

# Be Better

Issue 3

MAGAZINE

BETTER Nutrition

BETTER Health

BETTER Fitness

BETTER Style

BETTER Life

BETTER Mind

BETTER You

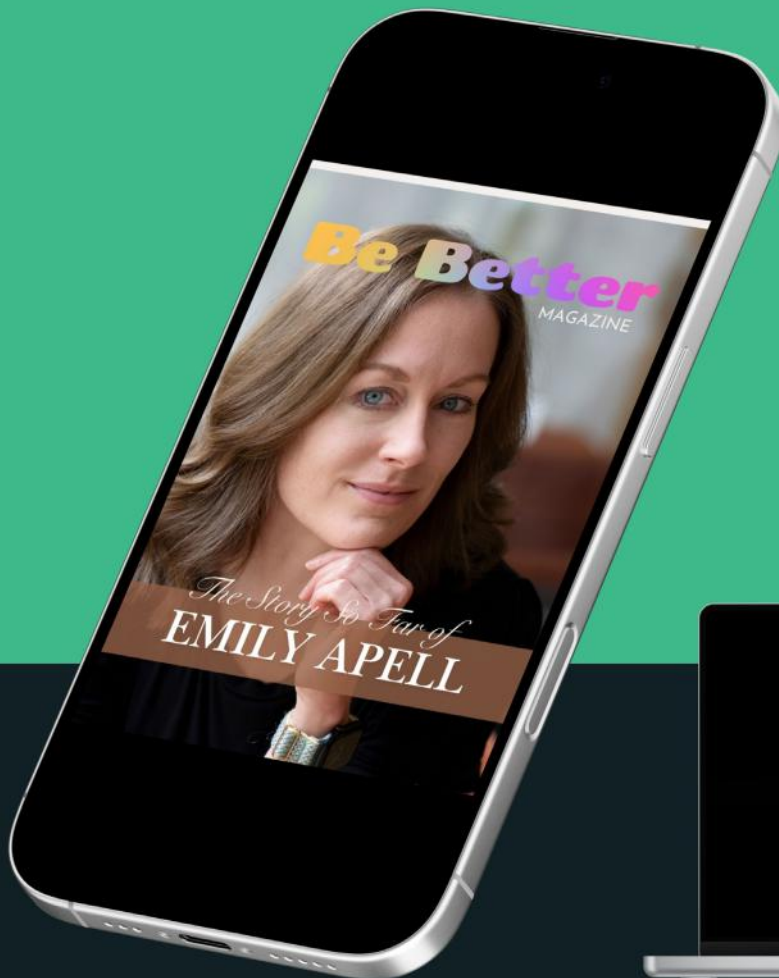
*The Story So Far of*  
**EMILY APELL**

BE BETTER MAGAZINE



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

As we move further into 2026, there is a clear and deliberate shift in how we bring voices to life.

Our publications have always been built on the belief that real stories, shared with honesty and intention, have the power to create meaningful change. That foundation remains unchanged. What is evolving, however, is how those voices are experienced, shared, and celebrated.

This year marks an important step forward for us as a publishing house. We are no longer just curating powerful insights within the pages of our magazines. We are taking those voices beyond the page and into the real world, creating spaces where our experts are seen, heard, and experienced in a far more direct and human way.

Through our growing presence at live events and showcases, we are placing our contributors at the centre of meaningful conversations. These moments are not about visibility alone. They are about connection. They are about bringing together individuals who are committed to growth, to wellbeing, and to making a genuine impact in their fields.

At the heart of this evolution is something that has always defined us: collaboration.

None of what we do exists in isolation. Every article, every insight, every shared experience contributes to something much bigger. A collective voice. A shared intention. A unified movement towards becoming better, not just as individuals, but as a community.

This edition is a reflection of that spirit. It is a continuation of the conversations that matter, brought to life by individuals who are not only experts in what they do, but who are deeply committed to helping others grow.

As you read through these pages, we invite you to not only absorb the ideas, but to feel part of something larger. Because Be Better has never been about perfection. It has always been about progress, connection, and the willingness to evolve. And in 2026, that journey is only just beginning.

**RANY ATHWALL**

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# CONTENTS & FEATURES

---



08

Special feature  
on  
**Emily  
Apell**

**The  
Career  
Coach**



14

## Kate Kleeberg

The Hidden Identity Gap



18

## Debbie Bryan

Becoming the Person Who  
Can Hold the Life You Want



20

## Sue Campanella

Muscle Testing  
The Ancient Smartphone  
of Your Body



22

## Jennie Sutton

7 steps to decide whether to stay or  
leave your marriage without regret

# INSIDE

---



30

**Jodie Hayward**

Success Isn't a Strategy Problem

34

**Crystal Johns**

Finding Strength in the Lows  
How Hitting Rock Bottom Led Me to My True Path



36

**Shardia O'Connor**

Why High-Quality Clients Are  
No Longer Responding to Most Brands





38

## Emma Hull

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



40

## Mary Scott

The Magic of Hip  
The Power of Real Connection



42

## Andrea Huber

As a Spiritual Leader  
You create Human Magic

# BE BETTER FEATURE STORY



I was raised in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and I still live not far from where I grew up. It's a city south of Green Bay, often recognized because of the Packers. For me, Oshkosh has always represented something simpler. It's a place where people notice whether you show up and follow through.

In my family, trust and loyalty were never debated. Family came first. Work mattered. If you said you were going to do something, you did it. Those expectations weren't spoken often; they were lived.

My father took over my grandfather's company and worked as an independent contractor. Construction was part of my life long before I understood what leadership meant. I watched long days begin early and end late. I watched responsibility extend beyond one person and affect many others. At the time, it felt ordinary. Looking back, I can see how much of that environment shaped my understanding of responsibility without my realizing it. "I didn't grow up talking about leadership," I often say. "I grew up watching it."

Like many people, I didn't start my career with a detailed plan. I chose stability. Early in my adulthood, I was navigating a divorce and preparing to raise children on my own. I needed a career that could support my family financially while still allowing me to do work that mattered.

Helping people has always been important to me. I had once considered becoming a police officer, but as a soon-to-be single mother, that path no longer felt right. Healthcare offered stability, purpose, and the opportunity to support others in meaningful ways.


I spent nearly eighteen years working in private medical practices, primarily in OBGYN and ophthalmology. I never worked in large corporate systems. The practices were personal. Patients were familiar. Relationships mattered. In private practice, people don't feel like numbers. They remember your name, whether you listened, and if things were explained clearly.

What came naturally to me was connection. I was able to calm even the most difficult patients and create a sense of ease during their visits. Over time, many patients felt like an extended family. I saw some monthly, or more often, and they shared stories about their lives, challenges, and families. I learned that tone can change the direction of a conversation. I learned that a person can be angry and scared at the same time, and if you only respond to the anger, you miss the real problem. "I can't make a procedure easier," I would think, "but I can make the experience calmer."

That was true in OBGYN, where people often arrived with fear, uncertainty, and deep personal stress. It was true in ophthalmology, where a diagnosis could change daily life. Many visits started with tension. A clear explanation, a steady voice, and a patient approach often changed what happened next. Those moments taught me something that stayed with me. People can handle hard news. They struggle when they feel rushed, dismissed, or confused.

