatty acids that help reduce inflammation throughout both the digestive tract and neural pathways. Regular consumption supports brain cell membrane integrity and gut barrier function simultaneously.

Fibre-Rich Complex Carbohydrates

Sweet potatoes, oats, beans, and other fibre-rich complex carbohydrates provide sustenance for beneficial gut bacteria, which transform these fibres into short-chain fatty acids—compounds that strengthen gut barrier function and reduce inflammation.

Culinary Herbs and Spices

Turmeric, ginger, coriander, parsley, rosemary, and thyme contain potent anti-inflammatory compounds that support both digestive and cognitive health. Research suggests these everyday kitchen ingredients can help maintain gut barrier integrity while protecting neural tissue.

Simple Daily Practice

Implementing gut-brain nutrition does not require a complete overhaul of your lifestyle. Start by incorporating one fermented food daily, ensuring each meal contains at least one brightly coloured vegetable, and replacing refined carbohydrates with fibre-rich alternatives. Staying properly hydrated further supports the mucosal lining of your digestive tract, enhancing nutrient absorption and waste elimination.

Drinking warm water with lemon and ginger in the morning is a great way to help flush toxins.

By prioritising clean, wholesome nutrition, you are not just feeding your body—you are nourishing the critical connection between your gut and brain, potentially transforming both your digestive health and mental wellbeing for years to come.

BY AMANDA WHITEHEAD





The Power of the Little Things

Unlocking Joy and Connection

Sometimes, it really is about the little things—the moments that make our hearts sing, the simple joys that add richness to our lives. Yet, in a world that seems to be moving faster than ever, everything can feel complicated. Or maybe that's just me?

It seems as if we've outsmarted ourselves. We're so caught up in progress, technology, and innovation that we've forgotten one of the most vital aspects of being human—our relationships. We've become highly technical, yet somehow, we've lost touch. We text instead of talk. We scroll instead of connecting. We interact through screens rather than sharing moments in person. But at what cost?

We often underestimate how much relationships nourish us—how much a simple conversation, a kind word, or an unexpected gesture can brighten someone's day. These connections aren't just nice to have; they're essential.

Yet, in this digital age, it's too easy to get lost in a never-ending trail of emails, messages, and notifications. Real conversations become rare. The art of picking up the phone and talking seems almost forgotten. And face-to-face meetups? They require planning, effort—sometimes even courage.

But here's the truth: human connection is what keeps us alive, thriving, and fulfilled. In a world obsessed with productivity and hustle, we need to remind ourselves to slow down and embrace the small, beautiful moments that make life truly meaningful.

What are these little things?

They're the simple acts that ground us, centre us, and bring us joy.

- *Sitting outside and soaking up the fresh air*
- *Taking a few deep breaths to reset*
- *Meditating, even for just five minutes*
- *Reflecting on what truly matters*
- *Savouring a cup of tea or coffee without rushing*
- *Listening—really listening—to a friend without distractions*
- *Laughing every day*
- *Walking in nature, feeling the earth beneath your feet*
- *Being kind to a stranger*

These moments may seem small, but they hold incredible power. They remind us that life isn't just about doing more, achieving more, or chasing the next big thing.

Why Slowing Down is a Superpower

In today's fast-paced world, slowing down can feel counterintuitive—especially if you're an action-taker, someone who thrives on momentum. But here's the thing: if we don't create space for ourselves, we risk burning out and missing out.





Stop Being 'Busy Being Busy'

At the end of the day, life isn't measured by how much we accomplish but by how deeply we live. The best memories aren't always in the big achievements but in the simple, everyday moments—the laughter, the kindness, the unexpected joys.

So, take a step back. Breathe. Make the little things count.

By Mary Scott

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Busyness can be a trap. It convinces us that we're making progress when we might just be spinning our wheels. Taking time to pause allows us to realign with what truly matters. Think about the last time you felt overwhelmed. Was it because you had too much on your plate? Did everything feel like too much? That's a sign to step back and create intentional moments of stillness.

We often tell ourselves we'll call that friend later. We'll visit family when things settle down. We'll plan a coffee date someday. But why wait? If you have people in your life who matter, nurture those relationships. Pick up the phone. Send a voice message. Make an effort.

Life is busy, but the connection is worth prioritizing. It's not about grand gestures—it's about the little things. A check-in. A shared laugh. A moment of presence.

