

# EXPERT PROFILE

# WINTER 2024

# MAGAZINE



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# EDITORS NOTE

As we enter a new year, it's important to take a moment to reflect on all that we've achieved in 2024- both individually and as a collective. Every win, no matter how small it may seem, deserves to be celebrated.

Life has a way of throwing challenges our way, but it's in overcoming those obstacles, in those moments of growth, that we truly find our strength. Whether you've made progress in your career, taken a leap of faith in your personal life, or simply managed to get through another tough year, these victories are worth recognising.

Life isn't always about grand triumphs; sometimes, it's the quiet moments of perseverance, the small joys, and the lessons learned that make the most difference.

But let's not stop there. Let's make a commitment to go even bigger in 2025. Let's raise our voices, celebrate even more boldly, and embrace every opportunity to lift each other up. We've come so far, and the future holds endless possibilities. As we move into the new year, let's celebrate our accomplishments, honour our journeys, and keep pushing forward with the confidence that each win - no matter the size - adds to the magic of our lives.

Here's to celebrating every moment, every victory, and every chance to embrace life fully. May 2025 be the year we celebrate ourselves and each other with more joy, and echo our triumphs even louder.

Keep shining; the world is waiting in anticipation.

EDITOR - RANY ATHWALL



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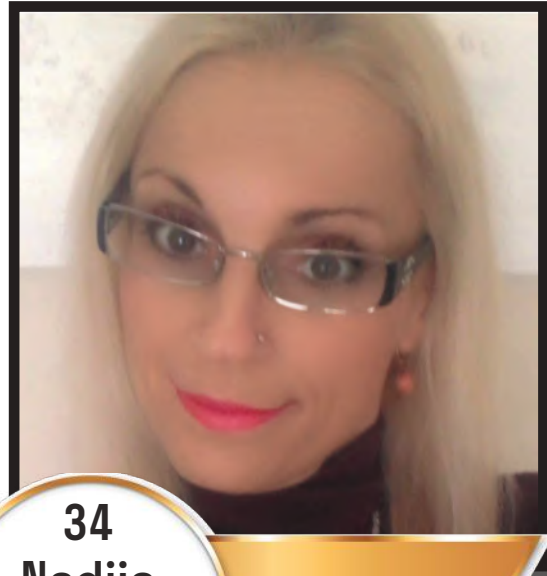


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# *Time for Reflection and Celebration*



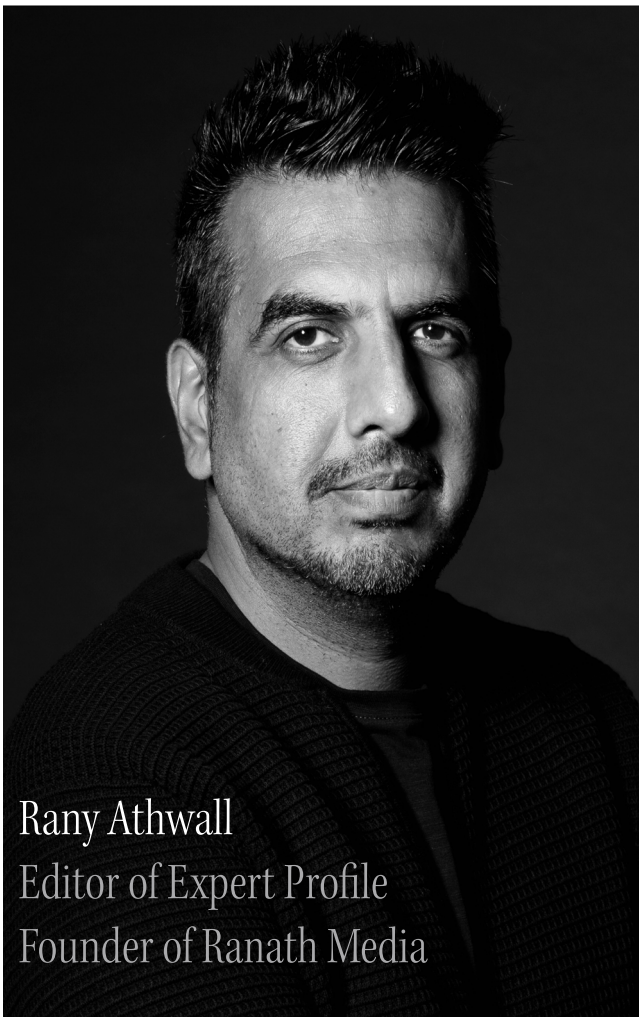
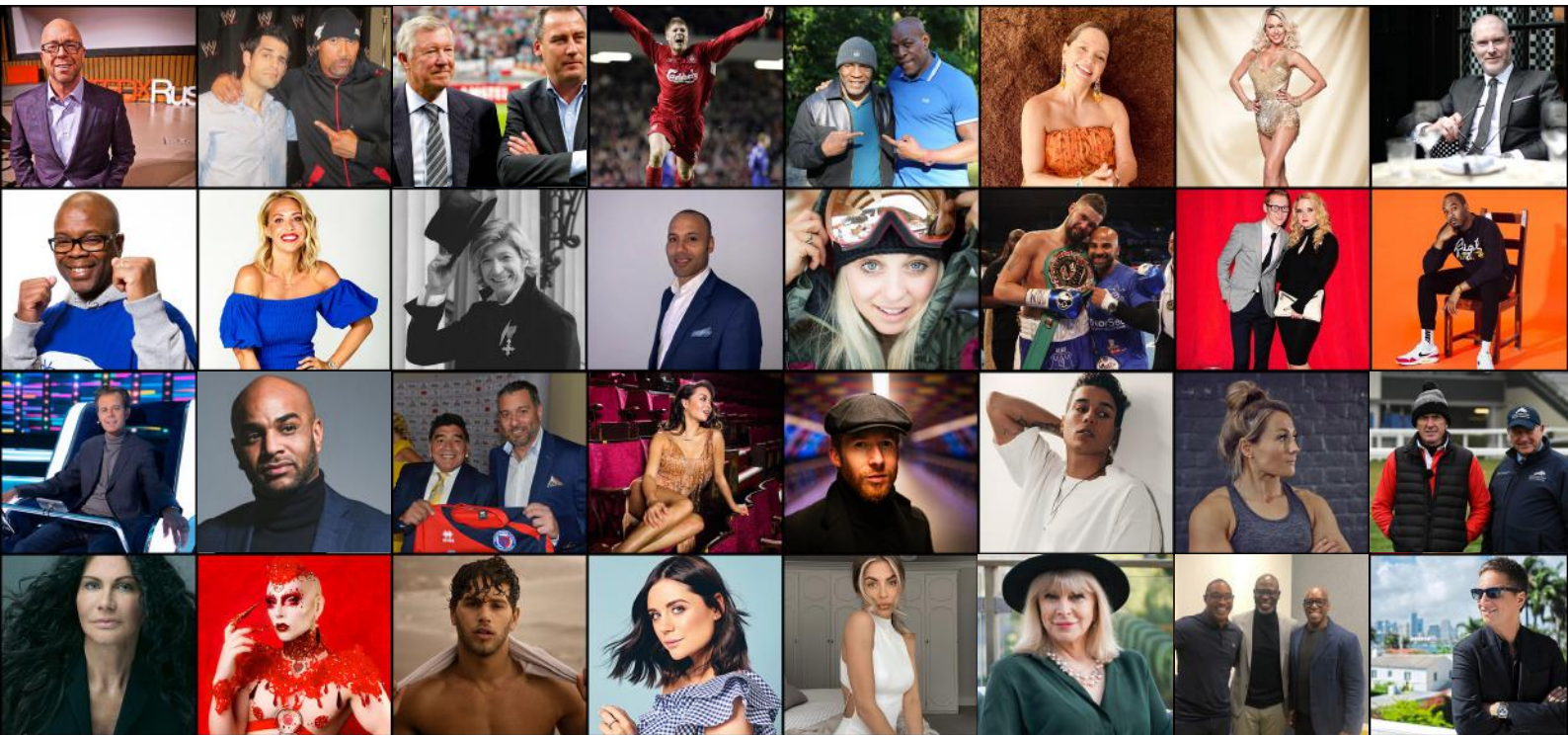
As we say goodbye to an extraordinary year, I find myself reflecting on all that we have accomplished together. 2024 has been a year of tremendous growth, collaboration, and purpose for Expert Profile and Ranath Media. Expanding our reach and sharing our diverse messages with a broader audience than ever before. This year, we didn't just create new content—we connected, inspired, and engaged with readers in meaningful ways.

## **Launching New Publications**

In 2024, we ended the year with the launch of three new publications. These weren't just business ventures; they were a natural evolution of our shared vision to amplify voices that are working towards making a real difference in the world. Each new publication brought its own unique focus, addressing diverse issues, highlighting influential leaders, and creating platforms for those who are actively working to improve the planet and the lives of the people who inhabit it.

Through these new publications, we will be able to reach entirely new audiences, further strengthening our mission of sharing valuable expertise and knowledge. The impact we've been able to create together this year is something I am incredibly proud of.

Looking back at our journey since the inception of Expert Profile and Ranath Media, one thing has remained consistent: our commitment to working with individuals who share one primary goal—to help others.



Rany Athwall  
 Editor of Expert Profile  
 Founder of Ranath Media

From the beginning, we have sought out experts who not only bring knowledge and expertise to the table but also carry strong ethical values and integrity.

This year, as always, we continued to collaborate with people whose tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to bettering the world shine through in everything they do.

Whether they're entrepreneurs, life coaches, mental health experts, innovators, or have an inspiring story, our contributors embody the ideals of compassion, respect, and a deep sense of responsibility toward others.

When I look at the work our experts are doing—whether through in-depth articles, interviews, or behind-the-scenes support—it's clear that our values aren't just words on a page. They're lived, breathed, and carried forward in each piece of content we produce.

Our experts don't just talk about making a difference; they take action every single day, inspiring others and driving meaningful change.



## **Entering Our Sixth Year - New Projects & New Collaborations**

As we prepare to start our sixth year, I am filled with excitement and anticipation. 2025 is going to be a monumental year for us. We are expanding our scope and reaching new heights as we work with even more influential and impactful brands and individuals. This will not only elevate our editorial content but also open up new opportunities for all connected. We're stepping into a new dimension of magazines, one that will see us working with people and brands who are well recognised for their work.

We will continue to push the boundaries of what's possible. This year will also mark the beginning of several exciting new partnerships, and I can't wait to see how these collaborations will further enhance our message. Whether through joint ventures with like-minded organisations or creating new avenues for creative expression, 2025 will be a year of innovation and growth. Our readers will continue to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and insight our experts bring, and we will continue to lead with purpose and integrity.

One of the other key ways we'll continue to elevate our experts is through our growing PR programme. We've always been proud of our ability to celebrate the voices of those we work with, but in 2025, we're taking this effort to a whole new level. We're committed to increasing the visibility of the incredible people in our family—people who are making real and lasting contributions to their communities and the world at large.

As we look to the future, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude to every individual who has contributed to our success. Whether you've written an article, shared your insights, participated in a project, or simply supported us from the sidelines, you are a vital part of the Expert Profile and Ranath Media family. Without your dedication, passion, and unwavering support, none of this would be possible.

Thank you for believing in our vision. Thank you for your hard work, your expertise, and your commitment to making a positive impact in the world. It's because of you that we continue to grow, innovate, and inspire. Together, we are building something truly special, and I am incredibly proud of everything we've achieved in 2024.

In closing, together, we've made a real impact in the world in 2024 and thank you for being part of this journey. The best is yet to come in 2025 and beyond.

# Our Selfless Souls



# 2025 personal brand trend

## Depth over diversification

As we close out another year, the marketing world's attention turns to 'what are next year's big trends'.

The interesting thing this year is that what's 'old' is set to become new again. Over the last few weeks, I've attended multiple business events, including hosting my own, and the consistent message has been the same: we want simplicity.

Consumers have so many choices that decision fatigue about what's 'the best' is setting in. Even Pantone has announced that the 2025 colour of the year is a very neutral, soft and unassuming colour of Mocha Mousse.

What does this move towards a simpler 2025 mean for personal branding? Several trends are emerging that take personal branding back to basics.

### 1. Human opinion is still the top driver before making a purchase

It's easy to believe that in the digital world, our social media follower count, number of Podcast downloads, or whether our content goes viral determines our credibility.

Yet, in a recent study run by Rory Vaden and his Brand Builders group, the research showed that 61% of Americans want their Doctor to have a personal brand.

Not exactly the celebrities we usually think about when we hear about personal branding.

Why is this the case? Vaden and his team investigated further and identified that the more responsibility and trust the role has, the more having a personal brand matters. It was no surprise that people wanted doctors and Lawyers to have established personal brands.

A personal brand is often positioned as a tool to increase visibility and attract more eyes to our business. However, the leading role and influence of a personal brand are still essential at its core: building trust in your reputation.

How can you apply this shift? People still hugely value client testimonials and hearing from the people you have helped to achieve results. Audit if your marketing channels are up to date with easily digestible client testimonials, such as short-form videos, and that you have a simple process to proactively collect clients' testimonials as clients work with you.

### 2. Concentration over-diversification

There has been a lot of attention on diversifying income streams, especially in the online space. Whether that is starting to sell digital products alongside your 'live' services or adding speaking engagements to your consultancy work, there are multiple ways to make money.

The question is, when is the 'right' time to do this?

Over the last few years, we have seen people focus on diversifying their income streams, and now we're seeing a move back to simpler business models. It sounds very obvious in hindsight, but multiple income streams also mean multiple layers of work. The commitment to setting up and maintaining several 'mini' businesses is huge and not always sustainable.

We're now seeing people move back into their core areas of expertise and double down on their depth of knowledge. I, for one, think this is an exciting shift. Most of the big names and 'personal brands' that are world-renowned today started with a core focus.

**Steven Bartlett: Simplified social media**

**Jeff Bezos: Amazon**

**Steve Jobs: Apple**

**Oprah: Talk show**

Once these people established themselves, they diversified into other areas such as events, Podcasts, speaking, brand partnerships. Their personal brand was established because of their dedication to becoming the best in their field. They build their reputations on clarity, conviction, and concentration in their area.

***They didn't diversify until that reputation was built.***

I predict that in 2025, we will see more people focusing on what they want to be known for. This may require stepping away from multiple income streams and focusing back on the one area of expertise that they can excel at and be known for.

How can you apply this shift? Reflect on what you want to be known for. What is your core area of expertise or knowledge that you can deepen your knowledge in? Review where there are opportunities within this area for you to covet. Is there an angle that no one else is talking about? Is there an approach or insight you are able to bring? Reflect on these questions to be able to focus on your area of personal brand genius in 2025.

### 3. Certainty and clarity outperforms being clever

One of the common pitfalls of personal branding is the belief that in order to stand out, you have to bring something that has never been done before. There are 34 million pieces of new content posted on TikTok on average each day. It's very hard to come through with something new.

The other risk of pursuing 'newness' is overcomplicating what your audience really wants. Instead of sharing exactly how you can help your audience, more focus is placed on the idea of 'sounding' new and different. This lack of focus usually leads to a lack of clarity in the message and a lack of impact on your personal brand.

Instead, 2025 will see a rise in clarity about what personal brands stand for. There will be a move towards using simpler language, simple 'relatable' concepts, and fewer acronyms to name frameworks or approaches.

People who can explain complex ideas in simple terms will demonstrate credibility with their knowledge. This will be a key way that personal brands stand out amongst the rise of AI-generated content. AI is certainly part of the future, but it currently cannot replace original thinking and insight.

How can you apply this shift? Check that your personal brand is speaking to what people find valuable. You don't need to create a new idea in order to stand out. Instead, reflect on whether you are clearly communicating your viewpoint on your area of expertise and see whether there are opportunities for you to get clearer and deeper into that topic.

### 4. Purpose leads to profit

According to PwC, consumers are willing to pay a 9.7% 'sustainability premium' on products, and, according

to Deloitte, 30% of consumers have stopped buying products because of ethical and sustainability concerns.

There is a growing focus on the ethics behind household brands, and we're seeing this reflected in how we build personal brands, too. It is also important to share your values and standpoint as part of your brand to convey authenticity. Personal branding is ultimately a way of communicating your reputation and building trust. This means that everything has to be in congruence with your opinions and decisions.

In 2025, expect to see more personal brands sharing the purpose and mission behind their stories and work. This has a commercial aspect, as consumers will look to the values and ethics of a personal brand to decide where to purchase from.

If you aim to become more visible with your brand in 2025, such as through events or speaking, then be prepared to share your values as part of your 'pitch'. It's not enough anymore to have the traditional credentials and accolades of what you've done and achieved. People are more interested in how you bring your point of view and authentic 'humanness' into the ideas and knowledge you share.

How can you apply this shift? Get clear on your values, not just what you do but what you stand for. Start sharing these values and viewpoints authentically via stories that connect your expertise to your personal and unique point of view.

In summary, 2025 marks a New Year, but in many ways, we're going to see a return to simpler times. Sometimes, time goes forward in order for you to remember what's really important: relationships, genuine connections, and plain, good old conversations.

By Rachel Pearson

[www.iamrachelpearson.com](http://www.iamrachelpearson.com)

[@rachelpearson.co](https://www.instagram.com/rachelpearson)

[www.linkedin.com/in/iamrachelpearson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/iamrachelpearson)



# Self Care Corner

## The Blur of Busyness

One of my passions in life is to volunteer and serve the community. One of my life goals is to become a philanthropist. I'm willing to lend my time and talents to extraordinary causes. My siblings and I were taught the importance of helping others at an early age. My mother would always share with us "The Tale of the Starfish":

A young girl was walking along a beach where thousands of starfish had washed up during a terrible storm. When she came to each starfish, she would pick it up and throw it back into the ocean.

People watched her with amusement.

She had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, "Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can't save all these starfish. You can't begin to make a difference!"

The girl seemed crushed, suddenly deflated. But after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it into the ocean as far as she could. Then she looked up at the man and replied,

***"Well, I made a difference for that one!"***

While I'm not on the Bill and Melinda Gates level, I believe my contributions make a difference to those I assist.