I was also highly organized, which mattered in busy environments where precision and efficiency were critical. In ophthalmology, seventy-patient days were common. Phones rang, patients checked in, technicians moved, providers rotated rooms, and schedules changed in real time. When a day is that full, one missed step can create delays that ripple through every appointment after it. Order protects everyone's time. It also protects the team's energy.

A typical high-volume day meant scanning the schedule early, watching for bottlenecks, and preparing for the moments that would hit all at once. If a patient needed extra time, you adjusted without turning the office into chaos. If someone walked in anxious, you slowed down just enough to keep them steady, then you got the day back on track. It was fast work, but it was also people work. You had to keep the pace without losing connection.




**“Silence doesn’t keep the peace,” I learned. “It just postpones the work.”**

## BE BETTER MAGAZINE

I worked long hours and often took on extended days when needed. Over time, my responsibilities expanded beyond my formal role, which taught me a great deal about leadership and communication. I learned to notice what was about to break before it broke. I learned to speak up early, in a way that kept the day moving and protected patient care. One of the quieter lessons from that season was this. If you care about the outcome, you can't avoid the hard conversations. I was often in the role of addressing small issues before they became larger problems, and that required directness with respect. I didn't see it as "running" anything. I saw it as protecting the standard and supporting the team so we could better serve patients.

Burnout did not arrive suddenly. It showed up gradually, through sustained responsibility and constant demands. At the same time, I was raising my children on my own. When you carry both, you become skilled at planning. You also become skilled at pushing through fatigue.



**“I don't need a louder voice,” I realized. “I need clearer language.”**

A normal weekday required structure. Mornings were focused on getting everyone where they needed to be. Workdays were full. Evenings were intentionally predictable. Dinner together every night. Homework. Time outside with neighborhood friends throughout the year. Bedtime routines, a small snack, then lights out.

That routine wasn't rigid for the sake of being rigid. It was a foundation. It made life predictable for my kids, and it kept our home calm. It also taught them responsibility in an age-appropriate way. The basics were consistent. School. Home. Dinner. Homework. Sleep. When kids know the rhythm of a day, they worry less. They take fewer emotional swings. They feel more secure.

After my children went to bed, I usually had about an hour of quiet time to read or decompress before starting the next day. Structure wasn't a preference. It was necessary. It created security and predictability and reduced stress for everyone involved. It also taught me something I would later see again in leadership. People relax when they know what to expect. “Structure creates calm,” I learned during that season. “Without it, everything feels harder than it needs to be.”

That season also changed what I had patience for. When you live inside responsibility, you stop tolerating preventable chaos. You stop accepting vague plans and unclear roles. You value clarity because you feel the cost of confusion. Clarity wasn't a personality trait. It was survival. It was also respect for other people's time.

As time moved on, the healthcare environment shifted, especially in the years following COVID, and the pace intensified. I still cared deeply about my patients, but I began to recognize that my professional interests were evolving.

I wanted a new kind of challenge. I wanted space to build and improve systems in a different setting. Construction was not part of my plan.

I came across a job posting for an office manager role at a construction company. I had no formal construction background, but I believed the answer would always be no if I didn't try. I applied, interviewed, and left unsure how it had gone. When I received the call offering me the position, I was genuinely surprised.

After I started, I asked my boss why they chose me. He explained that my family history in construction had given me more exposure than I realized. More importantly, he said he could see that I was someone who could take initiative and shape a role into what the team needed. I stepped into the role during a period of growth, which required me to learn quickly and take initiative. The position was evolving alongside the organization, and I was trusted to help shape what the team needed moving forward. I asked questions. I listened closely. I built systems that removed confusion.

In those first weeks, I learned that being new doesn't mean being powerless. I started by learning how work moved, where it got stuck, and what questions kept repeating. Then I built simple tools that made it easier to find the answers. What surprised me most in my first year was how familiar I felt despite the industry change. I didn't know fire sprinkler systems, but I understood people, organization, and process. Creating structure and building systems that supported the team came naturally and helped me find my footing quickly.

What required adjustment was learning the industry while defining my role at the same time. There was no template. I had to trust my judgment, ask thoughtful questions, and remain open to learning. I learned to be clear, concise, and consistent. I learned that people respect you when you tell the truth, even when the truth is "I don't know yet, but I will find out."

It took about a year for me to fully understand how critical leadership was alongside technical skill. Learning the industry mattered, but how I showed up mattered more. Being visible, consistent, and approachable built trust across teams. I realized that people were not only looking for answers. They were looking for steadiness. They wanted someone who would handle issues early, not let them linger.

I remember delaying an accountability conversation because I didn't want to create conflict. That hesitation allowed a small issue to grow into something larger than it needed to be. Eventually, I had to address it anyway, and now the conversation carried more emotion because the pattern had been allowed to settle in.

## **“Silence doesn't keep the peace,” I learned. “It just postpones the work.”**

That moment changed how I saw leadership. Being dependable was no longer enough. Showing up early, staying late, and producing strong work did not create progress on its own. What created progress was using my voice thoughtfully and advocating for changes that supported the team. When I began having clearer conversations and standing behind decisions, progress followed.

There was another lesson underneath that shift. I had to learn the difference between commitment and over-responsibility. Early on, I believed that saying yes was the best way to support the team. If something needed to be done, I stepped in. If someone was overwhelmed, I absorbed the work. It wasn't about control. It was about reliability.

Over time, I realized that constantly being the one to say yes didn't always help the team move forward. It kept work moving in the moment, but it didn't always create clarity about ownership. I learned that leadership wasn't about carrying more. It was about making responsibility visible and shared.

Trust became my anchor. Trusting that people understood their roles. Trusting that clear expectations mattered more than constant availability. Trusting that supporting the team meant creating structure, not absorbing pressure.

Trust also meant being consistent, setting direction early, and staying accessible without inserting myself into every detail. Addressing issues directly, then allowing people space to do their work.



**“The best days aren’t perfect,  
I often say. “They’re clear.”**

Over time, the results became clear. Processes strengthened. Efficiency improved. Deadlines were met. The team became more confident and self-directed. When expectations were clear, and communication stayed consistent, stress dropped. Calm replaced urgency, and the work reflected it.

People continued coming to me for advice, as they always had. Friends, colleagues, and coworkers asked questions about careers, leadership, and navigating change. The details were different, but the deeper need was the same. They wanted clarity. They wanted to know what they were capable of. They wanted to be seen for their strengths and guided through their next step.

For many years, the idea of becoming a coach lived quietly in the background. I knew that helping people succeed was part of who I was. I also knew that responsibility had to come first. I raised three children on my own for many years. I made choices

that kept life stable, even when it meant putting my own goals on hold. That season built resilience, but more than that, it built perspective. It taught me what people really need when life gets heavy. They need clarity, steadiness, and someone who doesn’t judge them for being human.

I also made a deliberate decision to continue my education in business and professional development. Through structured business education, including Dean Graziosi’s Mastermind Business Academy, I gained a clearer understanding of how experience, leadership, and communication translate into sustainable impact. That education helped me organize what I had lived and apply it with intention.

It gave me better language for what I had been doing instinctively. It also reinforced that growth is not accidental. Growth is built, step by step, through learning and action.

“I don’t need a louder voice,” I realized. “I need clearer language.” That learning reinforced something I had been observing for years. Technical skill does not automatically translate to leadership readiness.

Leading people requires communication that is direct and respectful, decisions that are clear, and accountability that is consistent. It also requires emotional steadiness. People do not follow perfection. People follow consistency.