Here's a list of small, meaningful actions that can make a big impact:

- Call a friend just to say hello*
- Laugh every day—it's medicine for the soul*
- Step outside and breathe in the fresh air*
- Visit a botanical garden or park just to be present*
- Take time to be still and reflect*
- Listen more—without interrupting or waiting for your turn to speak*
- Practice kindness*
- Show gratitude—say "thank you" and mean it*
- Set aside one day a week to unplug from social media*
- Make time for deep, meaningful conversations*
- Learn something new from someone close to you*



UNMASKING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

WHY CLOSING THE GENDER GAP BEGINS WITH RECLAIMING SELF-BELIEF

Imposter syndrome doesn't discriminate. It finds its way into boardrooms, classrooms, and even the most accomplished minds. And for women—especially those stepping into leadership roles—it's not just a fleeting insecurity. It's a conditioned response to generations of being told we are too much, not enough, or simply not the norm.

I've led high-performing sales teams, built national retail operations, trained emerging executives, and presented to rooms filled with decision-makers. And still, there were moments when I questioned whether I truly belonged. That's the deception of imposter syndrome—it rarely aligns with your capability. It aligns with the subconscious narrative you've absorbed about what leadership should look like.

My journey to executive leadership wasn't linear. It was a climb paved with reinvention, resilience, and a lot of unlearning. Early in my career, I often felt I had to work twice as hard to earn half the credibility. I didn't come from a traditional path, and while my results spoke volumes, I found myself shrinking in moments when I should have been standing tall. I had to learn how to take up space.

I had to train myself to believe that my voice didn't need permission. And I had to stop waiting to feel "ready."

The

truth is, most women don't suffer from a lack of skill—they suffer from a lack of internal validation in systems that weren't built with them in mind. Imposter syndrome isn't a flaw. It's a byproduct of a society that has historically underrepresented women in leadership, undervalued our contributions, and undermined our voices. It stems from walking into rooms where decisions are made and not seeing yourself reflected at the table. And yet, despite the discomfort, we continue to rise.

Through Inspire with Marissa, I've worked with hundreds of women at different stages of their career journeys. The pattern is painfully familiar—brilliant, capable professionals questioning their worth the moment they step into visibility. They fear being "found out" when, in reality, the only thing to uncover is their own brilliance.

What I've learned through coaching and mentorship is this: imposter syndrome loses its power the moment we call it by name and confront the systems that sustain it. We must stop framing it as personal insecurity and start addressing it as a leadership crisis fueled by a gender confidence gap.

According to the World Economic Forum, while the education gap is nearly closed, women still hold less than 25% of C-suite positions globally. Representation matters—not just because it gives young women someone to look up to but also because it reinforces what is possible. When women lead visibly and unapologetically, it creates a ripple effect that erodes outdated norms and rewrites the leadership narrative.

At No Girl Left Behind, this is our mission in motion. We don't just empower women—we equip them. We provide mentorship that dismantles doubt, leadership training rooted in clarity and confidence, and spaces where women can practice taking up space before they're asked to prove they belong.

We teach values-based leadership—because when you lead from a place of alignment, imposter syndrome doesn't stand a chance. When you are clear on your purpose, your values, and your vision, external noise becomes background static.





For me, that clarity came from embracing my full story. Not just the polished version but the chapters I once tried to hide.

Once I integrated every part of my journey—failures, reinventions, and lessons—I no longer needed external validation to know I was qualified to lead. I stopped trying to fit a mold and started becoming the example I wish I had seen.

That's what I now help others do. Through coaching, public speaking, and hands-on leadership development, I teach women how to reclaim their narrative and lead from the inside out.

Because here's what I know for certain: you don't need more experience to lead—you need more belief. You don't need to be perfect to be powerful. And you absolutely do not need to shrink to fit the comfort of others.

Imposter syndrome is not a reflection of your readiness—it's a signal that you're stepping into new levels of leadership. The discomfort isn't the problem—it's the invitation. And when we collectively rise above it, we don't just close the confidence gap—we close the leadership gap.

To every woman who has questioned her place at the table:

**You are the table.
Pull up a chair.
Speak with clarity.
Lead with values.**

And know this—when you rise, you give every woman watching you permission to do the same.