Although I love volunteering, I soon found myself in the vicious loop of overcommitment and ignoring my own wellbeing. I became overextended and failed to take care of myself. At the height of my activities, I was arriving home at 9:00 pm at least four nights a week. I'd leave home around 7:00 am each morning and wouldn't return home for at least 12-14 hours later. That's right, between Monday and Friday, I was working all day, then going to a meeting and lending my skills. I'll admit, it didn't happen all at once.

Little by little, I took on more and more. With each yes, I said no to my self-care and my need to decompress from a full day. I was exhausted and was no longer enjoying the projects. They began to feel like another responsibility that I had to manage. While driving home from another meeting, I remember the exhaustion that swept over my body one night. I gathered my belongings, and as I stumbled into my house, I huffed, "I'm so tired! I never seem to have any time to myself!" At that moment, I had the stark reality that I was the culprit behind my exhaustion.

I failed to acknowledge that I was responsible for my schedule and failed to honor my boundaries. From that moment, I learned a





valuable lesson. While it's good to be involved in activities, it's crucial to recognize when we're busy and not productive.

**What's the difference? Let's talk about it!**

What is busyness? Busyness refers to being engaged in various activities, tasks, or obligations. A frantic pace of work, multitasking, and a sense of urgency characterize it. Busy people tend to feel overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious. Busyness is often associated with a lack of focus and feeling constantly behind schedule.<sup>1</sup> A friend would often refer to this as spinning my wheels. It's a Southern colloquialism to say that while you're it looks like you're going places, you're still in the same place. Nothing has happened.



What's productivity? Productivity is about being intentional, proactive, and efficient. It's about achieving results, being practical, and doing things that move you closer to your goals. Productivity requires that your actions have meaning and purpose—you are intentional about what you do professionally and personally.<sup>2</sup>

The primary difference between the two is intentionality. I had to learn that while my desire to serve was honorable, my actions did not lead to tangible results. Our meetings never produced an event, product, or service that helped anyone. We were stuck in the brainstorming phase. Eventually, I removed myself from the organizations and had to learn how to reprioritize my time.

**BEVERLY JOHNSON**

**beverlyjohnson.com**

**IG handle: imbeverlyjohnson**

**Facebook: Coach Beverly K. Johnson**

**Email: hello@coachbeverlyjohnson.com**

**Here are a few strategies to help navigate those moments of busyness:**

- 1. Schedule your projects into smaller tasks.** Set aside some time to disconnect and clear your mind. Taking a break allows you to reset your mental state and approach the task with renewed focus.
- 2. Permit yourself to say no.** Busyness often stems from taking on too many commitments. Learning to say no to tasks that don't align with your goals and priorities allows you to focus on essential tasks.
- 3. Take care of yourself.** This means getting enough rest, following a balanced nutrition plan, and engaging in activities that help you relax.

Do I still volunteer? Absolutely! I enjoy serving and wouldn't have it any other way. However, I've become more selective in the activities that align with my values. Serving with intention allows me to select the projects I enjoy without experiencing burnout. Turns out the adage is true—less is more!

[1] Productivity vs. Busyness: The Difference, <https://terraacademyforarts.com/productivity-vs-busyness-how-to-tell-the-difference-and-make-the-most-of-your-time/>

[2] Productive vs. busy: What's the difference? <https://www.success.com/busy-vs-productive/>

[3] How Constantly Staying Busy Affects Our Wellbeing, <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-the-glorification-of-busyness-impacts-our-well-being-4175360>





# Time to Heal

*It's Not All in Your Head*

*What you aren't being told about Mental Health*

In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the amount of people of all ages who are being diagnosed with some form of mental health issues. I can, of course, pull up the statistics here, but knowing how it has become so widespread, I am confident in stating every single person reading this knows someone close to them who has suffered or is currently dealing with a decline in their mental health.

If you have ever read my column before, I often speak of chronic illness here and the dramatic increase of cases that are occurring every day. This topic is very personal for me because I was one of the many very serious cases of chronic disease and had an ongoing list of health problems, illnesses and diseases. I have healed from every single health issue I was labeled with and proved that despite what we have been told our entire lives, healing from chronic illness and disease is absolutely possible, and doing so never required a single pharmaceutical treatment.

I currently help others who are now determined for answers and ready to begin their healing journeys. I am always amazed at how similar our timelines of symptoms align with one another. Every person I have met who has struggled with chronic health issues and inflammatory symptoms has also presented some type of mental health struggle as well. Anxiety and panic disorder are the most common, as well as depression. I am not talking about feeling very nervous here and there, but rather an ongoing state of worry and panic. It is an overwhelming place of constant anxiety that paralyzes us with fear and keeps us in a state where we become petrified of what each moment of the day may bring us. It's a torturous experience, especially considering we are also dealing with so many other physical health issues that are often debilitating and unpredictable.

There is a direct correlation between our mental and physical health. Yet, the current protocols (that haven't changed in decades) treat our psychological and physical health as if they are entirely separate entities.

The treatment for anxiety will often include therapy and medication to alleviate your symptoms. While this is often helpful and necessary, it does not

address or capture the whole picture needed to bring someone long-term healing and relief.

The treatment for our physical health problems, most commonly autoimmune and inflammatory illnesses, is treated by a specialist with potent medications to suppress those symptoms. Again, while this is sometimes helpful and needed, it doesn't even scratch the surface of what actual healing should and could look like.

These physical and mental so-called chronic health issues are claimed to have "no cure". We are told that in order to stop the progression of these diseases, we must take these toxic medications. In fact, this is presented as the only way to approach these diseases, leaving us with little hope and eventually total dependency on medications to maintain some sort of quality of life.

I will always remind people that a pill is only suppressing your symptoms and gives the illusion that your health has improved. The same thing could be said for the medications that are being given for mental health. Medication will silence the symptoms, while the root causes of the health issue will remain and continue to manifest, eventually presenting itself with new symptoms and further health problems.

As I stated above, I personally healed from these so-called "chronic" diseases without a single pharmaceutical drug. I learned how to approach my health from a root-cause perspective. Instead of silencing symptoms, I learned how to listen to and address my symptoms and understand why I was having them. The more my body healed, the more my mental health improved. On the contrary, the state of my mental health also played a vital role in my journey to attain optimal wellness.

Through years of healing and research, I realized that our mental and physical health directly depended on one another.

People, in general, would agree that stress and trauma will affect their physical and mental health. This is common knowledge and something we often witness when facing life challenges and everyday pressures. But people do not understand how these things impact our health.



- *What happens that causes stress to have a negative impact on our minds and bodies?*
- *What happens when we are faced with trauma, and why does it seem to continuously affect our health, sometimes decades after the traumatic event has occurred?*
- *How is it possible that trauma that happened back in our childhood is having such a profound impact on our overall health today?*
- *How can trauma be the catalyst of autoimmune disease?*
- *Why do those with autoimmune disease often struggle with anxiety and depression?*

The answers to these questions would lead people to a greater understanding of why our physical and mental health depend on one another. But despite so many of us expanding our understanding and awareness, the treatment and approach to these struggles remain the same.

When someone presents mental health struggles, we are still told to follow the same old approach, focusing solely on the mind and declaring symptoms like anxiety and depression as chronic disorders.

These aren't mental disorders; these are symptoms. Symptoms of past trauma impacting the body, childhood experiences that have never before been processed or addressed, physical imbalances of our microbiome, nervous system dysregulation, nutrient deficiencies, hormonal imbalance and more.

While the topic of mental health awareness seems to be trending everywhere you turn, nothing is being taught that is bringing light to the fact that your mental health is often a direct reflection of major things happening within your body and physical health.

These days, Hollywood stars, social media influencers, and commercials speak of mental health awareness everywhere you turn. But when it comes to the message they are sending, there is truly a tremendous lack of knowledge and awareness being shared.

We have to stop speaking of our mental health as if it is its own entity. If we genuinely want to shed light on mental health, we must look at the entire picture.

## **Mental Health is NOT all in your head!**

What society doesn't know is that you cannot truly address mental health if you are not addressing your physical health. Advocating for mental health is a wonderful thing, but who is it helping if the message isn't including all the factors that are contributing to our mental well-being?

Most people understand that there is some correlation between our body and mind, but the extent of just how much our body and mind are connected has never been shared before.

For example, let's discuss something that is getting more attention on social media: The vagus nerve.

### **What is the vagus nerve?**

The vagus nerve is a large cranial nerve extending from the brain to our gut! It branches out to many organs and systems and is in constant communication with the brain.



Based on what we have always been told, most would assume the brain is running the show and sending messages to the vagus nerve, which then sends the message to various organs and systems. But it is the other way around.

The vagus nerve is predominantly afferent. This means that contrary to what we have always

“About 90% of serotonin is found in your gastrointestinal tract cells. It’s released into your blood circulation and absorbed by platelets. Only about 10% is produced in your brain.” (Cleveland Clinic: Serotonin: What Is It, Function & Levels (clevelandclinic.org))

believed, the brain does not give the body instructions and runs the show. Instead, the vagus nerve is our body sending messages and instructions to our brain! If there are imbalances within our bodies, the messages and instructions being sent to the

brain will be flawed or interrupted in various ways.

The vagus nerve also sends signals to our nervous system when it’s time to calm and get into a parasympathetic state (rest and digest). Or, it will alert the nervous system of a threat, putting us into a state of fight or flight, our sympathetic state. If there are mixed messages coming from our vagus nerve, our nervous system will remain in these states for prolonged periods of time, causing symptoms of anxiety or depression.

Another example is our gut. A common medication given to patients with mental health struggles is Zoloft. This medication is a synthetic form of serotonin. It is used to increase our levels of serotonin and alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. Based on everything we were ever told about our mental health, you would assume that it is the brain responsible for producing serotonin. It is our gut that produces the vast majority of our serotonin, not the brain. Therefore, if you have gut imbalances, leaky gut or other digestive issues, this can dramatically impact your serotonin levels, leading to mental health struggles and symptoms.

Not a single therapist I have ever worked with in conventional medicine discusses gut health and overall health as needing to be addressed to improve mental health. In fact, I have personally mentioned these things to more than one therapist, and while they were very intrigued, they were also totally unaware of the direct correlation that I expressed.

The focus and advocacy for mental health awareness is growing, which is a wonderful thing, but what purpose does it serve if those advocating for it are not educated or aware of just how limited our current treatment is for it? The decline in mental health is impossible to ignore. But as long as we are allowing our healthcare system to be run by Big Pharmaceutical companies, the truth behind our overall health (that includes our mental health) will continue to be ignored.

Again, by only addressing the symptoms of mental health disorders and never even considering the why behind the symptoms, we are doing nothing to help people prevent and heal from these issues. The exact same thing is happening when it comes to our physical health and diseases. The conventional medicine way was NEVER meant to heal us. It is a vital part of our healthcare, and its purpose is to provide life-saving crisis care. It is intended to keep us stable when we are in a serious and acute state. The protocol to stabilize our mental health usually includes medications. While they are necessary in many cases, they aren’t going to provide us with anything but symptom relief. The reason why almost all are kept on these medications long term isn’t because these mental health issues are “chronic”; it’s because the root of our mental health issues has never been addressed.

I hope when you read this, you understand that I am in no way saying your mental health diagnosis isn’t real. It is very real and can be extremely debilitating. I have suffered from anxiety, panic disorder, depression and complex PTSD. I am not shaming or discouraging the use of medication to get to a stable and sound place. I believe that is necessary and should be encouraged in many cases. I am saying that by ONLY taking medication, along with therapy, then the state of your mental health will never truly heal. This is why you are told that you must remain on these medications because no further action that would help you begin healing takes place.



When you are in therapy or taking your medication, that is the time to get to work on yourself. The medication gives you the relief and stability you need to take the action necessary to uncover the root of your struggles and begin healing from them. We can no longer sit back and wait for someone else to do our work. True healing happens when we stop depending on others to fix our health and begin acting to help ourselves.

### 5 Ways You Can Work on your Mental Health:

1. *Focus on your gut health.*
2. *Nervous System Regulation and Flexibility.*
3. *Reduce Toxin Load (Stop counting calories/points and start counting chemicals!)*
4. *Trauma awareness and Somatic Practices.*
5. *Inner Child Work*

**Note:** I highly suggest investing in a coach to assist and guide you. Ensure you connect and feel comfortable with the coach. They have done the research and are well-versed in each of the things listed below. There is no one magic supplement that will make it happen. Our health is an investment that you will never regret.

I don't know if our healthcare system will change in our lifetime, but we don't have time to wait. Right now, our focus needs to be on how we can change our own ways of addressing our health needs. We need to shift our beliefs and realize that it is our personal responsibility to take the action necessary for a healthy and happy life ahead.

I know it isn't easy to accept that for much of our lives, we have been conditioned to become so dependent on outside sources that we have lost total trust in relying on ourselves. We have become obsessed with those who hold a degree in medicine, not knowing how limited their education is and how much more there is to medicine and health beyond their degrees and conventional medical schools. We must understand that our lives are in our hands and that we are capable of so much more than we ever imagined. Take back your power and be the advocate of your own health journey and life story. Let go of everything that tells you you can't, because I promise you, you can!

## Jacqueline Goncalves Wellness Coach and Business Owner Inspired Healing LLC

To connect with Jacqueline:

Email: [inspiredhealingcoaching@gmail.com](mailto:inspiredhealingcoaching@gmail.com)

Instagram: [@inspiredhealing\\_](https://www.instagram.com/inspiredhealing_)

Facebook: [Become Your Own Healer Academy](https://www.facebook.com/BecomeYourOwnHealerAcademy)

[www.inspiredhealingcoaching.com](http://www.inspiredhealingcoaching.com)





## Embracing the journey of grief, how it can open a spiritual door

Grief is unpredictable, often showing up in unexpected moments. One particular incident for me was a 21st birthday meal for a mutual friend of mine and my passed sibling. We sat around the table shortly after his passing and forgot to amend the number of people attending. There I was, sat opposite an empty chair where he should have been sitting and celebrating with us. Inside, I was being torn apart. I was so utterly overcome with grief. For the rest of the evening, I felt vacant and unengaged. No one would have known, though. On the outside, I smiled and said I was ok. I was the furthest from ok I could be. I had no previous experience of a pain this deep and unexpected. It can present very differently on the outside from person to person.

One of the most surprising gifts brought into my life was a much-needed pause. When it broke me open, it also forced me to slow down and breathe. I wasn't able to rush forward to distract myself as I might have done with other challenges. This was uncomfortable and unfamiliar, but the pause allowed me to catch my breath and listen to myself more deeply. In that stillness, I began to hear my intuition, a quiet voice I'd overlooked for so long amidst the busyness of everyday life.

Through the stillness of healing, I felt a growing connection to my authenticity, as if grief had stripped away all that was unnecessary, leaving me with a stronger sense of self and purpose. This painful yet grounding awareness allowed me to trust my inner guidance and find strength within. I soon recognised that all the emotions I tried to bury and help were bubbling to the surface. I was being irritated and snappy. I'm usually very easygoing, so I knew my emotions were communicating through my actions. I needed help. I began bereavement counselling. This taught me that my grief isn't about leaving my loved ones behind but about carrying them forward.

Speaking openly about my loved ones became an act of remembrance. I learnt it's possible to feel joy and sadness without diminishing either. I realised that feeling happiness isn't a betrayal to them but a sign of healing, an acknowledgement that life, even after loss, can still hold light. The combination of being deeply connected to myself and learning the tools to navigate the pain left me with a new lease of life. I was looking through a new, more transparent lens. I understood what truly mattered to me, and I was deeply grateful for each moment and each connection.

Spiritually, I believe that those we love never truly leave us. The body may pass, but the spirit endures in ways that can touch our lives if we are open to it. From small, unexpected coincidences to moments of calm that seem to arrive just when I need them most. The love we share, I believe, is eternal. It transcends the limits of the physical world. Grief is not something to be feared or solved. It's a journey to be navigated with care but ultimately born out of love.

By Lisa Andrews



Grief - is something we all would rather avoid but, at some point, must inevitably face. It's an experience we all dread, often spoken about in harsh tones. It's a shadow that some try to sidestep., refuses to be ignored, and reshapes our lives in a way we never anticipated.

The sudden absence of someone who was once there, woven into the fabric of your everyday life, is heartbreak in its rawest form. It's a quiet aching void where their presence used to be. It can present as a calm emptiness that seems to touch everything - a void where their laughter, voice and even the smallest habit used to be. Each familiar place and shared memory becomes a reminder of their absence, and the contrast between the fullest of life with them and the emptiness without them is almost unbearable; it's as if the world has shifted, but to everyone else, it can look like life has gone back to "normal".

For me, grief got me in a chokehold when I was 21. I often speak about it now as I recognise it as a pivotal turning point in my life. Taken far too soon, grief doesn't only arise from the loss of a loved one; it can also emerge from the loss of dreams or hopes that never had the chance to flourish - such as the pain of a miscarriage or an unfulfilled longing such as the desire to find or reconnect with a loved one. These experiences can leave a quiet yet constant ache reminding us that grief can be about what could have been, might not be and also what once was. Many people carry this hidden pain deep within, suppressing it as they navigate daily life, just trying to survive.

I recognise that grief seems to come in relentless waves. Memories of my loved one would surface without warning, along with the ache of everything left unsaid and undone. There were many days when simply getting out of bed felt impossible. It became apparent that ignoring the grief was not an option. I had to let it in, no matter how difficult. I let it take me to parts of myself I'd never met, let alone confronted. In the process, I discovered something essential: we have to let the wave of grief in and, in a way, befriend it as the new normal.

[www.lisaandrews.life](http://www.lisaandrews.life)  
[@lisa\\_andrews\\_psychic](https://www.instagram.com/lisa_andrews_psychic)

# The Secret to Bravery Is Not What You Think

Have you ever wondered what enables some women to step outside their comfort zones and make bold choices? Bravery isn't about being fearless—it's about having the inner strength to act despite fear. It's what invites you to dream big. Maybe you're considering starting over in a new city, going back to school at midlife, or finding the courage to love yourself fully after divorce. But if you doubt your dreams can be realized, confidence alone won't be enough. What fuels bravery is self-trust. Trusting yourself gives you the strength to take bold steps towards your goals.