Today, I work in construction operations and continue to write about leadership, communication, and growth. Alongside my professional role, I support leaders navigating responsibility, confidence, and clarity. I keep the focus practical because work moves fast and teams depend on decisions.

A good professional day now feels balanced. I arrive and leave on time. Work gets done. The team feels supported. Stress stays manageable. If something unexpected happens, we address it and move forward. The day has momentum, but it doesn’t feel frantic. “The best days aren’t perfect,” I often say. “They’re clear.”

The leaders I respect most focus on their teams. They ensure people have the tools and support they need. They hold accountability with care. They continue learning and growing. They build a team mentality, not a me mentality. They protect standards without using fear. They create clarity so work can move without drama.

Leadership is not a title. It is a responsibility. A responsibility to help others succeed, to lead by example, and to have the conversations that move teams forward. Leadership also means being the voice for change when change is needed. It means being steady when others feel pressure.

When I look back, the thread is clear. From a small town in Wisconsin to healthcare and then construction leadership, responsibility has guided every chapter. I didn't always feel ready for what was next. I did have a pattern. Set a goal. Do the work. Learn what you need. Keep going.

**“If my team is successful,”  
I often say, “that means I’m  
doing my job.”**

I hope readers feel empowered by this story. You can choose clarity, build structure, and keep moving. You can take the interview even if you don't match every line. You can learn what you need and grow into the next level.

I am still in Oshkosh. I live with my significant other, Shawn, and my youngest son. My older children are grown adults now, and I'm proud of all three. When I look around at my life today, I don't see a straight line. I see chapters, choices, and lessons earned through work.

“This is the story so far,” I tell myself. “And the next chapter is mine to write.”



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# The Hidden Identity Gap



## Why change keeps backfiring after healing

For many people who have done years of inner work, the most disorienting moment does not arrive at the beginning of the journey. It arrives after. It arrives when insight is no longer the problem — when self-awareness is high, patterns are understood, and the inner landscape feels familiar. The origins are known. The language is there. The coping strategies can be identified as they occur. And yet, real-life change keeps collapsing or feels incredibly slow.

Boundaries do not hold.

Decisions feel clear in theory but difficult to sustain in practice. When something is at stake — a relationship, a reputation, a sense of belonging, behaviour quietly defaults. This is not because people lack courage or desire. It is not because they have failed to heal “enough.” It is because many reach a point where they know themselves to be internally changed, but the nervous system has not yet learned how to live from that identity when life applies pressure.

This is the Hidden Identity Gap: the space between internal awareness and embodied capacity. It remains largely unnamed because it does not show up as confusion or dysfunction. It shows up in people who are articulate, reflective, emotionally literate — people who appear healed. Internally, it is often experienced as a persistent tension: the discomfort of knowing one’s truth with clarity while repeatedly watching behaviour fall short of it. The gap only becomes visible in moments of consequence, when insight alone is no longer sufficient to carry behaviour forward.

## When healing stops translating into life

After enough healing, most people are not confused about what they want. They can describe, often with striking clarity, the relationships they want to be in, the work they want to do, the way they want to move through the world. They can feel the truth of it internally. They know what no longer fits. Something has shifted.

And yet, externally, very little changes.

The same conversations are avoided.

The same environments are tolerated.

The same roles reappear the moment there is discomfort, uncertainty, or relational cost.

This does not usually present as dramatic self-sabotage. It appears in ordinary moments: a truth rehearsed, a text message written 12 times and then softened; a boundary nearly held and then delayed; a decision deferred once the imagined consequences come into view.

Because this phase follows significant effort, the disappointment is acute. People do not invest years in therapy, coaching, somatic work, or spiritual inquiry for intellectual enrichment. They do it because they believe — consciously or unconsciously — that healing will lead to a different life.

When it does not, the conclusion becomes personal.

I must not be ready yet.

I must be missing something.

I need to go back and keep working on myself.

What is rarely articulated is that this moment is not always a signal to return inward. Often, it marks the beginning of a different developmental phase. Healing is designed to build awareness. It teaches people to recognise their patterns, understand their history, and relate to themselves with greater honesty and compassion.

The next phase asks a different question.

Not Why am I like this?

But what is required of me now?

### How identity actually forms

The difficulty many people encounter at this stage is not a lack of insight, but a misunderstanding of how identity stabilises. Identity is not formed by understanding alone. It is formed — and maintained — by repetition.

By the thoughts that are returned to under pressure.

By the beliefs that organise decisions.

By the behaviours that are relied upon when something is at stake.

Over time, these repetitions consolidate into personality, and personality produces lived reality. This is why insight, while necessary, is not sufficient. Healing can radically change how someone sees themselves. It can dismantle old narratives, expose survival adaptations, and restore access to a more authentic internal reference point.

But unless behaviour changes in real situations, identity does not fully reorganise around that awareness.

This is where the hidden identity gap emerges. Internally, a person recognises who they are becoming. Externally, their nervous system still defaults to responses that were rehearsed over years of coping, accommodation, or self-protection.

The result is a persistent mismatch between self-concept and lived experience.

### Why knowing does not equal fluency

A useful way to understand this gap is through language. It is possible to understand a new language long before it can be spoken fluently. Someone may know exactly what they want to say — yet when they are tired, emotionally activated, or socially exposed, they revert to their native tongue.

Sometimes, they say nothing at all. Not because they lack comprehension. Because fluency under pressure requires practice. Identity functions in the same way.

Healing expands awareness faster than the nervous system can stabilise new behaviour. Insight arrives before fluency. Knowing precedes doing. Without lived repetition, the body relies on what it has rehearsed most often — not what the mind has recently learned.

This is why people can name a pattern while enacting it. Why can they articulate a boundary that they still struggle to hold? Why can they sense the truth of a different life and still default when the moment arrives?

What is often framed as an unresolved past is frequently something else entirely.

An untrained present.





### How the gap widens

The hidden identity gap does not remain static. It widens.

Each time someone moves toward the life they want, their nervous system responds. Sensation arises — uncertainty, contraction, unfamiliarity. When this is interpreted through a healing framework, it is read as a signal to stop, reflect, and return inward.

So they do.

They step back from the edge and go back to healing.

They think more deeply.

They understand themselves more clearly.

They refine their language.

They see with greater precision what no longer fits — and what they want instead.

### This is where the widening begins.

It is like standing at the edge of a river you intend to cross. Each time you approach the water, you feel its coldness and step back, telling yourself you will cross once you feel more ready. You return to the bank, gather more information, study the terrain, and imagine the other side in greater detail. But the river does not stay the same.

Each return sharpens your vision. You see further. You want more. The life on the other side becomes clearer — more specific, more compelling. And with every delay, the distance between where you stand and where you want to be feels larger.

Not because the crossing has become more dangerous —

But because awareness has expanded without movement.

Over time, a pattern forms. Each retreat quietly teaches the nervous system that wanting leads to withdrawal.

That desire must be managed.

That clarity is safer when it remains theoretical.

The river widens — not from failure, but from accumulation.

More insight.

More awareness.

More longing — without a way across.

Healing expands the map.

Without a practiced crossing, the map becomes painful to hold.

The lens that determines the outcome

At this stage, what determines whether change becomes possible is not what arises internally, but how that experience is interpreted. The same sensations can point in very different directions, depending on the lens being used.

Through a healing lens, discomfort signals something unresolved. Activation prompts introspection. The implicit question becomes: What do I need to understand or process before I can move forward?

This lens is not wrong. It is how awareness is built.

But once healing has generated sufficient awareness, the same lens can begin to distort what is happening in real time because expansion in the beginning does not feel like confidence. It feels like unfamiliarity.

Not danger.

Newness.

When unfamiliarity is misread as a problem, people slow down, analyse, and stop — precisely at the moment growth becomes available.

If we were to look at the same situation through a different lens, it would ask a much simpler question.

Am I actually unsafe right now?

If the answer is no, the work shifts from analytical to practical.

The question is no longer why this sensation is here, but whether you can stay present with it long enough for something new to be learned. Can you tolerate the discomfort of not managing the outcome?

Can you remain steady while someone is disappointed, uncertain, or upset by your choices? Can your nervous system experience — in real time — that choosing differently does not result in danger, abandonment, or loss of connection?

Nothing dramatic is required.

No breakthrough moment.

No emotional resolution.

The signal itself has not changed.

Only the meaning assigned to it has.

What matters from here is not further insight, but how that insight is carried when there is pressure, consequence, or relational cost.

This phase is often referred to as integration, though it is rarely articulated clearly. . . What is required next is a shift in focus — from insight to lived capacity. From understanding who you are to learning how to live as that person.

It is not a continuation of healing in the inward sense, but a distinct developmental stage: the repeated practice of new responses in real situations until they stabilise. Until the body no longer defaults to what was once familiar, simply because it hasn't rehearsed something else often enough to hold.

Embodiment is the outcome of that process.

It is what it looks like when behaviour begins to match internal clarity — not because it feels comfortable, but because it has become lived.



## The Hidden Identity Gap

What closes the hidden identity gap is not more healing. It is learning how to live from a changed identity when the conditions are no longer internal, but real.

Healing alters awareness.

Integration — in its truest sense — alters behaviour under pressure.

Until that translation occurs, people can know themselves deeply and still live lives that no longer reflect who they are. Not because they are resistant or afraid, but because no one ever taught them how to stabilise a new identity in motion.

The hidden identity gap closes when insight is no longer treated as the destination, but as the beginning of a different phase of development — one where life, not introspection, becomes the training ground.

By Kate Kleeborg

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# Becoming the Person Who Can Hold the Life You Want



**By Debbie Bryan**

International Motivational Speaker and  
Award Winning Business Coach

**T**here's a moment most people don't talk about. It's not the moment you decide you want more. And it's not the moment you finally get it either. It's the uncomfortable space in between, where your life starts asking you to become someone slightly different in order to hold what you say you want.

I've been thinking about this a lot recently, both personally and professionally. For years, my work has been about helping people show up more clearly, on stages, in business, in leadership, and in life. I've helped people step onto TEDx stages, reposition their businesses, find their voice, and grow in ways that feel aligned rather than forced. And yet, even with all that experience, I've found myself face-to-face with the same question many of the people I work with wrestle with: Am I actually showing up as the person who can hold the next level of success I say I want? Because wanting success and being ready for it are not the same thing.

## **The identity shift nobody prepares you for**

We talk a lot about confidence, mindset, and visibility. But what's often missed is the deeper identity shift that has to happen underneath. Success isn't just about doing more. It's about becoming someone who makes different decisions. That might mean: charging properly instead of being liked being clear instead of being accommodating letting go of roles that once fit, but no longer do. These shifts can feel unsettling, especially for women who've been rewarded for being helpful, adaptable, and quietly capable. This is something I see again and again with the quietly brilliant women I work with, women who are respected, relied upon, and admired... yet somehow still overlooked when it comes to recognition, opportunity, or income. Not because they're lacking talent. But because they're still showing up as a previous version of themselves.

## **When visibility isn't the real issue**

We're often told that if things aren't moving, we need to be more visible. Louder, more active, more present. But visibility alone doesn't create trust, and it doesn't create authority.

I've met countless people who are visible everywhere, yet still feel unseen in the ways that matter most. And I've met others who say very little publicly, yet are chosen again and again because their clarity does the talking for them.

What makes the difference is not volume, but alignment.

Alignment between who you are now and how you present yourself. Alignment between the level you're operating at and the decisions you're willing to make. Alignment between the success you want and the identity you're holding onto.

### **Why this matters now**

Recently, I've been stepping more fully into naming my own work, not changing it, but owning it. Alongside my role as a TEDx speaker and co-curator, and through the events and conversations I'm now hosting, I'm seeing something very clearly- people don't need more noise.

They need clarity that matches where they are now.

This is especially true for leaders and founders who have outgrown their old ways of showing up, but haven't yet updated how they see themselves or how they allow others to see them. That gap is where people stay stuck.

And it's also where the most meaningful shifts happen.

A quieter, braver question

Instead of asking:

"How do I get more success?"

The more powerful question is:

"Who do I need to become to hold it calmly, confidently, without apology?"

That question changes everything.

It changes how you speak.

How you price.

How you choose opportunities.

How you allow yourself to be seen.

And it often marks the beginning of a much more sustainable kind of success, one that doesn't require constant proving.

### **A closing thought**

Quietly brilliant was never about staying small.

It was about trusting that substance travels further than noise.

As we move into a new season, I find myself increasingly interested in this quieter kind of courage, the courage to evolve your identity, not just your output. Because the life you want isn't waiting for you to work harder. It's waiting for you to arrive as the person who knows they belong there.





# Muscle Testing

## The Ancient Smartphone of Your Body

**Muscle testing is more than a diagnostic tool; it is a bridge between the conscious and subconscious, the physical and energetic.**

**O**ur bodies know exactly how to heal themselves. We just need to use the right tools and ask the right questions.

Wouldn't it be nice if your body had access to a smartphone like you do, so it could call you when it needed help? The human body is beautifully designed so that it does not need any cutting-edge technology to communicate.

Since the human body's inception, it has used the tried-and-true ability to give us symptoms, which most of us like to ignore. Some symptoms seem to disappear without our noticing, only to manifest elsewhere in the body later, while others get progressively worse until we can no longer ignore them.

How can we effectively communicate with our bodies? Muscle testing. Muscle testing is a tool, not a diagnosis, but when used properly, it can give you important information about your symptoms and how to get to the root of what is causing them.

This will give you the ability to rebalance your body, which can lessen and potentially relieve the symptoms. I have seen this firsthand in my business as an Energy Therapist. Everyone can learn how to muscle test; it just takes time and practice.

Muscle testing stands out as a practice that bridges the physical and energetic realms. Known formally as applied kinesiology, muscle testing has evolved from its roots in Traditional Chinese Medicine and chiropractic care, to today's world of energy medicine, where it is a widely used tool for accessing the subconscious mind by-passing the conscious mind. It can identify emotional blocks (even those causing physical symptoms), nutritional needs and energetic imbalances.

Here is a simple example of how anyone can use muscle testing. Your doctor tells you that you need more Vitamin C. Obliging, you run out to your local pharmacy to get it. When you get there, you are hit with multiple varieties of Vitamin C.

What typically happens here? If you are like me, your eye is immediately drawn to the nicest label. You may discern if you like tablets over capsules, but really, how else do you know which Vitamin C bottle on the shelf holds the best type for your body?