## What Is Self-Trust?

Self-trust is believing in your abilities, judgments, and decisions. When you trust yourself, decisions become less stressful. You choose confidently, knowing you can handle the outcome—even if it's unfamiliar territory. It's like a friend who sees your potential and reminds you of your strengths when you are unsure. While doubt might hold you back, self-trust says, "You've got this." Self-trust allows you to face new beginnings with curiosity and confidence rather than being stuck in fear.

## Why You Don't Trust Yourself

Unprocessed trauma, like the emotional fallout from divorce, can profoundly undermine your self-trust. It disrupts your sense of safety and stability, creating fears of inadequacy. Trauma can make even simple decisions, like choosing a Christmas tree, feel overwhelming. It reduces your confidence to handle new challenges or make good decisions.

Fear of making mistakes also erodes self-trust. This fear often stems from past experiences where mistakes led to criticism, punishment, or a sense of failure. You might find yourself striving for perfection or procrastinating. This fear can fill your decision-making process with anxiety, causing you to second-guess yourself and question your judgment.

Comparing yourself to others can also erode your confidence, leaving you feeling inadequate. While it's natural, constantly doing so signals deeper wounds. Focusing on how others seem better or more successful reinforces the belief that you're not enough, making it harder to trust

your abilities and choices.

These factors create a cycle of self-doubt and second-guessing, making it challenging to trust your own decisions and instincts. Understanding these root causes is the first step toward breaking that cycle and rebuilding your self-trust.

## 3 Ways to Start Trusting Yourself

### 1. Calm Your Nervous System.

Chronic stress can leave you feeling unsafe and stuck in survival mode, whether it shows up as anxiety, reactivity, exhaustion, or feeling disconnected. Regulating your nervous system is about reconnecting with your body and the present moment. Practices like breathwork, nature walks, or grounding exercises can help you shift from fear to openness and curiosity, improving your thoughts and emotions.

### 2. Keep Promises to Yourself.

When you commit to something like joining a gym or eating healthier but don't follow through, you might start to believe your needs and desires aren't important. Each time you don't honor a commitment, it can erode your trust in yourself. Focus on keeping your promises, even small ones, to reinforce that your goals and well-being matter. If your goals feel too big, break them down into bite-size steps and celebrate each step completed.

### 3. Practice Making Small Decisions with Awareness.

When simple, low-stakes choices feel overwhelming, it's a sign your nervous system is overtaxed. Instead of forcing a decision, notice what's happening in your body. What do you feel and where? Ground yourself with deep breaths, and once you're centered, make a choice.

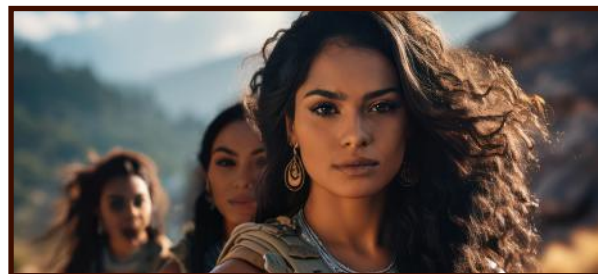
Building self-trust is like building any other muscle—it takes practice, patience, consistency and a healthy dose of self-compassion to lay a foundation. But when you trust yourself, bravery follows. You'll take risks to live a life that feels true to you.

## By Jennifer Legaspi

Transformational Coach,  
Author, *Brave Wise Woman*

[www.jenlegaspi.com](http://www.jenlegaspi.com)

Instagram: @jenlegaspi.coach



# MOVING BEYOND MINDSET WITH ANCIENT UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES

***“There Is No Insignificant Action” Lidia Kuleshnyk, Lady Apona***

Unbreakable willpower, motivation and focus are considered essential qualities for great leadership and success. Without them, vision wanes, drive dissipates, and execution of goals becomes diluted. Frustration, dissatisfaction and exhaustion set in, weakening your passion, purpose and mission. To avoid the doubt, defeat and deficit of depletion, you must rely on a power that is infinite, reliable and always accessible; a power that will support your limitless growth, a power that exists within you.

Welcome to my 10th column exploring moving beyond mindset with ancient universal principles. The 12 Ancient Universal Principles of my High-Performance Wellness Coaching are your trusted guide and advisor’s roadmap to creating the limitless energy that activates your willpower, sustains your motivation and clarifies your focus. They are the gateway to accessing your inner power.

***“We dance round in a ring and suppose, but the secret sits in the middle and knows” Robert Frost.***

As a high performer with high standards and goals, you are gifted with a great intellect and a strong life force, the ideal qualities for consistently getting things done. When mastering the uncertainty of life, it is easy to use your intellect to assess, comprehend, and plan. Your willpower and motivation are built into who you are. Your focus is an asset not easily relinquished.

What happens when, despite your success, your once unwavering willpower and motivation feel strained? What happens when the chronic stress of life leads to distraction, burnout and worse . . . the struggle and limiting force of chronic illness? Implementing mindset tools helps you take action to build momentum forward. But until you expand your consciousness, you may dance around in a ring and suppose while overthinking and ultimately sinking.

My Ancient Universal Principle #2, “Energy Never Lies. You Can’t Fool Mother Nature,” reminds you that the universe notes your every thought and action. One of my guiding mantras, “There Is No Insignificant Action,” is a simple yet powerful principle that ignites deep insights, especially when you are feeling stuck, drained, and even hopeless.

***“Our Separation From Each Other Is An Optical Illusion” Albert Einstein***

Historic leaders and ancient teachings speak of the true cause of suffering . . . the illusion of separation. The principle of Oneness, the master principle from which all understanding unfolds, enhances awareness of your connection to life and the impact of your actions. Oneness is the essence of the wholeness and balance of the ancient science of yin and yang. It is within the principle of Oneness that you experience the flow of non-attachment, become the conscious observer of your life and find higher value, meaning and purpose in who you are, why you are here, how you live and the impact and legacy of your life.





In my High Performance Wellness Coaching, I often utilize my Expanding Consciousness Exercise when clients feel lost in reigniting their passion, purpose and fulfillment or seek deeper connection and energy to get to their next level of empowerment and success. In this exercise, I ask a powerful question that assists you in becoming more Centered, Connected and Conscious™, wherein you naturally create the balance and connection with the Oneness of life and embrace the eternity of who you are. In this state of unity and wholeness, life's pressures and stressors dissolve. You experience the freedom and security of living in full presence without attachment.

I developed this question and exercise based on my powerful Near Death Experiences (NDE) 30 years ago. In those experiences, I had my "life review". I felt, with incredible intensity, how my every action impacted others. I felt the wholeness of my Being and the Oneness of existence. I became conscious that there is no separation. These experiences summoned incredible willpower, motivation and focus to direct my life for the highest good of all, fueled by the unrelenting energy of passion, dedication and vision.

### **Highlights of My Expanding Consciousness Exercise:**

**Step One:** Review my mantra, "There Is No Insignificant Action". This principle has many applications. For the purposes of this exercise, it can be expressed as "Your every action in this material life is magnified 1000 times in your spiritual afterlife."

**Step Two:** The Most Powerful Question to Ask Yourself: If you believe the ancient principle "Your every action in this material life is magnified 1000 times in your spiritual afterlife" to be true, what would that do for you?

**a)** How would you, your perspectives, beliefs, values, priorities, and actions change and evolve right now?

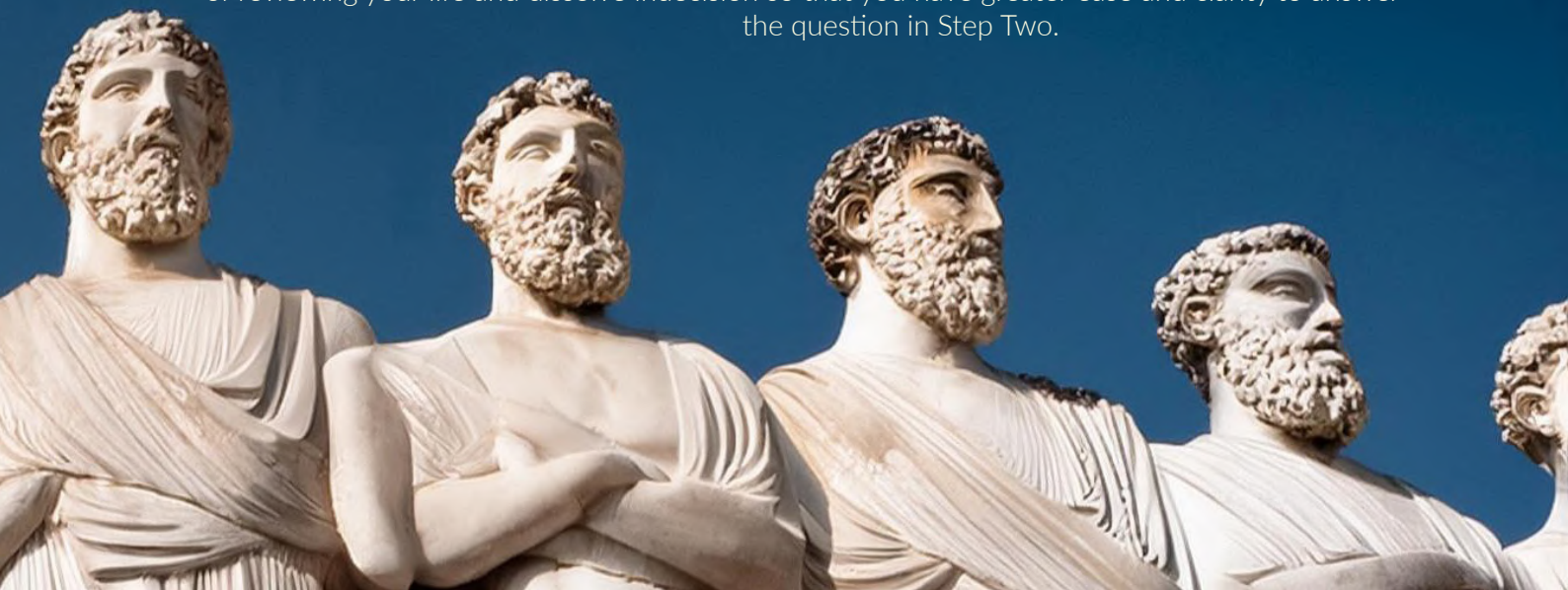
**b)** How would that change your life and lifestyle, and how do you understand and live your life?

**Step Three:** Take a deep breath and review my 12 Ancient Universal Principles.

### **12 Ancient Universal Principles**

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

Choose one principle. This principle will help you come into alignment, release the fear and self-judgement of reviewing your life and dissolve indecision so that you have greater ease and clarity to answer the question in Step Two.



**Step Four:** Take time to self-reflect and revisit the question in Step Two at least twice a week. Keep a private journal of your insights and thoughts. Track how they progress and evolve over 14 days. This is deep work. Be patient and dedicated. Your awakening is inevitable and will evolve over time.

**Step Five:** As you create the sacred space to cultivate a deeper relationship with yourself, make a list of positive inner changes combined with aligned actions. Creating an Accomplishment Board will help you witness and respect your progress and growth. As you honour yourself, you will access your inner power and feel secure, resilient and empowered to uncover your core beliefs and values. You will clarify your life vision and begin to live in flow with renewed passion, purpose and joy.

***“The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skilful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.” – Epictetus.***

To navigate through life’s storms and create lasting fulfillment and success, you must access the inner force that fuels willpower. This inner power is your core energy, your fundamental life force that connects you to the infinite energy of the universe. Willpower expands into inspiration. The origin of inspiration is “in-spirit”, the creative energy and inner knowing of your spiritual essence. Inspiration fosters motivation. Motivation cultivates the focus and commitment required to achieve goals and create results. With results, you gain confidence and faith in your ability to succeed, persevere through any circumstance and manifest your goals and desires.

You may not be able to outsmart the Gods – the ancient principles of yin and yang - but you can work with them to turn lead into gold, expand your capacity and break through the greatest barriers to your success.

As you master willpower, motivation and focus, you live in the flow of Taoist non-attachment, moving beyond mindset with evolving consciousness. You surrender to the power of the Oneness of life with the realization that your every thought and action matters profoundly. Your self-worth and value deepen as you remember who you are and why you are here. You manifest the highest fulfillment of abundance and peace in accessing your inner power. You live without limits. You reclaim your sovereignty and become the conscious leader of your life and the world.

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

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

Connect with Lidia Kuleshnyk  
[www.AponaHealing.com](http://www.AponaHealing.com)



# What is possible for you?

You can ask yourself this question by writing it at the top of a piece of paper, riffing off, brain-dumping everything that's in your head on the paper, and brainstorming everything. Think about it..... what is possible for you in this lifetime, in your job, with your family or career, with your business, with friendships or whatever it is? Really think about what is possible for you.

A lot of the time, the brain is "default negative". So, when you can have mindful moments to train your brain with a deep-level mindset, it's ideal to flip the switch to be more positive. This means you can reframe everything going on in your life, which it's defaulted to, and turn it around more positively. The idea is to focus on gratitude, love and happiness in your life and everything that can go right - incredible and amazing. It's liberating as it's all mindset work.

So instead of waking up on the day thinking, "Oh, it's raining again! It's going to be a dreadful day!"... change the mindset aspect of it by reframing it to "Thank you for the rain today as it's helping the crops grow. I can't wait to get to work to see what I can create and what value I can give people. I'm really excited about today and what it can hold".

Can you see the difference, not only in the wording but also in the energy associated with it and what it holds? So, I'll ask you again: What is possible for you in this life? Think about it and write it down.

*What do you want to do? What do you aspire to accomplish and achieve? What is new for you? What would you like to be new? Do you want a new home? New relationship? New car? New career? New client? Do you want a baby? To get married?*

## What is it for you?

Really think about the mindset and energy behind what you desire for your life and what direction you're going in. Think about your list, look at what you've written and feel into the emotions that you're embodying with each item on the list and are embracing with that. Are you feeling excited? Do you really feel like, "Oh my goodness, this is happening, this is it. I'm elated, thrilled, and happy. I can't contain my excitement."

The reason why I encourage you to write it all down is because when life happens, as it does, you can come back to the list as there's so much power with writing it down on paper in your own handwriting; you get into the vibration and frequency of how you were feeling writing it and how the energy is as you're reading it all at the moment you are in. You can tie into the emotions, feelings, and frequency of the energy, so you're more likely to go after whatever you want.

If you want a new home...what does it look like? What will it bring for you? How will you feel? Will you feel more safe and secure? Will it be in a quiet place, whereas at the moment, you're busy and you'd like more peace in your life?

Tie your feelings and emotions to the actual thing that you want because it IS possible for you to get that promotion you desire. Will you work more hours and earn more money for yourself? What will you do with more money - go on holiday, make more memories with your loved ones as you'll be able to afford to do more things?

The results and experiences from what you're going to be having, what's possible for you, what's new for you, and all that's motivational. Another question you can ask yourself is, what's a forward step?

What is the next step you need to take in order to move forward towards whatever it is? To have that action in motion, you need to have the excitement of living where you're going to be living, having the dream job, travelling, etc. Knowing this is important, as what you can do can get lost in translation.

You can write it all down, not take action and lose the motivation, whereas it's a bit like stepping in time like Mary Poppins. Take those steps forward and action it all, as it's all about stepping forward into the feeling and emotion of happiness, love, peace, joy, contentment, tranquillity, safety, freedom, security, etc.

It's powerful, so don't allow yourself to get stuck in the quicksand or headlights and freeze—it's all about knowing what's possible for you and going for it anyway. Don't allow fear or any limitations to keep you safe—flip the script and take a chance on yourself. You are important, and your mindset can be your enemy or best friend, so choose wisely. Be mindful about really stepping up and showing up to your life—you've got this! Have fun.



by Rebecca Adams  
[www.rebeccaadamsbiz.com](http://www.rebeccaadamsbiz.com)

# Permission Slips

## The Key to Remembering Who You Truly Are

*“It’s been you all along... It’s always been you...”*

I heard these words as if they were me whispering in my own ear, and my eyes blinked open, transporting me back from a life-altering meditation. And I remembered. *It’s me!*

### What if it Really Were That Simple?

Imagine if you could just be, do, and have everything you truly needed. Imagine if life could be that simple—that all you needed to do was say, “Yes!” to yourself and believe in yourself! ***There would be no hoops to jump through, no validation from outside sources, just you saying “yes” to what feels right, aligning with your own unique frequency, and allowing everything else to fall into place.***

What if the only thing standing between you and the life you desire is your willingness to relax, to let go, to just chill, as my mum would say? What if manifestation doesn’t have to be about striving and struggling? It is truly about keeping it simple, setting the intention, and then staying the course. What if it’s actually like all the songs, stories, and poems the greats wrote about letting it be, allowing things to unfold, and trusting that when you’re aligned with your true self, everything you desire naturally flows to you?

I’m here to tell you that it really is that simple. And it starts with one powerful act—giving yourself permission.

***Manifestation is our natural state, but we have to allow it.*** We must trust ourselves enough to relax into our own **YOUUnique** frequency, tune into our heart, and let that guide the way.

### Manifestation as a Natural State: We Are Manifest

My whole life, I’ve been fascinated by manifestation. As a child, I was so good at it that it felt like magic! But as I got older and life became more



complicated, I seemed unlucky, feeling as if the Universe had betrayed and abandoned me. I now understand: I had betrayed and abandoned myself. I was so focused on tuning into everyone else’s frequencies that I couldn’t hear my soul’s calling. Thus began my long journey, filled with trials and tribulations. I was lost. Looking back, I realize I had to lose everything I thought I wanted to find my true self and return to my **HEART’S HOME**.

Along this journey, reading, writing, and creating allowed me to distill my decades of experience to its essence. Since I was young, I have loved words—especially reading their vibrations and understanding their meanings. Yet, a couple of years ago, while preparing for a master class titled “De-Mystifying Manifestation,”

the definition of manifestation truly resonated with my entire **BEing**. I moved beyond merely comprehending it to knowing what it meant—in essence, manifestation isn't about "doing" or "achieving"—it's our natural state of being. We are manifest. We're always manifesting, moment by moment, from every belief, emotion, feeling, thought, and action. Manifestation isn't something we need to learn or force; it's something we are. We've been conditioned to complicate our lives, seeking answers outside ourselves and believing that happiness and success must be earned through struggle. Phrases like "No pain, no gain" and "Nothing in life comes easy" reinforce this mindset, but these are merely beliefs we've adopted. The good news is that beliefs, like everything, can be changed.