You can use the Sway Test. This is a form of Muscle Testing that you can easily practice on your own.

In this scenario, to use the Sway Test, hold the bottle of Vitamin C in your hands, take a deep breath and try to clear your mind. Ask out loud or in your head: Is this Vitamin C in my highest and best good? If it is, your body will sway slightly forward, just a little bit, you won't fall over. My body sways a little sideways forward.

If the Vitamin C you are holding is not good for you for whatever reason, your body will slightly sway backwards. How I remember which way is which, you always want to be moving forward in life, not living in the past (or behind you).

A fun way to practice this or create a cool party trick is to try the cup game. Have someone put water in one cup, and something not good for you, like laundry detergent, in another, then try the Sway Test in front of each cup, asking, "Is this in my highest good to consume?" Practice makes perfect, so be sure to look in the cup before drinking! This is also a fun way to get your children to start to learn the Sway Test for themselves.

Other ways to muscle test include the O-Ring or Finger Pull test, or using a pendulum to get the yes-or-no answer you are looking for.

Muscle testing is more than a diagnostic tool; it is a bridge between the conscious and subconscious, the physical and energetic. It invites us to listen to the body's wisdom, to trust the subtle signals that guide us toward balance and healing. Muscle testing, when used with integrity and intention, can transform the way we approach health and self-awareness.

By Sue Campanella

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*Sue Campanella, founder of Transformations Life Coaching & Healing, LLC, is an award-winning energy therapist, an acclaimed speaker, and co-author of several books, including Chicken Soup for the Soul.*

*She has empowered thousands of awakening women—those seeking to reclaim their voice and truth—through spiritually guided coaching, the Emotion, Body, and Belief Code modalities, and bespoke tools for lasting alignment.*

*For over a decade and a half, Sue has embodied empowerment as a lifestyle, guiding women to live authentically and consciously every day.*



# STEPS TO DECIDE WHETHER TO STAY OR LEAVE YOUR MARRIAGE WITHOUT REGRET



## Introduction

Making the decision to remain in or leave a marriage is one of the most difficult and emotionally complex choices a person can face in their life. It is rarely a clear-cut moment of certainty. Instead, it often unfolds over months or even years of internal questioning, emotional turmoil, and reflection.

When a relationship has been part of your life for decades, the decision carries additional weight. There are shared memories, mutual responsibilities, family connections, financial ties, and the simple reality of having built a life together. The 'me' becomes 'we'. But what about when the 'we' becomes 'me' again?

For many people, the thought of ending that chapter can feel overwhelming. Some clients even describe the idea of leaving as if all those years might have been "a waste." Yet, that is rarely the case.

Research shows that more people in midlife are facing this crossroads than ever before. Several societal changes contribute to this. People are living longer, which means the prospect of spending decades in an unhappy relationship feels harder to sustain and accept. Women now have greater economic independence, giving them more freedom to make choices about their future. Many couples also experience a shift when children leave home, known as the 'empty nest' stage, which can reveal issues that were previously hidden by the busyness of family logistics and life.

Retirement can bring further changes. When couples suddenly spend far more time together, the quality of the relationship often becomes impossible to ignore. Many people realise they are unwilling to spend the next twenty or thirty years in a marriage that no longer brings them fulfilment and joy.

If you find yourself at this turning point, you are not alone. The purpose of this article is to guide you through a thoughtful, step-by-step process so you can gain clarity and move toward a decision that feels right for you and your wellbeing, both now and in the future.

## 1. Let go of the fear of making the "wrong" decision

One of the biggest reasons people remain stuck in indecision is the fear of making the wrong choice. Many people imagine that if they leave, they might regret it forever, or if they stay, they may be settling for less than they deserve.

It is important to acknowledge something early on. There is rarely a perfectly right or wrong decision in situations like this. Life is complex, and the meaning of our choices often becomes clear only with time and reflection. What often keeps people frozen is not the decision itself, but the fear surrounding it. We start being paralysed in our decision-making through over-analysis and perhaps even through our imagination.

Our brains are wired to seek safety and familiarity. The primitive part of the brain prefers routine and predictability because these things feel secure.

Change introduces uncertainty, and uncertainty can trigger fear. Fear then keeps us stuck in a loop of the same thoughts. It's like being on a hamster wheel of questions, but constantly looking for the answers.

This fear often shows up in practical concerns. For example,

- What will happen financially?
- Where will I live?
- How will this affect the children?
- What will others think of me?

Emotions such as guilt, shame, or fear of judgement can also feel overwhelming. It can feel as though one wrong move will cause everything to collapse, like the domino effect.

However, acknowledging these fears is the first step toward loosening their grip of paralysis. Instead of avoiding them, ask yourself three honest questions:

- Am I staying out of love, or out of fear?
- If nothing changed in this relationship, how would I feel five years from now?
- Is this marriage capable of healing, and if so, how much am I willing to invest in that process?

These questions can gently begin to reveal what is truly holding you back. Fear versus change.

## 2. Check in with your wellbeing

Many people approach this decision entirely from a logical perspective. They analyse the situation, list pros and cons, and try to think their way toward clarity. While thinking is important, it is not the only source of guidance.

We experience life through all our senses. Our emotions, physical sensations, and intuition often carry valuable information that the rational mind alone may overlook or undermine. The body can sometimes recognise stress or misalignment long before the mind fully understands it. I have firsthand experience of this because of living in my own 'Maybe Years'. Maybe things would improve; maybe, if I just changed my approach, our connection would blossom; maybe our relationship has run its course.

I reconnected with my inner wisdom, my body and really checked in with myself, not just intellectually but physically and emotionally. Here are my suggestions for you to consider:

- Do I feel more drained than uplifted in this relationship?
- What emotions arise most often when I think about my partner: anxiety, sadness, numbness, or happiness?

- Do I experience physical symptoms of stress such as headaches, poor sleep, tension, or constant fatigue?

Our bodies often whisper quietly and honestly. Listening to those signals can provide insight into what your deeper self is trying to communicate. Your inner knowing.

## 3. Look at the relationship without rose-tinted glasses

No marriage is perfect. Every relationship goes through difficult periods and moments of disconnection. However, there is a difference between temporary challenges and deeper patterns that consistently undermine the relationship.

At times, it becomes necessary to step back and look at the situation as objectively as possible. For me, I took the fall on my 30-year marriage, and saw it through an unhealthy cocktail of menopause, depression, loneliness, empty nest and lack of purpose.

What about you? Here, I share some common barriers to a healthy marriage.

- A lack of emotional or physical intimacy.
- Frequent conflict, disrespect, or unresolved resentment.
- Differences in core values or life goals.
- A loss of trust due to behaviours such as dishonesty or infidelity.

In more serious cases, there may be forms of domestic abuse, including emotional, verbal, physical, or financial abuse.

These situations should never be ignored. This is an area that's increasing in my practice, with many clients totally unaware of the red flags; they just put it down to 'this is how it's always been' or 'this is how we rub along in our marriage'.

Looking clearly at these patterns does not mean blaming yourself or your partner. It simply allows you to understand the true condition of the relationship so that your decision is based on reality rather than imagination and hope.





#### 4. Ask yourself if you've truly given the marriage your best effort

Before making a final decision, it can be helpful to ask what I often call the "No Regrets Test."