Manifestation works best in reverse, from the inside out. It's not your thoughts that create your reality. It's your beliefs. When you change your beliefs, you change your reality! When we align with our

**YOUUnique** frequency, when we give ourselves permission to believe in the life we desire, manifestation flows naturally, by design.

Imagine stepping through a doorway into a reality that reflects the best version of your life, where all it takes is a simple, sincere "Yes." Just one word.

Your **YOUUnique** frequency is that doorway, and giving yourself permission is the key. Once

you allow yourself to believe it's possible and be authentically you, you're already on your

way. Life is all about embracing this journey, knowing that each step you take is a testament to your courage and your commitment to living fully and authentically.

### You Are the Permission Slip The Power of Self-Allowance

The moment everything shifted for me? It was when I truly grasped that "It's been you all along... It's always been you..." wasn't just about the love I sought or the leader I desperately yearned for. I had heard the phrase, "Everything you need is already within you," countless times, but it never resonated until I made this connection: I am the permission slip.

The true power doesn't lie in tools, rituals, or even the teachers we admire—it resides within me. It's present in every single moment when I allow myself to believe in what feels authentic, align with my

**YOUUnique** frequency, and trust that my heart knows the way forward.

Growing up, my mum would say, "What are you waiting for? A personal invitation or a permission slip?" She had this way of beckoning to me, my sister, and others, especially if we didn't respond right away. "Both!" I would often joke! But it took me years—decades, really—to understand that this funny way she had of getting someone's attention actually speaks to the depths of my soul and carries a wealth of wisdom.

For the longest time, I searched for that elusive "something" outside of myself. I went from course to course, certification to certification, always hoping to find that missing piece. And then, one day, on the first day of certification for another modality that I knew I just had to learn, as I already believed that I was onto something, I realized I was already teaching, sharing, and living so much of what I was learning, in my style, with my flavor. And sure enough, on the last day of the training, all the pieces clicked into place! There was a moment when I knew, with deep conviction and certainty, that I was the permission slip. I don't need anything outside myself to validate my truth or path. I just need to allow myself to **BE** who I am.

When I realized that—I saw it with my real eyes—it was like I unlocked my next level self—and I was the key! And everything changed. Life became lighter and more playful. Manifestation stopped feeling like something I had to get better at or master and started feeling like a joyful exploration into my different states of **BEing**. I truly understood why my soul chose my mum, my family, my life path, and all my experiences to date. I didn't need a personal invitation. I was the invitation. All I had to do was accept me!

### Creating from the Inside Out Beliefs, Emotions, and Perceptions

Our beliefs are simply ideas we accept as true, often without proof. But truth itself is subjective, shaped by each person's unique perspective. Quantum mechanics and relativity have been hinting for decades that the concept of an 'objective' reality doesn't hold up. As we experience it, reality is tied to the observer—it's filtered through perception. Each **YOUUnique** individual carries their own viewpoint, from which their beliefs are formed.

Modern society teaches a backwards, upside-down, "outside-in" version of "reality" when the truth is that reality flows from the inside out. Every belief we hold acts like a lens, coloring the world we see. If we believe life is a struggle, struggle is what we'll see. But if we believe life can be joyful and simple, a new, lighter world opens up.

Emotions are energy in motion, serving as direct signals from our soul. Unlike feelings, which our





mental narratives can influence, emotions provide real-time data generated by bodily sensations that reveal our alignment. When we feel a positive emotion—defined here not as “good” but as a constructive amplification and expansion of energy—it indicates that our being is in harmony with our soul.

Conversely, a negative emotion—understood not as “bad” but as a destructive contraction of energy—signals that the energy in motion is misaligned with our true essence.

By attuning ourselves to our beliefs and emotions, we tap into our **YOUUnique** perspective and create a reality that aligns with our true selves. Making this practice a priority—listening to and interpreting the signals within—enables us to recognize our own truth. Emotions, much like beliefs, serve as permission slips, guiding us to understand where we are in alignment and where we may need to let go of limiting beliefs. They invite us to realign with the Divine within and embark on the path that resonates with our authentic essence.

### Embracing Intuition The Sixth Sense of Manifestation

Intuition—our sixth sense. The one that’s rarely talked about but is as real and essential as any of the five senses we’re taught in school. Intuition is that inner knowing, the voice that tells us, “This feels right” or “Something’s off.” It’s connected to our heart, to the part of us that already knows what we need. For me, intuition is deeply tied to **FAITH**—Full Assurance In The Heart—**FAITH OVER FEAR**. While **FEAR** is just False Evidence Appearing Real, **FAITH** is a deep trust in that inner voice, that connection with our higher self. Intuition is our direct line to the Divine within, guiding us in alignment with our soul’s purpose.

Growing up, I learned to ignore my intuition and outsource trust to others. Following what feels true for me, even if it confuses others, has been my most challenging life lesson to date; taking much of my life to **REMEMBER**, I can trust myself and know what is right for me. Intuition is a powerful compass guiding us on our **YOUUnique** path. And I’ve learned that when I give myself permission to trust my intuition, I align with my higher self. Manifestation flows effortlessly from this inner alignment, not from force but from allowing my soul to guide me.

### Returning to Heart’s Home Remembering Who You Truly Are

So here’s what I **KNOW** now and what I am here to share: Manifestation is your natural state of **BEING**. It’s automatic and simple, just like breathing. It’s about allowing yourself to be who you truly are. It’s about remembering that you are the permission slip. You don’t need anyone else’s validation or approval to live your truth, to follow your joy, or to step into your power. That’s already within you.

Every time you honor yourself, every moment you tune into your **YOUUnique** frequency, you are saying, “Yes,” to yourself. You are living your life in alignment with integrity and purpose.

We came here to explore, to experience, and to expand. Your **BELIEFS** create your reality. So get clear on your definitions and beliefs and experience your life unfolding in a way that feels good to you! Give yourself permission to be fully, unapologetically you. Let your heart be your guide, your intuition, your compass. Life is a journey, and your heart knows the way home. You are the permission slip. Embrace it, embody it, and watch as your reality aligns beautifully and magically with who you truly are.

### By Lizzie Siegel

To connect with Lizzie further for more teachings, mentorship, retreats, and to receive her latest offerings, follow her on **Instagram @lizzienamasteplantbased** or email her at **namasteplantbased@gmail.com**



# Are You Enough?

Do you think you will ever be enough? How many times have you pondered this question in your reflections?

Over the weekend, I sat with friends for a meaningful chat over lunch. We were outside on a warm day, the gentle breeze weaving through a garden full of blooms, vegetables, and a pond where ducks paddled serenely.

It was a moment of connection, surrounded by the simple beauty of life. I was struck by how much Joy was in the air. The average age around the table was 60-something. These friendships spanned decades—40 years, 20 years, 10 years, and a few months. There we were, engaged, drinking champagne, sharing stories, laughing, and looking ahead with excitement.

Why is it that despite all this richness, we still question ourselves? We take the critical stick and beat ourselves up, thinking we should be more, do more, and achieve more. Are we ever enough? How do we know? When will



we realize it? It is a valuable exercise to reflect on what we bring to the table—the table of life. We all contribute value, sometimes clearly seen, sometimes perceived. It depends on the lens through which we choose to view ourselves. The truth is that we are enough as we are, but it takes nearly a lifetime for that realization to settle.

What do we need to do differently to awaken ourselves to the pureness of being enough early in life? How much time do we spend convinced that we'll never measure up, only to one day wake up and realize we've always been enough? Imagine living life from the beginning with the belief that we were born enough, magnificent in our own right.

What if we truly appreciated who we are instead of who we think we should be? A simple yet profound question arises: Who are you? On the surface, we might answer with roles, relationships, careers, or achievements. But at our core—beyond those labels—who are we, and is that core worthy, valuable, and enough? The journey to believing in our inherent worth is often tangled in societal expectations and self-doubt.

We're conditioned to measure worth by productivity, success, or validation from others. No wonder feelings of inadequacy persist. But what if our sense of enoughness wasn't tied to external achievements? What if we believed

our existence was enough, that our true value lies not in grand acts but in everyday moments when we show up authentically?

Think back to that lunch with friends. The laughter, the shared stories, the comfort of being together—those moments mattered. No one needed to prove their worth; being present was a gift. This is what being enough looks like, showing up as we are without pretence.

As we age, a quiet wisdom unfolds. The competitive drive of youth fades, replaced by an appreciation of moments over milestones. We learn to see the beauty in our imperfections and cherish what we share with others—the stories, lessons, and love. So, how do we shift from “Am I enough?” to “I am enough”? It starts by silencing the inner critic and choosing self-compassion. We learn to celebrate small victories and to value how we show up for ourselves and others. We remind ourselves that our worth is unconditional.



Our value is in the small acts: a kind word to a stranger, resilience in tough times, and comforting a friend. It's in choosing presence, choosing love, and seeing ourselves with gratitude. Imagine waking each day with a deep knowing: I am enough. How might that change your life?

Would you take more risks, knowing failure doesn't diminish your worth? Would you show more kindness, free of the fear of vulnerability? This doesn't mean we stop striving for growth. On the contrary, when we operate from a place of inherent worth, our pursuits have more meaning.

We chase dreams not to prove ourselves but to express who we are. Success then becomes a byproduct of passion, not a requirement for self-worth. As you reflect on “Who am I?” let the answer come not from what you do but from who you are at your core—your values, spirit, and presence.

***Then remind yourself: I am enough.  
You always have been.***

**By Mary Scott**

[www.maryscottinfluence.com](http://www.maryscottinfluence.com)





## Dating with Intention in the Digital Age Navigating Authentic Connections in a Swipe-Obsessed World

You wake up to silence, no usual morning text to kickstart your day. As the day drags on, you're fixed on your phone, refreshing your notifications in vain. In a desperate search for answers, you even find yourself scrolling through his social media feed, trying to figure out what could possibly be keeping him so occupied. Before you know it, you're like a modern-day Nancy Drew, piecing together the mystery of his sudden disappearance.

Finally, as night falls, your phone buzzes. His message is short and impersonal, as if sent out of obligation: **"What's up?"**

This scenario is all too familiar for many of us navigating the dating world today. The modern dating landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. Dating apps, social media, and digital communication have reshaped the way we connect. While these tools provide convenience and easy access, they can also make the process feel shallow and transactional. For women seeking meaningful relationships, navigating this digital-first world requires more than just swiping; it calls for dating with intention. By combining purposeful dating with smart strategies for the digital age, you can attract the right partner and create a relationship rooted in authenticity and shared values.

I know because I'm living proof that it's possible to rise above. In my past relationships, the "conversations" often consisted of endless texts and online exchanges. Despite the overwhelming presence of social media interactions that define many of our daily connections with men, you can still approach dating with intention in the digital age. Here are five tips for cultivating a timeless courtship online.

### 1. Begin with Self-Awareness in a Digital Age

Before diving into the digital dating pool, take a step back and reflect on what you truly want. Use your values and goals as a compass to guide your actions online. Ask yourself:

- *What qualities and values are most important to me in a partner?*
- *How do I want my ideal relationship to feel?*
- *Am I using dating apps with clarity, or am I just swiping out of boredom?*

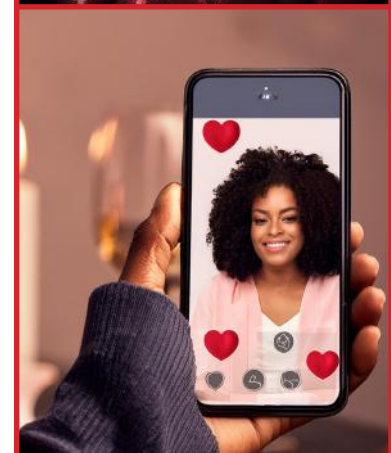
Self-awareness helps you approach dating apps and digital communication with purpose, making it easier to filter out mismatched connections.

### 2. Use Technology Wisely to Build Genuine Connections

In the digital age, technology is both a blessing and a challenge. To build a genuine connection:

- *Use voice notes or video chats early to establish rapport beyond text.*
- *Avoid excessive texting; focus on scheduling face-to-face dates when possible.*
- *Pay attention to red flags like inconsistent communication or overly vague answers about their intentions.*

Technology should enhance connection, not replace it.





### 3. Keep Your Intentions Marriage Minded

What makes intentional dating different from casual dating is its focus on a clear goal—marriage. This stands in sharp contrast to casual flings or pursuing a short-term relationship, and your approach should align with that purpose. With the end goal in mind, approach communication with a mutual openness to discussing the future. Social media in dating should serve as a tool to facilitate meaningful conversations, not as the goal itself.

Courtship isn't about playing games with emotions, whether you're sending a text or swiping right. Be thoughtful in your messages, texts, and chats, and ask questions that deepen your understanding of the person. It's easy to fall into lighthearted flirtation, which can be fun. Still, it's important to balance it with conversations that show you're interested in learning more about the person beyond the surface, like what they're passionate about, rather than just what they had for lunch.

Share your intentions early to ensure you're aligned with potential partners. This doesn't mean being overly serious or formal; it's about expressing your goals without fear of scaring someone off.

When getting to know someone, it's important to keep your expectations realistic. Avoid the temptation to idealize your date based on their social media presence. If you're trying to determine if someone could be a potential spouse, it's essential to balance your perspective with a healthy dose of reality supported by people who know both of you. One way to achieve this is by introducing your new partner to your friends early and often!

### 4. Avoid the Swipe Burnout

Dating apps can make it easy to overindulge in swiping, leading to frustration and burnout. To stay intentional, set limits on how often and how long you use dating apps. Prioritize meaningful conversations over endless matches to focus on quality over quantity.

**Tip: Choose one or two apps that align with your goals. For example, apps like Hinge or eHarmony prioritize compatibility and long-term connections over casual flings.**

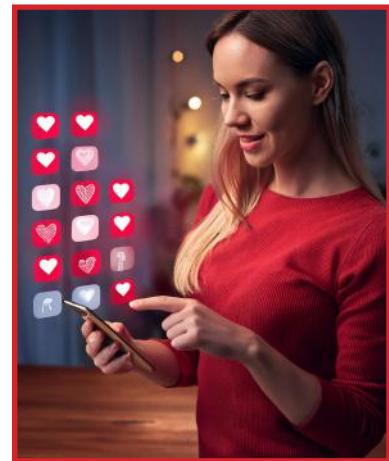
### 5. Trust the Process and Stay Patient

Take the time to gradually reveal your true self. It can be tempting to approach your digital communications with a too-much-too-soon approach, but avoid oversharing your texts, photos, and statuses. It's important not to allow conversations to consume every moment of your day. Having a running conversation with someone at work, at home, or out with your friends can be invasive. Even though the person is not physically present, the chat messages and texts keep you from being fully present to those you are physical with.

Send short text messages in the morning or throughout the day, but avoid the temptation to share endless streams of emotional disclosure with your man. Save the deeper revelations for the times when you are physically present to one another. That way, you can be sure this vulnerable moment will be well received and handled with the attention it deserves. This kind of restraint will prevent nonstop texting and messaging from outpacing your actual level of emotional intimacy.

Dating with intention in the digital age is about finding balance: using technology as a tool for connection while staying rooted in your values. By approaching modern dating with clarity, authenticity, and patience, you'll navigate the challenges of the swipe-first world and thrive in it. Trust that you'll attract the right partner by staying true to your intentions and values. Remember, each interaction, whether a promising date or a mismatched connection, teaches you more about what you want and need in a lifelong partner.

By Inna Mel



# Main Character Syndrome

## What It Is, How to Spot It, and How to Avoid It

Are You the Star of Every Scene?

We have all had moments when life feels like a movie, and we are the stars. There is nothing wrong with taking pride in your story or striving for personal growth. But when this “main character energy” takes over, it can get in the way of meaningful relationships—both at work and in our personal lives.

Main character syndrome (MCS) happens when we start seeing the world as revolving around us. Sure, it's not always intentional, but it can lead to self-centred behaviour that alienates others. Let us break down what this looks like, why it is a problem, and how we can keep it in check.

### What Is Main Character Syndrome?

Main character syndrome is when someone acts as though life is their personal stage, and everyone else is a supporting character. It's often unintentional, but it can stem from:

- **Social Media Culture:** Platforms glorify “main character energy,” encouraging people to prioritise their own stories.
- **Individualism:** Society sometimes emphasises personal success over collective well-being.
- **Echo Chambers:** It can feel normal if no one challenges this behaviour. While feeling like the main character can be empowering, it often comes at a cost—especially if it diminishes other people's voices and experiences.

### Signs You Might Have MCS

Not sure if this applies to you? Here are a few signs to look for:

- 1. You Crave the Spotlight:** Do you feel the need to be the centre of attention in conversations or events?
- 2. You Overshadow Others:** Are you quick to redirect discussions back to yourself, even when someone else is sharing?
- 3. You Take All the Credit:** In team settings, do you highlight your role while downplaying others?
- 4. You Struggle with Feedback:** Do you see constructive criticism as a personal attack?
- 5. You Forget to Ask About Others:** Are you so focused on your story that you miss others' perspectives?

### Why Is It a Problem?

Main character syndrome might feel harmless, but it can damage relationships and teamwork in big ways:

#### At work:

It creates friction in teams when collaboration is

ignored. Colleagues may feel undervalued or unappreciated. Innovation can suffer if one person dominates the conversation.

#### In Personal Relationships:

Friends and family might feel unseen or unheard. Over time, it can lead to emotional disconnection and resentment.

You might find yourself isolated if others start pulling away.

Recognising these tendencies is the first step toward addressing them.

#### How to Avoid Main Character Syndrome

Good news—there are simple steps you can take to strike a healthier balance. Here is how:

**1. Listen More:** Instead of waiting for your turn to speak, focus on what others are saying. Ask thoughtful questions and show genuine interest.