This means reflecting on whether both partners have genuinely attempted to improve the relationship. This has a timeframe of 3 months. When you consider it, it's a very short test when a marriage has spanned decades. Yet it's long enough to know whether you and/or your partner are giving your marriage one last and best shot, or if the writing is on the wall.

Communication through a three-pronged approach is what I advocate.

- Having open and honest conversations where the focus is on listening rather than blaming or defending. By taking turns, review what was great about the past week, what could be improved on, and how you'd like to connect for the next week coming. I call this my Sunday Summit. With no kids, no alcohol and no sitting across the table from one another.
- Invest in you and your insights. Through relationship and divorce coaching, I often work with clients who want to shine a light on their own patterns and behaviours. This then builds self-awareness. Because you can't change what you don't know until you know it.
- Love languages would be the final piece. Often, we express love from our frame of love, thinking that our partner has the same approach and needs. Instead, find out your own love language and then that of your partner's. Then have a conversation as to how you would love to be expressed and your partner's love language. I highly recommend Dr Gary Chapman's Love Language Quiz, as he was the founder of this phenomenon.

Sometimes these efforts lead to meaningful change and renewed connection. Other times, they reveal that the

relationship may not be able to evolve in the way both partners need it to.

If you have genuinely tried these avenues and little has changed, it is important to recognise that effort and what you've done. Hold your head up high and stand in your power. Walking away after giving your best shows courage, honesty, and respect for both yourself and the relationship you once had.

#### 5. Turn toward your fears and examine them

Human beings are natural storytellers. When we feel uncertain or afraid, the mind often creates narratives that amplify those fears through our imagination. That image then becomes fact. When in fact, it's a made-up story.

Sometimes fear appears like a large shadow on the wall. From a distance, it looks intimidating and overwhelming. Yet when we turn around and face the object casting that shadow, we often discover that it is far smaller than we imagined.

The same principle applies to many fears around separation and divorce. Instead of avoiding those fears, call them out and step into curiosity.

- Am I more afraid of being single or of remaining unhappy?
- If finances are a concern, what options might be available to me?
- What example of relationships am I modelling for my children?

Facing these questions directly can transform any future anxieties into more practical and logical challenges that can be addressed through a pen and paper exercise.

#### 6. Visualise both possible futures

Visualisation can be a powerful tool for gaining perspective. It allows you to mentally explore potential futures and observe how each scenario feels in your body. It also shifts you from facts into a future that your mind's eye can make compelling, drawing you closer to reality.

The staying put scenario.

Picture your daily life if you remain in the marriage.  
 How do mornings feel when you wake up beside your partner?  
 How do the two of you communicate throughout the day?  
 How do the dynamics between you make you feel?  
 On a scale from one to ten, how would you rate your level of happiness in this future?

The leaving and letting go scenario  
 Now imagine life after the relationship has ended.  
 There may be practical challenges, such as new routines, financial adjustments, and living arrangements, as well as your emotional state.  
 After the initial transition, how do you feel about your life?

Do you sense relief, freedom, sadness, peace, or perhaps a mixture of emotions?

By visualising both these scenarios, you can provide valuable insights into what you'll feel and what the future may hold.

### **7. Be your own cheerleader for your decision**

After working through these steps, you may find that clarity begins to emerge. Ultimately, no one else can make this decision for you. Friends, family members, and professionals may offer guidance, but the final choice belongs to you. You own your life, and your decision is as unique as your thumbprint.

Take comfort in knowing that you have not rushed the process. You have reflected carefully, considered multiple perspectives, and explored the emotional and practical realities involved.

If you choose to stay, commit to actively working on the relationship. Even if your partner is hesitant, focusing on your own growth can often create positive shifts within the dynamic around you. Relationships are interconnected systems. When one person changes, the ripple effect can influence the whole.

If you decide to leave, aim to make the transition as respectful and constructive as possible. The end of a relationship does not have to be filled with animosity and bitterness. With maturity and support, it can become a process that prioritises wellbeing and, where relevant, the needs of children.

Building a supportive “breakup team” can be incredibly helpful. This might include legal advisors, financial planners, therapists, or a relationship and divorce coach who can guide you through the transition.

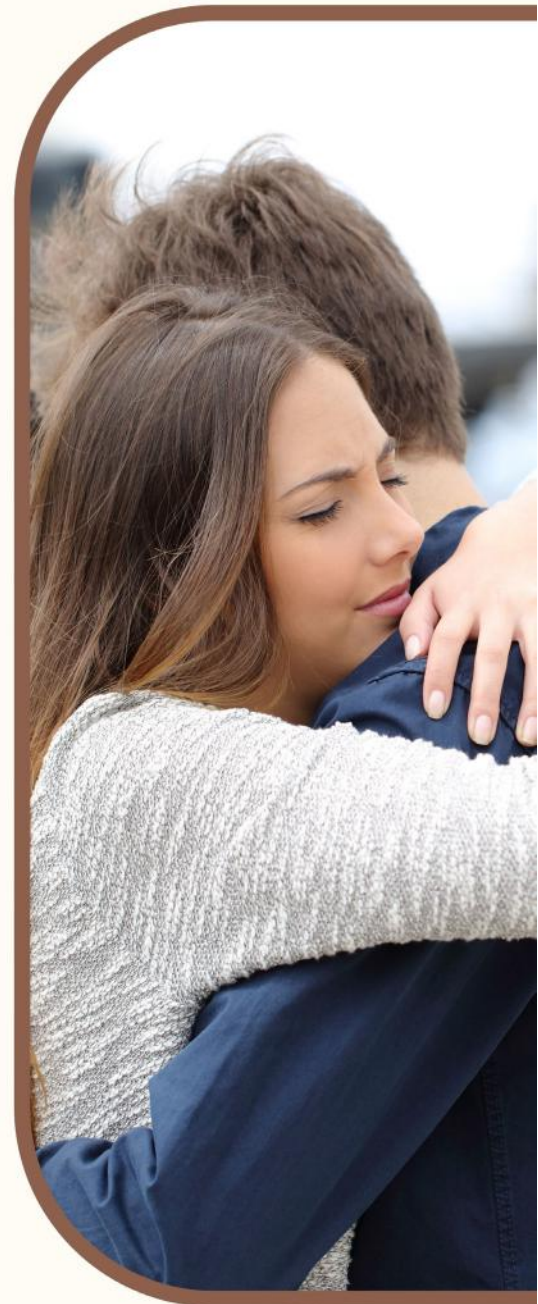
### **The beginning or the end**

Deciding whether to stay in a marriage or leave it is never simple. Yet clarity often emerges when you are willing to be honest with yourself and take thoughtful steps to explore your options. Your life belongs to you. Whatever decision you make should ultimately lead you toward greater peace, self-respect, and the possibility of a fulfilling and exciting future.

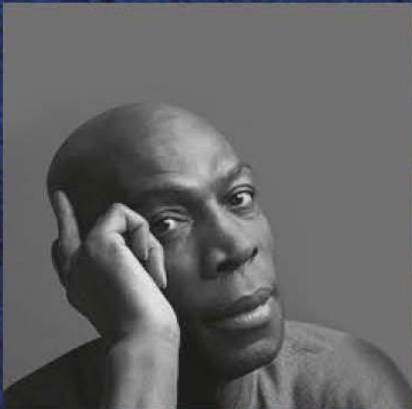
Sometimes the most courageous choice is not the one that appears easiest, but the one that allows you to live more authentically.