**2. Share the Stage:** Celebrate others' wins. Let someone else take the lead in conversations or projects.

**3. Practice Empathy:** Remember, everyone has their own challenges, successes, and stories. Try to see situations from their perspective.

**4. Check Yourself:** Pause and ask: “Am I lifting others, or am I overshadowing them?”

**5. Invite Feedback:** Ask trusted colleagues or loved ones if you come across as too self-focused. Be open to their insights.

**6. Focus on the “We,” Not Just the “Me”:** Whether at work or in your personal life, think about how you can build connections instead of just shining on your own.

**7. Main character syndrome** does not make you a bad person—it is something most of us sometimes fall into. The key is recognising it and making changes that foster better relationships.

**8. Being the main character** does not mean the world revolves around you; it means knowing how to play your role while supporting the other “characters” in your life. After all, the best stories are the ones we create together.

#### Conclusion

Main character syndrome does not make you a bad person—it is something most of us fall into at times. The key is recognising it and making changes that foster better relationships. Being the main character does not mean the world revolves around you; characters” in your life. After all, the best stories are the ones we create together.



By Shardia O'Connor

# The Power of Self-Advocacy - Championing Your Voice in Every Room

In a world where dominant voices often overshadow others, many people struggle to speak up and feel heard. Self-advocacy—the ability to stand up for oneself—can be a transformative tool in personal and professional settings. This article highlights the importance of self-advocacy, how to cultivate it, and the positive ripple effect it can create for others.

## Belief in your own worth: the foundation of self-advocacy

Self-advocacy begins with recognizing your worth. To effectively stand up for yourself, you need to believe that your opinions, boundaries, and feelings are valid. When you embrace your value, you stop shrinking yourself to accommodate others and confidently claim the space you deserve.

Self-doubt is often a major barrier to this self-worth. Many people feel unqualified to express their opinions due to internal fears of not being worthy of attention or respect. Overcoming this insecurity requires practising self-affirmation. By repeating statements like “My voice is powerful,” you remind yourself that your unique perspective matters. Embracing this belief allows you to make a meaningful contribution to the world by expressing your authentic self.

## Overcoming impostor syndrome: you are more than enough

A major obstacle to self-advocacy is impostor syndrome—the persistent feeling of inadequacy despite personal achievements. This can make people doubt their skills and abilities, holding them back from self-expression. To overcome impostor syndrome, it is important to reflect on your accomplishments. Acknowledge the challenges you have faced, the skills you have gained, and the goals you have reached. Understanding that self-doubt is a normal human experience helps you push through moments of uncertainty. Empowerment comes from stepping into discomfort, trusting your growth, and moving forward even when doubts arise, and they will!

## Speaking up: expressing your needs and setting boundaries

Effective self-advocacy does not mean being the loudest person in the room. It is about clearly and assertively communicating your needs in all areas of your life in a way that ensures they are heard and respected. One practical communication tool is using “I” statements. For example, instead of saying, “You never listen to me,” say, “I feel unheard when my ideas are not considered.” This approach shifts the conversation away from blame and toward constructive dialogue.

Additionally, setting boundaries is crucial for self-advocacy. You have the right to protect your time, energy, and emotional well-being. Learning to say “no” without guilt reinforces your self-worth and teaches others to respect your limits. By setting healthy boundaries, you ensure that others honour your space and voice.

## Facing resistance: standing strong when the world pushes back

Advocating for yourself is not always easy, especially when others do not value your perspective. In these situations, it is essential to remain grounded in the belief that your voice matters. Resistance is often a sign of progress.

Resilience is key when facing opposition. Building a strong support network of friends, mentors, or colleagues who encourage and uplift you can help reinforce your confidence. These supportive relationships will be invaluable in helping you maintain motivation during challenging times and remind you of your worth.

## The ripple effect: empowering others through self-advocacy

Self-advocacy does not just benefit you—it also inspires others to do the same. You create a ripple effect by advocating for yourself and empowering those around you. Confidently expressing your needs, setting boundaries, and standing up for respect in various areas of life sets an example for others to follow.

Imagine a world where everyone feels confident speaking up for themselves, where every voice is valued, and everyone’s needs are respected. This transformation begins with you. By embracing self-advocacy, you contribute to a more inclusive and equitable world, empowering others to find their voice.

## Conclusion: you are your own best advocate

No one else can express your needs, tell your story, or share your desires better than you can. The power to advocate for yourself lies within you. Remember that your voice, dreams, and boundaries matter; you deserve to be heard.

Next time you hesitate to speak up, ask yourself, If I do not advocate for myself, who will? Take a deep breath, stand tall, and let your voice be heard. The world needs your authenticity—now is the time to embrace the power of self-advocacy.

By Nadija Bajrami





# The Missing Key to True Healing

## Why Soul Connection Matters

by Dr Margit Gabriele Muller

### Introduction

Modern wellness approaches often overlook the soul, focusing primarily on the body and mind. Yet, there is a deeper, often misunderstood part of us that holds the key to true healing: our soul. While many people may think of the soul as abstract, strange, or even a bit intimidating, it is, in fact, an essential and intrinsic part of who we are.

True healing is not just about managing symptoms but involves reconnecting with our innermost being—the core essence that guides us through life's challenges and offers profound emotional resilience. Trauma can cause parts of the soul to disconnect, leading to a sense of emptiness and a feeling that something essential is missing. However, healing is possible by retrieving these fragmented pieces and restoring the whole. This journey isn't just about recovery; it's about fully embracing the powerful, spiritual aspect of ourselves that often goes ignored.

### Understanding the Soul and Common Misconceptions

The soul is often seen as mysterious, intangible, or exclusively reserved for those deeply involved in religious, spiritual, or esoteric practices. But, in reality, the soul is the most intrinsic part of who we are. It holds our deepest truths, experiences, and the essence of our being. It's not abstract; it gives us our life purpose.

Many people avoid exploring their soul because they fear it may seem abstract or even overwhelming. Looking beyond the tangible, familiar realms of body and mind can feel intimidating. Yet, the soul is neither strange nor distant; it's a natural, essential part of us. It shapes our emotional and spiritual well-being, influencing our resilience, clarity, and even our ability to heal deeply. By reclaiming the soul's role in our journey, we can begin to see that it's not something "out there" or separate. The soul is the compass that guides us, and acknowledging this connection allows us to address the root of our emotional pain rather than just treating the symptoms. When we embrace the soul as a fundamental part of our well-being, we unlock the potential for a richer, more fulfilled life.

### Soul Fragmentation: The Impact of Trauma

Trauma, whether emotional or physical, profoundly impacts not only our mind and body but also our soul. When we experience deep emotional pain or overwhelming distress, parts of our soul can fragment or detach as a protective mechanism. This process, known as soul fragmentation, is the soul's way of shielding us from unbearable hurt by separating and disconnecting the parts of ourselves most affected.

The consequences of soul fragmentation can manifest as a lingering sense of emptiness, a feeling of being incomplete, or a constant awareness that something is missing. People who have experienced significant trauma often describe feeling disconnected from themselves or as though they have lost an essential part of who they are. Common causes of soul fragmentation include trauma like childhood trauma, loss of a loved one, betrayal, or life-altering events. When left unaddressed, these experiences can keep us stuck in cycles of pain and prevent us from truly healing. By understanding soul fragmentation, we can see the importance of reconnecting with these lost parts and restoring our wholeness, setting the stage for true emotional and spiritual healing.

### The Soul's Journey: Past Lives, Life Between Lives, and Incarnation


The soul's journey extends far beyond this lifetime. It carries the memories, experiences, and lessons of past lives, shaping our current behaviors, fears, and desires. The concept of past lives suggests that our soul has lived through many incarnations, each with its own lessons and challenges. These past experiences can influence us deeply, manifesting as unexplained fears, a sense of déjà vu, or recurring patterns in our relationships and behaviors that might stem from unresolved blocks, vows, or contracts made in previous lives.

After a lifetime ends, the soul enters what is called the "life-between-lives" state—a space for reflection, learning, and healing. During this time, the soul reviews past experiences, integrating the lessons learned and preparing for its next journey. This reflection helps the soul grow and evolve, guiding it toward its next incarnation with greater purpose and understanding.

An important aspect of the soul's journey is the belief that it chooses its life, including the challenges and lessons it wishes to experience. This choice allows the soul to grow, evolve, and move closer to a state of wholeness. Understanding this perspective can bring peace and purpose, helping us see even difficult times as opportunities for growth. By acknowledging the soul's journey across lifetimes, we begin to understand that our struggles are not arbitrary—they are part of a larger, meaningful journey towards greater spiritual evolution.

### The Journey of Soul Retrieval

Soul retrieval is a powerful healing practice aimed at reclaiming the lost fragments of our soul that have detached due to trauma. When we face overwhelming pain, parts of our soul may fragment to protect us from experiencing the full intensity of that moment. While this serves as a short-term survival mechanism, it can leave us feeling incomplete in the long term.

A man with a beard is lying in bed, looking up. Above him is a glowing, ethereal figure of a person, possibly representing a soul or spirit. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, creating a spiritual and healing atmosphere.

Soul retrieval focuses on reintegrating these lost fragments, allowing us to restore the wholeness of our being. The process often involves reconnecting with painful experiences, understanding them, and inviting these lost pieces back. It requires a willingness to explore past wounds, release old fears, and create space for healing.

Various tools and practices can assist in this journey—guided visualization, shamanic journeying, energy healing, and deep meditation are all effective ways to bring back these lost aspects. As we reintegrate these fragments, we begin to heal on a deeper level, feeling more connected, more whole, and more aligned with our true essence. Soul retrieval is not just about addressing pain—it's about reclaiming the fullness of our spirit and embracing who we are at our core.

### **Practical Steps to Deepen Soul Connection**

Reconnecting with the soul involves a combination of intentional practices that help nurture and align our innermost being. Mindfulness, meditation and visualization are powerful tools that enable us to quiet the mind and listen to the soul's whispers. Regular meditation helps us attune to our true selves, fostering a sense of inner stillness and clarity.

Journaling is another effective way to deepen soul connection. Writing down thoughts, feelings, and reflections can help uncover areas where we feel disconnected and provide insights into the parts of our soul that need attention.

Energy healing practices, such as breathwork or Reiki, help clear stagnant energy, making space for soul healing. Quantum healing techniques provide deep shifts at an energetic level, helping to restore balance, while hypnotherapy can help access the subconscious mind to release old blocks and heal emotional wounds. Reading the Akashic Records can also be a powerful practice for soul realignment, offering deep insights into past lives, contracts, vows, and soul-level patterns that may need healing or release.

Finally, forgiveness, both towards ourselves and others, is essential for releasing the burdens of the past and inviting the fragmented parts of our soul back. Practising these steps creates a foundation for a deeper, more meaningful connection with our soul.

### **Conclusion**

True healing involves more than just addressing the mind and body—it requires reconnecting with our soul, the most intrinsic part of who we are. When we include the soul in our healing journey, we acknowledge the essence that carries our deepest truths, past experiences, and purpose. By understanding concepts like soul fragmentation, past lives, and soul retrieval, we open ourselves to a deeper level of healing that transcends symptom management.

Reconnecting with the soul may seem intimidating but leads to a profound sense of wholeness and alignment. Whether through practices like meditation, hypnotherapy, energy healing, or reading the Akashic Records, each step we take toward the soul allows us to release old wounds and grow spiritually. Healing at the soul level transforms us, helping us find relief from pain and a renewed sense of purpose, connection, and inner peace. I'm offering a new self-paced course designed to provide a gentle introduction to accessing the soul, perfect for those ready to begin this transformative journey.

# Reach Your True Potential with Confidence

In my career, I have helped countless people do more and be more than they ever thought possible. From admins to zoning officers, their success was down to one key factor: confidence.

## Fear is Holding You Back

The problem is that you undervalue your worth and settle for where you're at. You want 'better' but don't know what that looks like. You have a goal but aren't doing anything to get there. You're always people-pleasing, putting your stuff further down the to-do list and criticizing yourself. Sounds familiar, right? I know because I was there too.

## Change Your Mindset, Change Your Life

Having a confident mindset and making yourself the number one priority will help you realize your dreams. With confidence, you believe that you deserve to have your cake and eat it! When you are confident, you plan to get where you want to be and take action every day.

Let me share the top three strategies that my clients use. These tools stop fear and doubt from sabotaging their dreams.



## You Need to Make Good Decisions

If you're feeling stuck right now, it might be because you're second-guessing every move. You so badly want to make the right decision that you don't make any decisions. You even try to get other people to make decisions for you, to tell you what to do. When you're confident, decisions are easy and fun. I teach my life coaching clients how to use The Confident Decision Maker. It is a simple and powerful tool for making decisions in your best interest.

Here's how it works: Write out the decision you're facing and list all the possible options. Then, for each option, make three lists: What are the must-have criteria? What are the things you absolutely do not want?

What are the things that you can take or leave? By the end, you'll have a clear picture of what matters to you and why.

Take Loriane, for example. She lived in the large home where she raised her kids, debating whether to stay until her new condo was ready. The overwhelming decision was giving her anxiety and causing headaches. Using the Confident Decision Maker process, it was clear to Loriane that she would prefer to stay in her home. There is plenty of room for the kids and grandkids to visit, and she can slowly downsize on her terms.

Now, instead of spending energy on self-doubt, she is happily hosting events and organizing her move. Because Loriane worked through her overwhelm, she feels calm and confident, knowing that she made the right decision for her. When you use the decision maker, you see why something is a yes or a no for you. You trust your decisions and feel great about them.

## Breaking It Down Is Key to Getting Stuff Done

It is not uncommon to be stressed by an overwhelming to-do list. Imagine feeling pride instead as you enjoy checking things off and celebrating your wins!

That's the power of breaking things down because small steps create big results. As your coach, I help you make a plan that breaks your goal into bite-sized chunks, starting by identifying the smallest steps towards your dream. Taylor is a perfect example. She felt stuck in her job and worried she wasn't qualified to apply for new roles. Together, we broke the process down. Using The Confident Decision Maker, she figured out what she actually wanted. Then, we refined her job search and polished her resume. With each baby step, we built her confidence. Taylor is now searching for jobs that meet her criteria and sending applications easily.

The sense of overwhelm is gone. Taylor went from feeling stuck to moving forward. Because she broke an overwhelming task down into manageable chunks, she isn't wasting time on unsuitable roles. And, because she has a plan for her future, she is able to focus on work.

## Boundaries Mean You Can Say No Without Guilt and Drama

Do you talk yourself out of doing things you want to do and into want to do? Saying yes to dinner invitations when watch Netflix. You missed that hike because you your cousin's birthday party. You're caught in pleasing, which is normal, but it's costing It's time to implement boundaries and stop

My coaching clients learn to create a It's a tool that replaces unhelpful thoughts empowering ones. You visualize your future making decisions as that version. You get to someone who confidently says no when

Chantal wanted to have fun dating while she one'. She spent hours on dating apps and went on weren't a good fit. I invited Chantal to picture what Using visualization techniques, I guided her to experience version of herself. She saw a woman who was confident, beautiful, and in control of her dating life.

Her dating mindset plan helped Chantal set boundaries and uphold them with confidence. She learned how to swipe with intention, ask the right questions upfront, and leave bad dates behind without a second thought. Now, instead of being frustrated, Chantal feels excited about her future. She knows that she'll be ready when Mr. Right comes along. Imagine how much more energy you'll have when you stop worrying about what other people think. You can, with your very own mindset plan.

### Three Simple Steps to Confidence

You've met Loriane, who showed you how decision-making can be easy and fun. Taylor taught you the power of breaking down tasks into small, manageable steps. Chantal gave you a glimpse of how setting boundaries can transform your life.

You have three ways to find confidence and clarity. You can stop wishing life were different and start creating a life you're excited to wake up to. I know you can do this on your own, but you'll get there faster with support. I'm here to help you to cultivate the confidence to make your dreams happen.

## The Unexpected Side Effects of Transforming Your Confidence

A word of caution before I sign off. My clients all have a specific goal; while we work on that, they experience changes across their lives. Side effects like better relationships, mind-blowing sex, more free time, increased energy, better sleep, taking up new hobbies, landing promotions and receiving pay rises. So, you should only embark on life coaching with me if you are willing to risk those side effects.

Emma Hull is a transformational life coach and founder of Life Untethered Coaching. She teaches you to have unshakeable confidence so you can achieve your audacious dreams. Get ready to meet the version of yourself you've always wanted to be; sign up for her inspirational emails and book your free strategy session at

[www.lifeuntethered.com](http://www.lifeuntethered.com)

By Emma Hull

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Mindset Plan. with intentional, self and practice practice being necessary.

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# WITH GERRARD FINLAYSON



## **Building a Resilient Mindset for the Winter Months Ahead** *10 Principles for Lasting Success in Health and Fitness*

As the temperature drops and days get shorter, it's tempting to let motivation slip away along with the daylight. But winter is the ideal time to strengthen both body and mind for the long run. Over my years in health and fitness, I've seen that success requires more than just a routine—cultivating the right mindset. Here are ten principles to fortify your outlook (and your fitness) through the winter season and beyond.

### **1. Prioritise First Things First:**

We're all climbing life's ladders, but the question is: are they up against the right wall? Winter makes it easier to justify skipping the gym, but take a step back and ask, What am I really working toward? Whether it's improved energy, better mobility, or longevity, prioritising these goals helps you stay consistent. Think of it as deciding to go to the gym instead of hitting "next episode" on Netflix. Spoiler: the gym's probably going to help you feel better in the morning.

### **2. Embrace a Growth Mindset:**

If you think you're "just not a runner" or "born without abs," let's reframe that. Every skill you have now, from walking to your job, you once couldn't do. If you can learn those, you can certainly learn to do a pull-up. Winter can be a great time to tackle a new challenge: try out that daunting kettlebell or sign up for a virtual race. Remember, growth is about becoming, not just being; every new skill you learn is a step in that direction.

### **3. Focus on What You Can Control:**

Sure, you can't control the cold, the snow, or the sun setting at 4 PM. But you can control your workout schedule, what goes on your plate, and the energy you bring to the day. Rather than getting worked up over the weather, focus on creating a cosy indoor workout space or perfecting your hot chocolate protein shake (trust me, it's possible). By focusing on what's in your control, you create a routine that lasts.