### **Take the next step**

Book a coaching call with me today and begin building the support you need to regain control, move forward with confidence, and make the decision that is truly right for your life, both now and in the future.



## Frank's Vision



"I don't suffer from Mental Health, I live with it."

The Frank Bruno Foundation is a direct result of Frank wanting to give something back to the community.

Frank has faced challenges both in and out of the ring and has always done so with determination, dignity, humour and humility.

It is Frank's bravery and honesty in talking about his battles with mental health issues, which continue to earn him the respect of those whose affection he won as a boxer. It is fitting then that supporting sufferers of mental ill-health is where Frank feels his attention is best focussed.

Frank has spoken openly of how exercise has played a vital role throughout his life whilst training as a professional boxer, and more recently in his battle with mental health challenges. Through his recent autobiography Frank has found the benefits of talking and sharing his experiences has not only enabled him to help others, but the public responses have empowered him to accept his own previous mental health challenges.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Frank Bruno" followed by a stylized smiley face symbol "☺".



## The Frank Bruno Foundation

The Frank Bruno Foundation has recently opened the Round By Round Centre.

This provides a base for structured non-contact boxing sessions and wellbeing programmes for anyone over the age of 10 years old who are experiencing problems with mental ill-health.

The Round By Round Programme consists of 8 weekly sessions of wellbeing and non-contact boxing.

The aim is to bring healthy body and healthy mind approaches together to provide a holistic and enjoyable method to supporting all clients with mental ill-health. This will increase:

- self confidence
- self regulation
- develop self worth
- develop social skills
- increase mental wellbeing

This will help to support social inclusion and physical and emotional strengths and achievements.

Our aspiration is that participants will use the skills they learn on the programme to develop a happier, more fulfilling and successful future. We will also offer signposting to any other appropriate agencies should this be requested.

Please see overleaf for the programmes we offer.



# MILTON KEYNES BUSINESS EXPO

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 29 APRIL 2026

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# Success Isn't a Strategy Problem It's an Identity One

We talk about success as if it's a fixed destination, something obvious and agreed upon, but most of us never actually stop to decide what success means for us in the first place. We inherit it. We absorb it. We step into adulthood already carrying expectations about what a good life is supposed to look like, often without questioning who those expectations belong to.

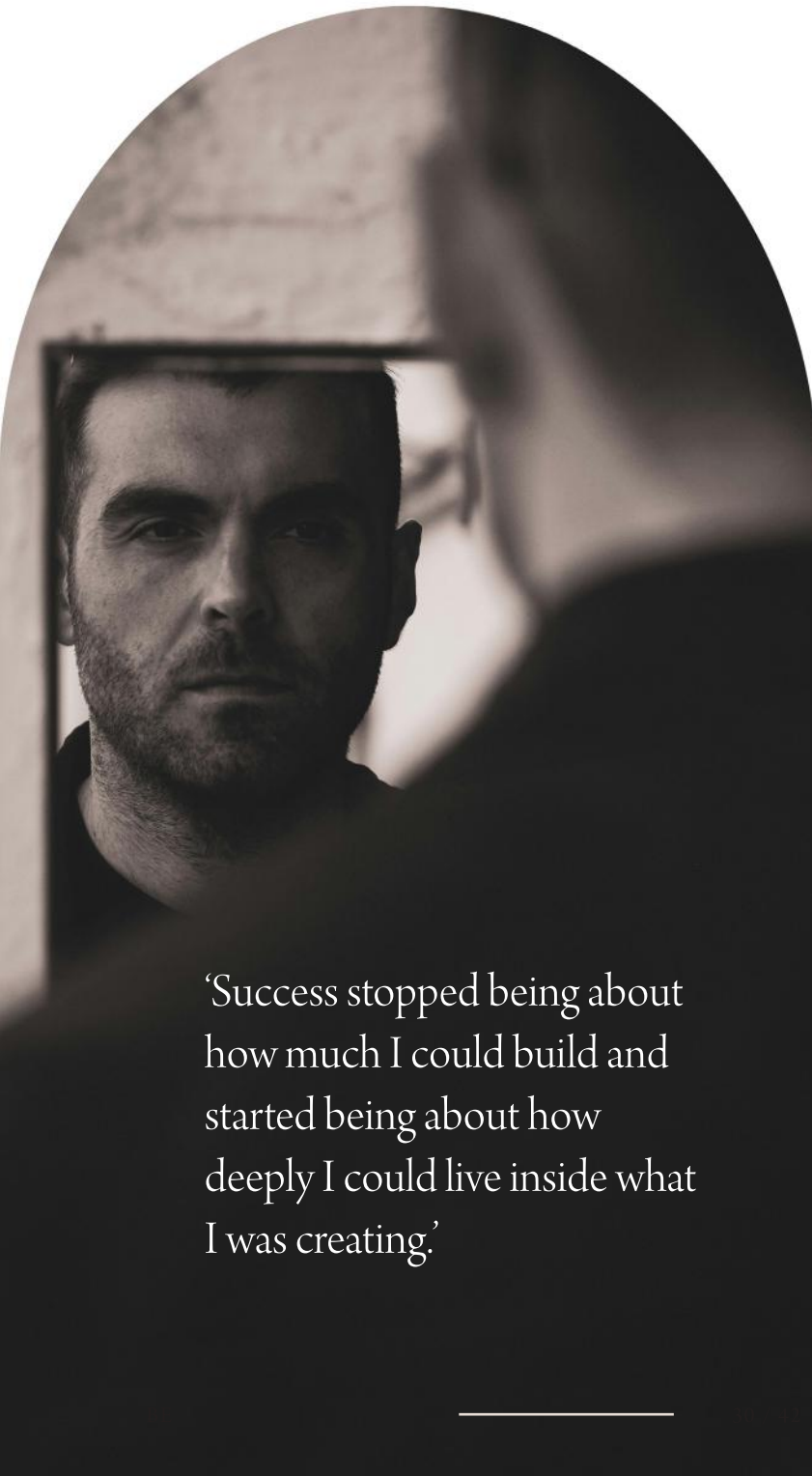
In life, it usually follows a familiar script. Build security. Find stability. Settle down. Get the job, the house, the partner, the children, the routine. Be sensible. Be responsible. And for many people, that path genuinely works. But for others, there's a persistent friction, a sense that even when you're doing everything "right," something still doesn't quite fit.

So you step off the traditional path... You start a business. You choose freedom over predictability because you believe the rewards of building something of your own are greater. And they are.

But not in the way most people expect.

The online business world has its own unspoken hierarchy of success, and it's just as powerful as the societal one we think we've left behind. The language changes, the aesthetics change, but the pressure remains. First, it's about reaching your first 5K month, then holding it, then scaling it, then multiplying it. Ten becomes twenty, twenty becomes fifty, fifty becomes a hundred, and the goalposts keep moving faster than your ability to pause and ask how any of this actually feels.

What makes this more complicated is that there are endless strategies, all contradicting each other, all backed by someone else's proof, someone else's certainty, someone else's results. And the piece that



‘Success stopped being about how much I could build and started being about how deeply I could live inside what I was creating.’

gets missed is that it's not the strategy doing the heavy lifting. It's the identity behind it. The confidence. The decisiveness. The willingness to take responsibility and move before certainty arrives.

A plan will only work if you're the person who can execute it, hold it, and evolve alongside it. Without that, even the best strategy eventually starts to feel heavy and unsustainable. And when you're ambitious, when you care deeply about the impact you have, of course, you look to the people who appear to be further ahead. Of course, you listen. Of course, you assume that if they've done it, this must be the way.

That's how self-abandonment happens. Quietly.

You don't set out to build a life or a business that doesn't feel good to live inside. You're simply following the maps that are most readily available to you, first in life, then again in business. And before you realise it, you've created something that looks like success from the outside but feels heavy or quietly exhausting on the inside.

I know this because I've lived it.

I built something that worked strategically, the model made sense, and the numbers stacked up. From the outside, it looked like success. But living inside that version of success required me to be constantly available, constantly producing, constantly switched on. I wasn't present, not fully. Not in my body, not in my life, and most painfully, not in the moments that mattered most to me as a mother.

We step off the traditional path because we believe the rewards of entrepreneurship are greater, more freedom, more choice, and more impact. But those rewards only exist if you're willing to take the real risk that business demands. And that risk is rarely external. It's not the market, the strategy, or the money.

It's the internal risk of having to change who you are.

The reason the rewards are greater is that the demand on your identity is greater. You're required to lead yourself. To look honestly at where you're playing small, where you're hiding behind busyness, where you're making excuses

that sound reasonable but keep you stuck. You're asked to take responsibility for your patterns, your avoidance, and your willingness to be seen.

For me, ambition didn't disappear. It matured.

Success stopped being about how much I could build and started being about how deeply I could live inside what I was creating. It became about building a business that matched the woman I wanted to be, not the one the industry celebrates.

Real success isn't just what you build, it's whether you're still present enough to experience the life you're building it for.

*By Jodie Hayward*



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## Finding Strength in the Lows

### How Hitting Rock Bottom Led Me to My True Path

**H**ave you ever thought, “Why is this happening to me?” Or “Why can’t I have a stable period in my life, even for a few months?”

The truth is, life is full of ups and downs. When we’re in the middle of a difficult situation, it’s hard to see the wood from the trees. Once we’ve come through the storm—and done the healing—we gain clarity. Whilst I’ve disliked the low points, I’ve come to realise they are essential. They allow us to grow, to reset, and to appreciate the highs when they arrive. I have learned to trust in divine timing. Even when it feels chaotic, we are always exactly where we need to be in our journey.

It can be difficult to have faith in the process, especially during the darkest of days, but there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, it is often the lowest points in our journey that teach us to appreciate the moments when life begins to come together. As human beings, we tend to focus on what we lack—whether it’s money, love, friendships, or career progression. When we feel down on our luck, our perspective narrows. Instead of noticing the opportunities right in front of us, we become consumed by our struggles and blind to possibilities. The truth is, opportunities are always there—we can’t see them.

Equally, in those moments, we often forget to appreciate what we do have. These are blessings that form the foundation of our resilience and growth.

Without challenges, we wouldn’t discover our true capabilities or recognise the strength we build through resilience and the transformation that comes from facing hardship.

Sometimes the most difficult experiences are not obstacles but essential parts of the journey. We may not always understand it, but more often than not, we are exactly where we need to be.

My transformation was during my engagement. I thought I was building towards the “two M’s”—marriage and a mortgage—with my fiancé. When that relationship collapsed, everything as I knew it came crashing down around me. It was a low point in my life, yet it became the catalyst for my transformation.



**“We may not always understand it, but more often than not, we are exactly where we need to be.”**

I sought therapy, faced past wounds, and started to heal my relationships—with family, friends, and, most importantly, myself. From there, I found the courage to start my own business. Along the way, I developed new skills, leadership qualities, and a mindset aligned with the most authentic version of myself.

Letting go of how my family, peers, or society judged me was liberating. For the first time in a long time, I wasn't living by anyone else's expectations. I embraced my individuality and shared my healing abilities with the world.

On reflection, my engagement and career had to fall away for me to start making changes in my life.

My breakdown became my breakthrough; I was forced to ask myself the uncomfortable question: “Is this really as good as life can get?” Of course, my answer was no. I knew I had to act, and in doing so, I set myself on an entirely new path.

What amazes me is how far I have come. The shy girl who once dreaded speaking up at school—or even asking for the bill at a restaurant—has since built a business, embraced her voice, and recently won an award for her work.

If you had told me in 2021 I would be running a business, I would have laughed and insisted nursing was my whole life. But life had other plans. Now I know I can achieve whatever I set my mind to.

The greatest gift I have received from my darkest moments is perspective. Sometimes we are exactly where we need to be, even if we cannot see it. Our lows are not the end of the story; they are often the very beginning of something far greater.



By Crystal Johns

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## WHY HIGH-QUALITY CLIENTS ARE NO LONGER RESPONDING TO MOST BRANDS

A quiet frustration is emerging among serious leaders, founders, and professionals. And it has nothing to do with budget, attention spans, or market saturation.

High-quality clients are disengaging because most brands are no longer speaking to them. Not intellectually. Not ethically. Not strategically. Instead, they are being spoken at, through diluted messaging, over-familiarity, and a relentless push to be accessible to everyone. And when a brand tries to be for everyone, it quietly signals that it stands for very little.

### The Accessibility Myth

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

High-calibre clients do not look for:

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

They look for:

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

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

### Consumers vs. Clients

One of the most important distinctions brands must make moving into 2026 is this:

You are not building an audience. You are selecting a community.

Consumers want ease. Clients want excellence.

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

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

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

### Why "Values-Led" Is Failing

Many brands claim to be values-led. Few are values-governed. Values without boundaries become branding. Values without consequence become decoration.

**“You are not building an audience.  
You are selecting a community.”**

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

Trust is built not through claims, but through consistency.

**Designing for Depth**

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

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

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

**The Role of Exclusivity**

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

**The 2026 Brand Shift**

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

They understand that:

1. Not everyone is ready
2. Not everyone belongs
3. Not everyone should have access

And that is not arrogance, it is leadership.

**Final Thought**

If your brand feels exhausted, it may not need more visibility. It may need better boundaries.

Because the most credible brands of the future will not shout, they will be recognised.

**By Shardia O'Connor**

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



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

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

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

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



### 1. Putting yourself last on the list

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

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



### 2. Expecting people to be mind readers

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

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



### 3. Avoiding hard conversations

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

Humans are not designed to run on cortisol and adrenaline long-term. It is essential that you give your central nervous system breaks to reset.

How to stop it: Schedule at least 15 minutes of downtime every day where you simply get to be.



6. Doing everything yourself

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

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



7. Second-guessing yourself

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

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



8. Perfectionism

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

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



9. Waiting for the perfect time

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

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



10. Dismissing your achievements

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

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

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

You Aren't Failing, You're Learning.

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

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

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



# The Magic of Hip

## The Power of Real Connection

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

### Enter Hip

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

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

### The Power of Vulnerability

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

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

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

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

“What began as resistance — my reluctance to join a guided tour, to travel with strangers, to step outside my comfort zone — became something deeply human.”

### **Moments That Stay**

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

### **Leading with Heart**

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

### **The World Needs More Hips**

What began as resistance — my reluctance to join a guided tour, to travel with strangers, to step outside my comfort zone — became something deeply human.

The truth is that the world needs more Hips.

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

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

**By Mary Scott**



# *As a Spiritual Leader you create Human Magic*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**By Andrea Huber**

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