### **4. Grit Through Obstacles:**

Winter comes with its own unique challenges. The temptation to skip a workout because it's too cold or dark is real. But let's call those what they are—obstacles that build grit. If you can get up early to hit the gym in January, the rest of the year feels like a breeze. Remind yourself that every session done in the cold is another tick in the "unstoppable" column.

### **5. Own Your Attention:**

Everyone's vying for your attention, and it's easy to let it slip into Instagram or another Netflix binge. But if your fitness goals are important, treat them with that same level of focus. Make it fun—commit to a "30-day squat challenge" instead of scrolling, or turn "10,000 steps a day" into a game. The result? You take back control of your day, one healthy choice at a time.





### **6. Challenge Self-Limiting Beliefs:**

Let's get rid of "I can't do that" and try "I won't do that." Not making it to the gym? Change "I can't go today" to "I won't go." This shift is a great reality check, making it clear what you're actually choosing. So, if it's not happening, you're the one making that call. This is powerful, especially in winter—what can you choose to do instead of letting excuses win?

### **7. Choose Positivity Over Complaints:**

Yes, it's cold. Yes, it's dark. But complaining about it only makes it worse. Instead, focus on what winter gives you—warm soups, cosy layers, and maybe even some seasonal activities like skiing or ice skating. Switching your mindset doesn't just make you more enjoyable to be around (trust me, your family will thank you); it builds resilience. After all, complaining never made a treadmill any more appealing.



### **8. Stay Open-Minded:**

Don't be that person who scoffs at new fitness trends or dismisses a new workout idea. Sure, maybe your friend is raving about an online yoga class, or someone tells you about a fun winter hiking trail. Instead of brushing it off, give it a shot. Winter's a great time to try something fresh, and who knows? You might discover a new favourite way to stay fit.

### **9. Shift "Have To" Into "Get To":**

This time of year, it's easy to think of workouts as a chore. But try framing it differently—"I get to go to the gym" instead of "I have to." It's a privilege to be able to work out, to move, to stay strong. Next time you're shivering as you head to the gym, remind yourself that you're one of the few people choosing to prioritise your health.

### **10. Strive for Excellence:**

Excellence is in the details. If you're going to make it to the gym, bring intention to each set. If you're prepping meals for the week, take that extra step to make them something you'll actually look forward to eating. Winter is a season to embrace the small details that lead to long-term progress. Fanatical attention to these little elements is what separates ordinary from excellent.



Winter can be tough, but it's also a time to refine who you are and what you're capable of. Embracing these principles not only keeps you on track with health and fitness but empowers you to build a resilient, adaptable mindset. When spring arrives, you'll feel stronger, more focused, and ready for whatever comes next.

[www.gf-fitness.co.uk](http://www.gf-fitness.co.uk)  
Instagram: @gerrardfinlaysonpt  
[linkedin.com/in/gerrardfinlaysonpt](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gerrardfinlaysonpt)



## What now?

### *Moving forward after a relationship breakdown...*

How you feel after the end of a relationship will be determined by several factors: how long you were together, the nature of the breakup, whether it was acrimonious or amicable, and whether you were the one to end it.

It will also depend on your own personal situation. And it is perfectly normal to have mixed emotions. On the one hand, you might be sad about the loss of the relationship and the life you envisioned with your partner and having "it wasn't meant to be like this" thoughts, or you might be feeling a sense of freedom if the relationship was unfulfilled, and relief if it was toxic.

If your relationship ended in divorce, that is a huge life change; moving forward from it is not something that happens overnight. The healing process is different for everyone, but it can be an opportunity for positive change and for rediscovering who you really are. People often lose sight of who they are "being" when they are in a relationship with someone else, especially if that relationship was abusive, and so this is a chance to reconnect with your authentic self and to find out who you intend to "be" and what you really want as you rebuild your life.

In my work with clients, a few common themes emerge around relationship breakdown: confidence, boundaries, and readiness for new relationships. Rebuilding confidence is an essential part of the healing journey, and a breakup can shake your self-esteem and self-worth, but it is important to work on your relationship with yourself. Self-love is not selfish, and when you recognise your value and what you have to offer in a relationship, then you will attract someone worthy of you.

An ability to set healthy boundaries is key. If the dynamics of your relationship were unhealthy, you may have become used to compromising too much and failing to assert your needs. Learning to set strong boundaries and being able to say "no" and not feel guilty about it is very liberating. It is all part of taking back control, making



decisions that feel comfortable to you, knowing where your limits lie, and sticking to them. As well as protecting yourself, it is also about respecting yourself. This is especially important when it comes to forging new relationships, which means you need to be clear about your boundaries from the start.

Dating after a divorce or a relationship breakdown will be different for everyone. Some people dive straight back in, whereas others prefer to dip their toe in the water first. If self-esteem has taken a hit during the previous relationship, that may bring up feelings of insecurity or reluctance to take the new relationship further. But there is no timeline for re-entering the dating world; it is a personal choice and something to approach at your own pace and when you feel ready, if indeed you decide to date at all.

Then there is the question of intimacy. Are you ready emotionally and mentally? Are you rushing into a new relationship before you have healed from the previous one? Or are you holding back for fear of being hurt again? Healthy relationships are built on mutual respect and trust, and sexual relationships require a level of vulnerability, which means you must feel comfortable with the choices you make.

Ask yourself whether you are truly ready to open yourself up to being with someone again. Do not feel pressured if you are not. If it does not feel right or the right time for you, then follow that feeling. This is where boundaries and confidence come into their own because when you are confident in yourself and with your boundaries, it is much easier to cultivate mutual respect and trust in all your relationships.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to navigating relationships. It is very important to take time out to heal, work on your confidence and boundaries, and reconnect with yourself. Whether you then decide to step into a new relationship with confidence or embrace a single life is entirely your choice. Ultimately, moving on from a breakup is about reclaiming your life, the life that you choose to create.

**By Celia Conrad**



Celia Conrad, your Relationship Guru, is a former family lawyer and relationship expert offering emotional and practical support on dating, thriving relationships, break-up and divorce, personal loss and bereavement.



# Embracing Neurodiversity and Sexual Energy in Relationships

In a world that values individuality, exploring neurodiversity alongside sexual energy is transformative. Understanding how neurodiverse people experience and express sexual energy can deepen connections and inspire more inclusive, meaningful relationships. Embracing both opens the door to authentic intimacy and encourages honouring uniqueness in connection.

At its essence, sexual energy is about passion, self-expression, and life force—it shapes how we relate to ourselves, our partners, and the world. When nurtured, it enhances intimacy and strengthens bonds. Neurodiverse individuals, including those with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, may express sexual energy in ways that differ from typical expectations. Recognizing these expressions enriches relationship dynamics, fostering understanding and genuine connection.

## Sexual Energy and Neurodiversity

For neurodiverse people, sensory experiences, communication styles, and social interactions often differ from neurotypical expectations, presenting opportunities and challenges in intimate relationships. Sexual energy, which relies heavily on sensory and communicative experiences, may be expressed differently.

For example, those on the autism spectrum might have heightened sensitivity to touch or sound, which could make traditional expressions of physical intimacy uncomfortable. They may find connection through intellectual or emotional bonding rather than physical contact. Likewise, people with ADHD might experience sexual energy with greater intensity or spontaneity, finding joy in novelty and excitement. Recognizing and honouring these diverse expressions can enrich relationships, allowing each partner to feel seen and respected.

## Communication and Consent

Communication is crucial in any relationship but takes on special importance when embracing neurodiversity. Open and non-judgmental communication about needs, boundaries, and desires fosters an environment where sexual energy can thrive in a safe, affirming way. For neurodiverse individuals, discussing sensory preferences, comfort levels, and emotional needs allows both partners to understand how to support each other best.

Consent, too, is essential and may require a more explicit, ongoing conversation. Rather than assuming comfort, partners can adopt “consent as a conversation,” where consent is an evolving dialogue. This approach allows each person to explore what feels enjoyable and safe. For neurodiverse individuals, maintaining a sense of control and clarity in intimate interactions reduces anxiety and encourages a positive experience with sexual energy.

## Letting Go of Shame and Judgment

Neurodiverse individuals often face societal misunderstanding, which can lead to shame or rejection in relationships. This baggage can inhibit the full expression of sexual energy. However, when a relationship acknowledges and embraces neurodiversity, partners can create a safe space free from judgment and shame.

This acceptance also means allowing sexual energy to be expressed uniquely. For instance, someone on the autism

spectrum might be uncomfortable with certain physical expressions, like eye contact, but feel deeply connected through shared activities or verbal affirmations. Respecting these expressions without trying to “normalize” them leads to mutual respect and deeper intimacy.

## Mindfulness and Sexual Energy

Mindfulness—focusing on the present moment without judgment—can be especially helpful for neurodiverse individuals exploring sexual energy. Practising mindfulness encourages both partners to slow down, observe each other's needs, and connect at a comfortable pace. Techniques like mindful breathing, gentle touch, or sensory grounding can help each partner feel more at ease, bridging differences in sensory or communication styles.

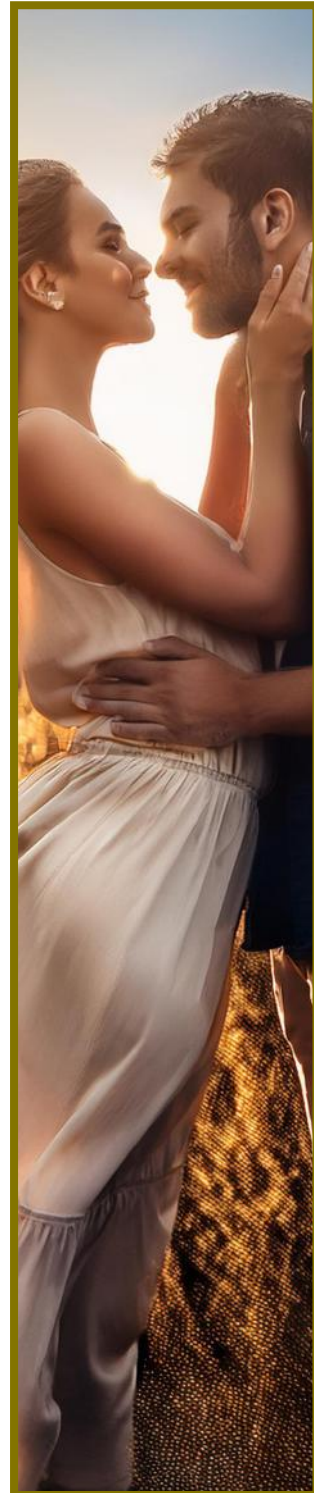
Mindfulness also allows partners to tune into each other's needs, fostering empathy and understanding. For example, a partner with ADHD might benefit from patience as they explore sexual energy without feeling pressured. Meanwhile, a partner on the autism spectrum might find comfort in a gentle, rhythmic touch that respects sensory boundaries. Through mindfulness, partners can experience the ebb and flow of sexual energy in a way that fosters trust and intimacy.

## Building a Future of Empathy and Connection

Embracing neurodiversity in relationships is about honouring each person's authentic self. In my coaching sessions, I've seen clients blossom when they celebrate their unique expressions of intimacy. When understood and valued, sexual energy deepens relationships and fosters self-acceptance.

Navigating sexual energy in neurodiverse relationships can be challenging, but the rewards—deeper connection, richer understanding, and new levels of intimacy—are profound. By embracing both neurodiverse expressions and sexual energy, we open doors to more inclusive and empathetic relationships, creating a world where everyone feels safe, celebrated, and empowered on their journey toward connection.

By Lorraine Crookes





# How to start your week prepared to handle anything

I used to be a corporate leader in the facility management industry. If you're not familiar with it, this industry is all about maintaining buildings, and my department specifically oversaw tens of thousands of properties across North America. As you can imagine, with so many properties—some aging—there was always something happening, from urgent repairs to regular maintenance.

My workdays could quickly descend into chaos, jumping from emergency to emergency. On top of that, I had client meetings, business development projects, leadership responsibilities, and service delivery improvements to manage. I was constantly running from one task to the next, and my personal life and well-being suffered.

But here's the thing: being in such a hectic environment led me to find a way to stay on top of it all while protecting my personal life and well-being.

These three tips transformed my work weeks. And they can help you as well to start your weeks prepared to handle anything.

## 1. Weekly Planning:

When I first started weekly planning, everything changed. Not only did I get more done, but my stress levels dropped, and I no longer needed to work long hours. The key is identifying your top priorities and scheduling them at times unlikely to be hijacked by unexpected events. For me, early mornings worked best. And remember, plan for a "regular" day, not a perfect one—leave room for the chaos that inevitably comes up.



## 2. Fill Your Cup:

You can't keep running on empty. No matter how much you love what you do, it drains your energy. Make sure you take time off each week to rest. That means good sleep, time with loved ones, and doing things that recharge you outside of work.



## 3. Morning Grounding

Practice starting your day with 10 minutes of grounding—whether it's meditation, prayer, or deep breathing—before checking your phone or emails. This will set you up to handle your day with calm and focus.



Give these practices a try for three weeks, and then reach out to let me know how it went. I'd love to hear from you!

**By Maggie Perotin  
Business and Leadership Coach**



[www.stairwaytoleadership.com](http://www.stairwaytoleadership.com)

[maggie@stairwaytoleadership.com](mailto:maggie@stairwaytoleadership.com)

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/maggie-perotin-business-and-leadership-coach/>

IG - <https://www.instagram.com/maggie.perotin.s2l>

Diamond Effect Podcast <https://diamondeffect.buzzsprout.com/>

# Building Strong Recruitment Foundations is Key to Business Success

Recruitment is the cornerstone of any organisation's success. The people who join a company bring their skills, creativity, and drive to the table, influencing the organisation's culture, productivity, and bottom line. In an increasingly competitive and dynamic business landscape, the importance of hiring the right talent cannot be overstated. Recruitment is no longer just about filling roles; it is about securing the future of the business.

Over the years, I have seen many businesses fail at the recruitment game for various reasons. Fundamentally, it starts with your

team. Imagine for a moment that you have received a resignation from one of your long-standing employees; you advertise their role and begin interviews, and the team pick up the extra workload and is now struggling with overwork. The longer this goes on, the worse this situation becomes, potentially causing stress-related absences and higher sickness. Finally, you have identified the perfect candidate, you believe, but when they start, they do not fit in with the team dynamics; they struggle and leave, and you start all over again. Sound familiar?

So, how can you change this traditional cycle?

Resignation from a long-standing employee is THE perfect time for you to do a skills assessment. Ideally, you do these regularly, but they are essential when you have a departure. By working with your team to ascertain their high-performing skills against their low-performing skills, they feel empowered, and it gives them the opportunity to take on more responsibility or less, as the case may be. An example of this was with a client I was working with, they had grown rapidly, and one of their employees was overworked, and they needed a second. However, this employee was very protective of her work; she didn't like sharing. An underlying fear that she wouldn't be as good as the new person coming on board. Imagine placing someone to work alongside her without this insight! We worked with this individual to discuss her role, what she liked and disliked about it, what she wanted to improve and how she wanted to grow. What evolved from her was a new role with no competition; it was all the tasks she didn't like! We were able to recruit successfully into the team from this perspective.

But it doesn't stop there; your onboarding process tells a candidate a lot about you as an organisation; imagine how you would feel with forms sent and no further interaction until you start.

More recently, this has made non-starters feel undervalued before they even begin. The compliance process can be longwinded, and notice periods can be long, but

maintaining communication is essential. Check-in regularly and keep them updated on the progress. It may seem little but it goes a long way.

Then they start. They try not to adopt a sink-or-swim mentality, craft a training program, and provide a mentor. This is even more important with GenZ, as they can struggle here and will leave in a heartbeat if they do not feel valued. This may sound like a huge process, but just like building a house, you wouldn't build it without foundations, so why would you take a chance on your business?

Here's why getting recruitment right is imperative for business:

## 1. The Cost of a Bad Hire

Recruitment mistakes are expensive. The financial implications of a poor hire include the cost of advertising, interviewing, onboarding, and training—only to start the process all over again if the hire fails to meet expectations. According to research, a bad hire can cost businesses up to 30% of the employee's annual salary. Beyond the financial hit, poor recruitment decisions can lower team morale, disrupt productivity, and negatively impact the company's reputation.

## 2. Building a Strong Organisational Culture

Recruitment shapes a company's cultural DNA. Every individual hired becomes a building block of the company's ethos, impacting how teams work together, solve problems, and innovate. Misaligned hires can dilute an organisation's culture, while the right hires strengthen and enhance it. When businesses prioritise cultural fit during recruitment, they attract candidates passionate about the organisation's mission and purpose. This shared sense of purpose fosters engagement, collaboration, and loyalty, creating a workplace where employees are motivated to excel.

## 3. Enhancing Business Performance

A business's performance is directly tied to the calibre of its workforce. Skilled, motivated, and innovative employees drive growth, improve efficiency, and deliver exceptional results. Conversely, employees who lack the necessary skills or motivation can hinder progress, causing delays, errors, and stagnation.

## 4. Embracing Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a key driver of innovation and resilience in today's global marketplace. Organisations prioritising diversity in their recruitment strategies benefit from various ideas, experiences, and problem-solving approaches. This inclusivity fosters creativity and adaptability, helping businesses thrive in complex and uncertain environments.

However, achieving true diversity requires intentionality. Recruitment processes must be free from unconscious bias and designed to attract talent from all backgrounds. When businesses get recruitment right, they create inclusive teams that reflect the diverse needs of their customers and stakeholders.


So, before you race headlong into your next hire, stop, evaluate, build your foundation, and grow not only your team but also your business.

By Penelope Layzell

[penelope@penelopelayzell.com](mailto:penelope@penelopelayzell.com)



# Why Your Deepest Desires Feel Out of Reach and How to Change It



The things we yearn for most - whether it's wealth, fulfilling relationships, career success, or optimal health - can often seem the hardest to attain. Even when we get close, these desires can feel fleeting, slipping away just as quickly as they appear. The phrase "easy come, easy go" may begin to feel less like a casual saying and more like an expectation. Whether you're an eternal optimist or someone who tries to stay positive, the weight of unmet desires can make you wonder if they will ever materialise.

But here's the truth: your dreams weren't born to torment you. They're guiding lights, pushing you to evolve into your highest self - the version of you that's fully capable of achieving them. The first step to realising these aspirations is understanding why they sometimes feel so out of reach.

## Welcome to Your Nervous System

At the core of this challenge lies your nervous system, which is governed by your unconscious mind. This part of your brain stores your memories, beliefs, and emotions, processing massive amounts of information every second—most of it outside of your conscious awareness. It takes care of essential bodily functions like breathing and heartbeat without any conscious input, ensuring you survive and function efficiently.

While this system is essential for your survival, it's also why your desires can often remain out of reach. Your unconscious mind's primary goal is to keep you alive and safe, not to help you thrive. Anything unfamiliar - no matter how positive - is perceived as a potential threat. The unknown is exactly that, and anything that's unfamiliar feels unsettling, and as a result, your nervous system instinctively pushes back against the things you consciously want.

For example, you might crave the perfect job, a large social media following, a passionate relationship, or a fit and healthy body. However, if your nervous system isn't equipped to handle these experiences, it will react as though they are foreign objects. Much like how the immune system rejects a harmful substance in the body, your nervous system may reject or resist unfamiliar success, wealth, or love, treating them as potential threats.

## "Good" Things Feel Threatening

On the surface, it seems illogical that your mind would resist something like love or success. To understand how this relates to your nervous system, think back to a moment of overwhelming excitement—perhaps Christmas Eve as a child or the night before your wedding. Your heart raced, your body buzzed with energy, and you may have found it hard to eat or sleep. While this was a positive experience, the intensity of the emotion was still too much for your nervous system to process.

Imagine experiencing that level of emotional energy every day. Even positive emotions, when sustained for too long, can overwhelm your system. It's similar to an electrical system: if too much energy flows through a circuit, it can cause a short circuit. In the same way, your nervous system can become overloaded and go into protection mode, reducing the energy flow and bringing you back to a state of equilibrium.

## The Hidden Costs of Achieving Your Desires

We often assume that achieving our desires will lead to joy, fulfilment and all good things. But consider how many people living your dreams - whether wealthy, in relationships, or physically fit - still struggle with dissatisfaction. Feelings of joy or happiness aren't inherent to a particular circumstance. They're emotions we can access at any moment, regardless of external conditions. You can recall a past experience and bring back the

‘To create something new in your life, you must become someone new.’

feeling associated with it instantly, showing that emotions are not tied solely to the future.

Here’s where it gets interesting; alongside the positive emotions we hope for, there are also hidden costs to achieving our desires. These can include fears of judgement, the pressure to maintain

success, or the loss of comfort that comes with familiar routines. Ignoring these potential downsides doesn’t make them disappear; in fact, they might be what’s silently holding you back from stepping into the life you truly want.

### **The Costs of Transformation: Becoming Someone New**

To create something new in your life, you must become someone new. This process isn’t just about changing external circumstances; it’s about transforming your identity, habits, and mindset to align with the version of yourself that can hold and sustain these new experiences.

Transformation comes with costs. Even if your current life feels limiting, it’s familiar and comfortable. Over time, you’ve learned how to navigate your present circumstances with minimal effort, much like driving a familiar route. Your nervous system is used to your current identity, making it easy to operate on autopilot.

But change requires stepping off this familiar path. It can feel exhausting and disorienting because you’re no longer coasting through life—you’re actively rewiring your brain. Shifting into a new identity requires building new neural pathways, which, unless you’re supported by a coach or mentor, takes conscious effort. That’s why change often feels tiring: You’re training your nervous system to adapt to something it hasn’t done before.

### **The Energy Demands of Change**

Creating something new isn’t a one-time decision - it’s a process that demands consistent focus and effort. At first, the energy required to start this transformation can feel overwhelming, like pushing a heavy wheel that hasn’t been moved in years. You’re breaking old habits and patterns while forming new ones, which can be mentally and emotionally draining.

When you’ve lived in a certain identity for a long time - whether it’s “I’m always broke” or “I’m unlovable” - your brain has built neural pathways that reinforce those beliefs. Shifting into a new identity means building new circuits that support beliefs like “I am abundant” or “I deserve love.” Undertaking this alone can take time and devotion, and it’s natural to feel drained during the process - approach it with self-compassion.

### **The Comfort of the Familiar vs. the Promise of the New**

Even though you may crave change, the familiar often feels safer. Your current life, even with its frustrations, offers a sense of control and predictability. You’ve adapted to its challenges, and your nervous system knows how to handle them.

Stepping into the unknown, however, brings uncertainty. New challenges require new solutions, ways of thinking and new behaviours, none of which feel automatic at first. This discomfort is part of the growth process. Just like learning any new skill, the initial stages of transformation can feel awkward and slow. But as you continue, these new ways of being will gradually become second nature.

### **Building Capacity for Your Desires**

To truly step into the life you desire, you need to build the capacity to hold it. This involves training your nervous system to feel safe with the success, love and fulfilment you desire.

A simple question you can ask yourself to reveal any unconscious beliefs is:

What are the potential negative consequences of achieving what I want?

Once you’ve identified them, you know what you need to overcome. Whether that’s through working with a coach to rewire your unconscious mind quickly or by developing a plan for how you will handle those challenges if they should arise. Doing this will reduce the sense of threat and allow your nervous system to embrace what you truly want.

In the end, the life you’re seeking is available to you, and you must be available for it. Creation is a two-way process. Transformation involves acknowledging and embracing the challenges that reveal your current limitations and training your nervous system to adapt. Only then can you fully step into the life you’ve been dreaming of.

**By Sian Hill**

[www.iamsianhill.com](http://www.iamsianhill.com)





**‘I was standing in a room full of millionaires, wearing brass balls around my waist. That’s when I realized everything about my \$50,000 investment was wrong.’**

Just hours earlier, I’d been sitting in this ‘Elite Mastermind,’ one woman among fifteen men, watching our billionaire mentor – a man who’d achieved 18 times the success I was aiming for. He prowled the front of the room, promising to reveal his exact blueprint for scaling from 7 to 8 to 9 figures. This was it, I thought. The perfect mentor. The perfect strategy. The exact roadmap telling me precisely what to do.

“Do you guys want to know the TRUE secret to my success?” A glint appeared in his eye as he scanned the room. The energy shifted as fifteen voices shouted, “HELL YES!” His response? “Get a massive hard-on and go out there and chase money like it’s p\*ssy!”

The words clanged in my head like the bells of Notre Dame. Before I could process what I’d just heard, he was already onto his next big reveal. “And talking of ‘hard ons,’ I want to present an award to the person with the biggest kahuna’s, and that’s Kirsty! Come on up here!”

An embarrassed silence filled the room. Cringing inside, I walked to the front. In one hand, he held a deep purple velvet bag with a gold sash. On the other, he had two brass balls that he kept wringing between his fingers. He dropped them into the bag with a heavy clink, asked me to turn around, and tied the sash around my waist. The bag hung at my groin, balls clanking with every movement.

“So go on, Kirsty, show the rest of the guys how much of a baller you are, swing it around!” My inner voice screamed, “Are you frickin serious?!” But there I was a successful businesswoman, standing on a chair, swinging brass balls for a room full of embarrassed men.

That moment was my wake-up call.

The truth? My inner GPS had been sending signals for months that this group and this leader weren’t aligned with who I am. But I’d done what so many of us do – dismissed that inner wisdom like an adult brushing off a child’s concerns. “We know better,” we tell ourselves.

After spending \$50,000 in coaching fees, I finally got the message. Here’s the real kicker, though – that moment of absolute clarity didn’t just save me from more misaligned investments. It launched me on a journey to discover something far more valuable than any billionaire’s blueprint: how to tune in and TRUST my own inner guidance system.

What I’ve discovered has transformed not just my business but my entire approach to success. The most powerful lesson? Clarity and alignment on who you are and what you truly want matter infinitely more than how you do things.

When you trust yourself and follow what feels right to you, magic happens. Not the woo-woo kind of magic, but the real, tangible, ‘holy shit, I can’t believe this is my life’ kind of magic. Let me share the exact steps I now use to tap into and trust that guidance. Fair warning: They’re probably the opposite of what you’ve been taught about creating success.





### Step 1: Stop Doing and Start Being

I get it – as a recovering workaholic, this first step felt like suicide. When my new mentor told me to take two weeks off and do absolutely nothing, I nearly choked on my coffee. “But it’s almost Christmas! I have campaigns to run, goals to hit!” Her response? “Did you pay me \$15K a month to keep doing what you’re doing?” Touché.

So I did the unthinkable. I stopped. Everything. No morning phone checks. No laptop opens. Just long walks and... space.

Within days, something shifted. Thoughts and feelings I’d been pushing away for years started bubbling up. The biggest? It was overwhelming to know that I needed to dissolve a business partnership. This wasn’t new—the whispers had been there for two years. But this time, I couldn’t ignore them.

The grief was real. But you know what followed? Pure, electric excitement. That excitement became my compass, leading me to growth I couldn’t have imagined while stuck in ‘doing’ mode.

Quick ways to start your own ‘being’ practice:

- *Create intentional SPACE in your calendar (yes, schedule doing nothing)*
- *Make your bedroom a phone-free zone*
- *Gift yourself one hour each morning before opening any devices*
- *Take silent walks (leave the phone at home)*
- *Sit in stillness and just breathe*
- *Journal those whispers that come through*
- *Notice how your body responds to different choices*



### Step 2: Find and Follow Your Unique Genius

Let me tell you about Sarah. She came to me burning to do something “EPIC.” Her solution? Repeat a successful business model selling physical products online. It was practical. Logical. Safe.

It was also completely wrong for her. When we tuned into her inner guidance, we discovered her true genius was creating transformative experiences.

Today? She leads life-changing journeys through the Sahara Desert. Her revenue has tripled, but more importantly, she finally feels alive.

To find your unique genius, create space and ask yourself:

- *What flows so naturally you could do it in your sleep?*
- *What would you do all day, even if nobody paid you?*
- *What gives you energy instead of draining it?*
- *What do people consistently say you’re amazing at?*
- *What would you create if all limitations vanished?*



### Step 3: Let Go of What Doesn't Light You Up

This is where it gets real. Once you know your genius, you have to release everything that isn't it.

Take Jeannie. She came to me with a 7-figure business and a breakdown on the horizon. Her genius? Innovation, leadership, and big-picture vision. But she was drowning in details, terrified everything would collapse if she let go.

Through learning to trust her inner guidance, she gradually released her death grip on the day-to-day. Now, both she and her business are thriving at levels she couldn't have imagined.

Your inner GPS speaks in simple terms:

- **Excitement** = "Hell yes!"
- **Heaviness** = "Hell no!"
- **Curiosity** = "Explore this..."
- **Tension** = "Something needs to shift..."
- **Exhaustion** = "Stop, breathe, reassess..."

### Step 4: Follow Your Vision, Not Just the Money

In my corporate days and early businesses, I was the queen of reverse engineering. I set the goal, built the plan, and hit the target—rinse and repeat.

Did it work for making money? Absolutely. Did it feel fulfilling? Not even close.

That nagging "Is THIS it?" feeling kept getting louder. Instead of feeling guilty about wanting more (have you been there?), I finally recognized it as a call for growth and expansion.

Now? Growth and Expansion BEYOND my limitations are my North Star. The money flows as a natural by product, but it's no longer the driver.

Try this:

1. **Create space** (sensing a theme?)
2. **List what makes you feel completely alive** (no judgment!)
3. **Write your internal intention for growth**
4. **Identify your next Growth Edge**
5. **Track when you feel most energized**

Those brass balls still sit on my desk. They're my reminder that success isn't found in someone else's formula – even a billionaire's. It's found in the quiet moments when you trust your own inner knowing. Your internal guidance system always receives perfect reception. The question isn't whether it's working—it's whether you're ready to listen.

Put your hand on your heart right now and ask: "Does this feel like me? Does this light me up?" Your body and soul already know the answer. Because here's the truth I had to swing brass balls to learn: You already have everything you need inside you. Your job isn't to conform to someone else's path – it's to be radically, authentically yourself.

That's where the real magic happens.  
Ready to start listening?

**By Kirsty Verity**

**Transformational Business Coach for Mission Driven Women**

kirsty@kirstyverity.com

Instagram: imkirstyverity

facebook.com/chatkirstyverity

linkedin.com/in/kirsty-verity





## Calm Begins with Me

### Embracing a Peaceful Family Christmas



Winter invites us to slow down with its darker, colder evenings, reflecting nature's natural cycle as wildlife retreats to rejuvenate. Yet, as humans, we gear up for the festive season, often finding ourselves overwhelmed by extra commitments. Family gatherings, gift buying, and work deadlines can lead to stress and burnout as we strive for the "perfect" celebrations.

As L.R. Knost wisely notes, "When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not to join their chaos." Yet, humans under stress often regress, sometimes triggering tension and unwanted outbursts. We can't control everything and everyone around us; however, we can choose how to respond. Learning to be more self-aware helps us regulate our emotions and is a game changer in cultivating a calmer home.

Here are my practical tips to encourage a more peaceful festive season:

- 1. Check-in:** An essential act of self-care at this time of year. Mindfully pausing a couple of times a day and noticing how you feel mentally and physically creates a space for self-reflection and identifies any stressors.
- 2. Family Planning:** Pre-empt difficult situations by recognising any potential triggers that cause stress during this festive time. Have a family gathering, acknowledge the flames, and generate ideas that can dampen them down.
- 3. Anchor Yourself with 5,4,3,2,1:** This sensory grounding activity helps to shift your attention from stressful thoughts to the present moment. Name: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- 4. Maintain Routines, Set Realistic Expectations:** Try to keep routines in place, providing a safe space. This helps reduce anxiety and prevent meltdowns. Be realistic, let go of the pressure for perfection, and embrace the real moments—that's where the magic is.
- 5. Encourage Problem-Solving:** This builds resilience and helps children break down their big problems into manageable steps. For example, if they're sad about not seeing relatives, discuss alternative ways to connect.
- 5. Embrace the Mantra:** "Calm begins with me." Combine it with deep breathing, tapping each fingertip in turn with your thumb as you say it rhythmically over and over. This will help refocus and calm the mind.
- 6. Validate Emotions:** Acknowledge emotions such as frustration when you get last-minute changes. Encourage open communication so you and your children feel heard and understood.
- 7. Take a breath:** Engage in festive-themed breathing exercises. Imagine holding a festive scent (Christmas tree/cinnamon) in one hand and a lit candle in the other. Imagine inhaling the scent (through your nose) and then turning and blowing out the flame slowly (through your mouth). Repeat five times to calm the mind and body.
- 8. Allow Downtime:** Encourage kids to take breaks for self-regulation, whether it's burning off energy through outdoor play and movement, snuggled up in a tight blanket like a burrito, or being barefoot and free.
- 9. Take Time for Yourself:** Recharge your battery and self-regulate so you can bring calm back into the home. Go for that run, dance in the kitchen, soak in the bath, do a mindful activity—paint your nails, crochet, or do a body scan.
- 10. Practice Gratitude:** And finally, this is a time to be festive, so have fun with your family and friends, and share positives in your life that you are truly grateful for.

**By Cindy White**  
Wellbeing and Parent Coach

[www.barefoot-coach.com](http://www.barefoot-coach.com)



# Empower & Elevate

## Transforming Stress into Success for Professional Women

In today's world, a professional woman's life is often a balancing act. With demands from work, family, and personal goals, stress becomes a constant companion. But what if stress didn't have to be a limitation? With a few strategic changes, stress can shift from a burden to a powerful motivator for growth and empowerment.

Having worked extensively with professional women, I have witnessed how intentional stress management can bring transformative results. Here is a roadmap to help you take control of your stress and use it to fuel your success.

### 1. Recognise and Address Your Unique Triggers

Pinpointing specific stressors is the first step to managing them effectively. Professional women frequently experience stress from high expectations, workload, or feeling unsupported. Start by journaling daily to identify patterns, noting moments of anxiety or overwhelm. This clarity is essential for tackling stress at its roots and beginning to reshape how you respond.

### 2. Establish Supportive Boundaries

Boundaries are vital for maintaining balance but are often challenging for those juggling multiple roles. Setting boundaries does not mean neglecting responsibilities; it is about protecting your mental and physical health. For example, try limiting emails to specific hours or carving out "focus time" in your schedule. Clear boundaries reduce stress and increase others' respect for your time, creating a healthier work-life balance.

### 3. Cultivate a Growth Mindset and Build Momentum

A growth mindset and steady momentum are essential for stress management and personal growth. Embrace challenges as opportunities for improvement, reframing setbacks as stepping stones. Then, break tasks into manageable pieces and celebrate each milestone. This approach reduces feelings of overwhelm and strengthens your clarity and confidence along the way, helping you transform everyday challenges into progress.

### 4. Take Advantage of Mindful Breaks

Mindfulness is a simple yet impactful tool for managing stress. Research shows that even five minutes of mindfulness can lower cortisol levels and improve focus. Incorporate small mindful breaks—like deep breathing, short meditations, or nature walks—into your day. These moments of calm can improve your mental resilience,

relieve tension, and boost your ability to stay productive under pressure.

### 5. Embrace Movement as a Stress Reliever

Stress often manifests physically as tension or fatigue, making movement essential for relief. Exercise, from stretching to brisk walking, helps reduce stress hormones and boosts endorphins for a natural mood lift. Regular movement shifts your energy and perspective, allowing you to face challenges with renewed resilience.

### 6. Practise Self-Compassion

Professional women often set high standards and can be overly self-critical. Practising self-compassion can transform how you manage stress. Instead of criticising yourself for feeling overwhelmed, try to show yourself the same kindness you would offer a friend. Self-compassion eases stress, reinforces positive thinking, and strengthens resilience for the long term.

### 7. Seek Support to Elevate Your Well-being

Stress management does not have to be a solo endeavour. Seeking support—whether from friends, mentors, or professional guidance—can provide insights and accountability. Programmes like my 30-Minute-Deep Dive Stress Audit offer a tailored approach to uncovering what is holding you back and providing actionable strategies to overcome it. Expert support can be a pivotal step towards lasting improvement, creating the accountability and structure to keep stress under control.

### Taking Charge of Stress

While stress may be inevitable, it does not have to control you. Through intentional strategies, you can manage stress and even turn it into a force that propels you forward. Start with small, manageable changes, and soon, you will see a shift in your focus, resilience, and overall well-being. Remember, stress does not define you—you define how you rise above it.

By Beverley Shatliff  
Green Tree Holistics



# Feeling Free in Your Surroundings

## How to Create an Environment That Nurtures Your Freedom

By Carola Goedeke



Feeling free in your surroundings is crucial for mental clarity and a balanced nervous system. Whether it's your home, workplace, or any space you inhabit regularly, the way your environment is designed and set up can greatly influence your well-being and, with it, your feelings of freedom.

Often, we associate with freedom grand concepts like traveling through the world or financial freedom. Another form of freedom can come from how you feel in your immediate physical environment, which always has a conscious and unconscious influence on the body, its nervous- and energetic system. Wrong surroundings can cause many irritations and can lead to health issues. It is essential to create a space that nurtures your freedom by letting your body be in a healthy mental, emotional, and physical condition. This can be especially crucial for highly sensitive people, who often feel the direct impacts of external influences such as strong colors, heavy furniture, irritating patterns, or clogged spaces. Feeling liberated also comes from within, and one's own values are in alignment with one's surroundings.

Explore how to create external and internal environments that foster a sense of freedom, enabling you to feel lighter and be your true self in your daily life.

### 1. Enfree Your Space

Cluttered and dusty spaces can be a direct barrier to feeling free in your living space. They can create a cluttered mind, which leads to unclear thinking and feeling stressed and overwhelmed. One of the most immediate and effective steps toward feeling freer is to simplify and declutter your space.

Start by identifying items in your environment that no longer serve you, bring joy, or store negative energies. This will create more physical space, which translates into mental and emotional space as well. Creating a minimalistic style can be incredibly liberating, allowing you to focus on what truly matters. Also open your space by using light colors and natural light, which can also make spaces feel more expansive. An enfreed and open space can also give you more room to move, breathe, and relax, helping you feel less confined and more open to possibilities.

### 2. Personalize Your Surrounding

Feeling free in your surroundings also comes from creating a space that reflects your unique personality, preferences, and needs. This might also be an opportunity to create a flexible space that gives you the freedom to adapt it to your needs as they evolve.

Add elements that resonate with you—whether it's artwork, plants, or meaningful objects. Surround yourself with things that remind you of your values, passions, and interests and make you feel comfortable. When your space feels like an authentic extension of who you are, you'll experience a greater sense of freedom to express yourself without inhibition.

### 3. Reclaim Autonomy Over Your Time and Space

Another essential component of feeling free in your surroundings is having more autonomy over your time and how you use your space. In many cases, people feel trapped or restricted by schedules, responsibilities, and obligations. Carve out time in your day that is purely yours—a space where you can do what you want without external pressure. Set boundaries to protect your time and space by communicating this to the people you live and work with. Take regular breaks at work to refresh your mind.

Freedom is about choice, and reclaiming your autonomy over how you spend your time and interact with your environment is key. Even small acts—like organizing your workspace to suit your preferences or scheduling time for creative pursuits—can create a more liberating atmosphere.

### 4. Clear Your Internal Environment

Lastly, it's important to recognize that your internal environment—the space in your mind and heart—is just as important as your physical surroundings. Even if you optimize your physical space, you won't truly feel free if your mind is cluttered with worries, doubts, or fears. Cultivating mental and emotional freedom starts with mindfulness. Take time to meditate, journal, or simply sit quietly with your thoughts. Notice the mental clutter that holds you back, and work on letting go of limiting beliefs, negative thought patterns, or unproductive habits.



# How can managers act as role models for workplace wellbeing?

Neil is the co-founder of Huddle, a leading UK fitness marketplace which enables companies to invest in the wellbeing of their employees through highly inclusive, affordable, multi-brand gym access, available in 96% of UK postcode regions.

The Huddle team has been lucky to attend some fantastic conferences recently, showcasing the latest trends and topics in the employee wellbeing and benefits space. Among many insightful themes, one of the most prevalent topics has been the role that we, as managers, can play in shaping and supporting the wellbeing of our employees. According to the CIPD, line managers support people's health and wellbeing. They are responsible for employee absence management in 70% of organisations. Despite this widespread responsibility, the lack of line manager skills and confidence is one of the most common challenges to workforce wellbeing.

'Management style' remains one of the top causes of stress-related absence.

However, managers are facing tough times, too. There has never been a worse time to be a manager, with many experiencing burnout. Measures need to be taken to ensure that not only employees but also managers stay healthy and well. After all, how can managers support their employees if they themselves aren't feeling happy and well?

The key here is to take the steps you would encourage your employees to take. Not only will such measures help you (the manager) stay well, but you'll also advocate for your organisation. You'll set a great example to your employees and play a key role in increasing engagement in healthy, wellbeing-focused initiatives.

## What actions can managers take?

Stories were told during a presentation at one of the earlier mentioned wellbeing events, demonstrating how leaders can become 'visible sponsors' for wellbeing initiatives.

Two specific examples especially resonated with us.

- **The manager who blocked out time in their diary, clearly labelled for exercise.**
- **A senior leader who deliberately walked a long route around the office whenever they had been to the gym before work. They would make it clear that they had been doing something active by carrying their gym bag or even leaving their hair a little wet after going for a swim.**

Perhaps the latter isn't something we'd all feel confident doing, but it's a great illustration of the influence that managers can have. Here are some suggestions that any manager can make when advocating for wellness in the workplace.

## Take regular breaks

If you're in the office, take some time away from your desk at lunch. If you're working from home, let your colleagues know you're breaking away from your screen. Perhaps take a walk outside for



that all-important Vitamin D. Even better, make use of your employee fitness benefits (if you have them) and go to the gym. Taking exercise breaks during the working day is linked to performance boosts as high as 21%!

## Make use of your holiday allowance.

We all need time off. Not all of us can afford fancy long-haul getaways, but be sure to make use of your annual leave allowance. It's there for a reason! Do something relaxing and refreshing, and tell your colleagues all about it.

## Respect time off

When employees are on holiday, it should be exactly that—a holiday. Try not to bother them with work-related queries while they're off unless it is absolutely essential. Support them in planning cover while they are away, and give them time to catch up once they're back. Exhibit the same standards while you're off as well, as far as you possibly can.

## Support flexible working

If the nature of your workplace allows, support your employees in balancing their work and home lives. Judge them on what they achieve, not on how, where or when they achieve it. Need to break from work to pick up the children from school? Prefer a slightly longer lunch break to go to the gym? Like the practicality of working from home some of the time to free up time for outside commitments? These are all measures that any forward-thinking workplace and manager should strive to make.

## Check in with your employees.

Ask your employees how they are feeling. Are they stressed? Are they facing any external pressures? Talk about these topics yourself to encourage your staff to feel confident sharing their challenges, enabling you to support them wherever possible.

## Encourage social connections

Often, the relationships that we build outside of our direct reporting structure and departments can be pivotal to our overall wellness and satisfaction in our working roles. Help your employees form these all-important friendships by scheduling social events. Encouraging exercise can be a great way to facilitate this! How about a lunchtime walking/ running group? Perhaps this would encourage employees to team up and use the activities available as part of their fitness benefits together.

## Become an advocate for workplace wellbeing.

Hopefully, you'll agree that these are key steps that any leader can take to advocate for and support the wellbeing of their staff. For all the managers out there, you are in a great position to influence your senior leaders and HR teams to make investments in the wellbeing of your staff.

## Neil Harmsworth

Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer at Huddle



[www.huddle.com/employers](http://www.huddle.com/employers)

## Communicate Effectively With Your Ideal Audience as a Personal Brand

Effective personal brands have value, and they communicate that value to those who need it, recognizing it and using it to create more value. Yes, personal branding is all about value, and communication is essential to getting someone to recognize and utilize that value.

Communication is an integral aspect of building a personal brand. It is important to package your expertise, skills, experience, and education to speak to the right people so they can derive value from your brand. If you are unable to communicate your value, your ideal audience may not recognize such value.

Here are five ways to help you effectively communicate with your ideal audience as a personal brand:

### 1. Understand who your audience is:

To effectively communicate your personal brand to your ideal audience, you need to understand who they are. How can you effectively speak with them if you don't know who you are speaking to? Knowing them means you understand the details about them. This includes knowing their demographics, psychographics, interests, likes, dislikes, pain points, and the like. You also need to know where they get their information, how they consume it, etc.

### 2. Know the language of your audience:

The "language" here is not the native tongue or learned language. Rather, it is about understanding the nuances in their communication, the kind of words they use when speaking, the sort of ways they describe what they are going through or their pain points, the choice of words they use, and so much more. When you understand their language, you can communicate with them in that language, and they may easily understand your brand message.

### 3. Where can you find your audience?

You need to know where to find someone to communicate with. This will enable you to communicate effectively and ensure you speak to the right people. For instance, if your personal brand is positioned to help mums, then you may want to utilize platforms like Pinterest or Instagram. LinkedIn may be one of the major platforms you want to utilize if you want to communicate with professionals. Also, if, as a personal brand, a part of your target audience is B2B companies, in-person networking may be one of the platforms you want to utilize for your communication.

### 4. How can you package the right content for your audience?

The content for your audience matters, as well as how you package the content, which is the format. To clearly communicate with your ideal audience, the format of the content you use matters. For instance, if you are speaking to certain audiences, you need to utilize formats like blogs, newsletters, ebooks, whitepapers, and other long-form content. If you are seeking to clearly speak with those who are more "on-the-go", then you need to utilize action-based short-form content. Don't ignore the format with which you present your content because it impacts how it is received.

### 5. Understand content consistency:

If you understand your audience well enough, understand their language, know where to find them, and know how to package the content, then it is crucial to understand how consistent the content should be. You need to research and develop a consistent posting schedule to match the needs and timing of your target audience. For instance, how often should you post on social media or even send newsletters? All these matters to ensure that your communication is effective when it comes to your ideal audience.

### Conclusion

The key to making an impact with your personal brand is effective communication. You may be a knowledgeable expert in your industry, but if you don't know how to package and communicate your expertise, it may be difficult to offer value to your ideal audience.

Are you ready to transform your communication and make an impact with your personal brand? Book a consultation with me today via [calendly.com/ayishatolanrewaju](https://calendly.com/ayishatolanrewaju). You can also visit my website, [www.brandingwithayishat.com](http://www.brandingwithayishat.com), to learn more.

By Ayishat Olanrewaju

[www.brandingwithayishat.com](http://www.brandingwithayishat.com)





# Confidence and Style: A Dynamic Duo for Self-Transformation

Confidence and style go hand in hand—they're the dynamic duo that can transform how you look and feel about yourself. Your personal style is much more than just your clothes; it's a reflection of you and your identity. And confidence? Confidence is the foundation of self-assurance, the quiet power that fuels both success and fulfilment in every area of life. It stems from believing in your worth, capabilities, and the value you bring to the world.

True confidence is not about perfection or arrogance; it's about embracing who you are, flaws and all, and trusting yourself to handle life's challenges. It allows you to take risks, face fears, and step out of your comfort zone with positivity and focus. Confidence radiates outward, influencing how others perceive and respond to you, but most importantly, it shapes how you perceive yourself—creating a cycle of self-assurance and empowerment that can impact your entire life.

## **The Power of Mindset: Unlocking Confidence from Within**

Mindset is an important and powerful force that shapes how we perceive ourselves and the world around us. It influences our decisions, resilience, and, ultimately, our confidence. The connection between mindset and confidence is profound, as the way we think directly impacts our self-belief and ability to overcome challenges. By cultivating a positive and growth-oriented mindset, we can unlock the confidence needed to achieve our goals and navigate life with purpose.

## **The Role of Self-Talk**

The inner dialogue we have with ourselves is a key component of mindset. Positive self-talk can boost confidence by reinforcing beliefs in our abilities and worth. Conversely, negative self-talk can create doubt and insecurity, undermining our self-esteem.

Your personal style can also be a powerful tool to complement and reinforce positive self-talk. Wearing clothes that make you feel confident and aligned with your identity can amplify the messages you tell yourself. For instance, choosing an outfit that reflects professionalism or creativity can serve as a tangible reminder of your capabilities and aspirations. When you dress in a way that feels authentic and empowering, it becomes easier to silence negative self-talk and embrace a mindset of self-assurance. In this way, personal style becomes an external extension of internal positivity, boosting confidence from the inside out.

## **Mindset, Personal Image, and Risk-Taking**

Confidence often requires stepping out of our comfort zones, and a positive mindset is essential for taking calculated risks. A growth mindset encourages us to view uncertainty and challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats to avoid. This shift in perspective empowers us to take risks that can lead to personal and professional advancement. Personal image and style play a significant role in shaping the mindset needed to take these risks.

Dressing in a way that aligns with your goals can be a powerful confidence booster, signalling to yourself and others that you are ready to embrace new opportunities. For instance, updating your wardrobe before a big interview or meeting can symbolise your commitment to stepping into a stronger version of yourself. When your outer appearance reflects self-assurance, it reinforces the belief that you are capable of succeeding, even in uncharted territory.

For example, someone with a positive mindset might approach a new opportunity with the belief that they can acquire the skills needed to succeed. Pairing this mindset with a personal image that exudes confidence—such as wearing clothing that makes them feel empowered—builds internal belief and influences how others perceive them. This combination of mindset and style creates a virtuous cycle of self-assurance and resilience, making it easier to face challenges head-on.

## **Cultivating a Positive Mindset**

Cultivating a mindset that supports confidence does take intentional effort. Practices such as gratitude journaling, mindfulness, and visualisation can help reframe negative thinking and promote self-belief. Surrounding oneself with supportive and encouraging people also plays a crucial role in maintaining a positive outlook.

Incorporating personal style into these practices can further enhance their impact. Visualisation, for instance, can include imagining yourself dressed in a way that reflects your aspirations and projecting a confident and composed version of yourself. Gratitude journaling



# 'Confidence is the foundation of self-assurance, the quiet power that fuels both success and fulfilment in every area of life.'

can also extend to appreciating the tools—like your style—that help you present the best version of yourself to the world.

Ultimately, mindset shapes the narrative we tell ourselves about who we are and what we can achieve. By embracing a growth-oriented perspective, nurturing positive self-talk, and aligning personal style with inner confidence, we can unlock a reservoir of self-belief that propels us toward success and fulfilment.

We should also recognise that feeling a lack of self-worth can be an isolating and disheartening experience, but it's important to remember that self-esteem and confidence are not fixed traits—they can be cultivated. Everyone faces moments of doubt, convinced they have confirmed their deepest fears: that they are not enough, but the key lies in learning

to challenge those negative beliefs, nurture your strengths, and create a positive relationship with yourself.

Here's a roadmap to help you navigate a few of these challenging emotions:

**Recognise and Challenge Negative Thought Patterns**—The first step is to acknowledge your inner dialogue with yourself. Pay attention to thoughts that reinforce feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt. Ask yourself: Is this thought based on fact, or is it a product of my fears? Replace self-critical thoughts with positive thoughts that focus on your potential and accomplishments.

**Surround Yourself With Positive Influences:** The people you spend time with can significantly impact your self-perception. Seek relationships with individuals who uplift and encourage you, and distance yourself from those who drain your energy or make you feel "less than". Positive environments foster growth and reinforce your sense of value.

**Embrace Your Strengths and Celebrate Wins:** Everyone has unique talents and qualities that make them valuable. Take time to identify what you're good at and lean into those strengths. Celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem, and remind yourself that every step forward is progress.

**Celebrate Your Uniqueness:** Comparison is the thief of joy, and constantly measuring yourself against others can erode your sense of worth. Instead, focus on what makes you unique. Your quirks, talents, and perspectives are assets, not flaws. Celebrate the individuality that sets you apart and adds value to the world.

**Practice Self-Care:** Physical and mental well-being plays a crucial role in self-esteem. Engage in regular exercise, eat nourishing foods, and get adequate rest. Practice mindfulness or meditation to manage stress and build emotional resilience. When you feel good physically and mentally, confidence naturally follows.

**Seek Professional Support When Needed**—Sometimes, overcoming feelings of worthlessness requires additional help. Therapists and counsellors can provide valuable tools and strategies to help navigate these complex emotions and build a healthier self-image. Remember, seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness, so if you need help, reach out.

**Focus on Growth, Not Perfection:** Confidence doesn't mean being the best; it means being willing to grow. Shift your mindset from seeking perfection to valuing progress. Celebrate your efforts, and allow yourself to embrace the journey rather than fixating solely on the destination.

**Using Style to Reinvent Yourself**—Style can be used as a tool for transformation. If you're going through a period of change, whether that be starting a new job or recovering from a setback, updating your wardrobe can symbolise a fresh start. It's a tangible way to leave behind the old and embrace the new, signalling to yourself and the world that you're stepping into a stronger, more confident version of yourself!

Overcoming a lack of self-worth and building self-confidence is a journey that takes time and patience, but it's a journey well worth taking. By challenging negativity, embracing your strengths, and nurturing a positive self-image, you can transform how you see yourself and unlock your true potential. Remember, your value is not determined by others—it is intrinsic and unwavering. Believe in yourself, take small steps daily, and watch as your confidence grows stronger with every step you take with **Style**.



By Angela Haynes-Ranger  
Style Coach & Award Winning Mentor  
[www.adourable.com](http://www.adourable.com)



# The Post-Covid Retail Landscape

Two decades ago, retail wasn't just a place to shop—it was a cultural touchstone, a shared experience that brought people together in ways that feel nostalgic today. Stepping into a store wasn't merely about transactions; it was about the atmosphere, the excitement, and the connection to something larger. The mall, in particular, wasn't just a destination—it was a stage for life's simple yet significant moments. It symbolized freedom, exploration, and possibility.



Shopping with family was a cherished ritual. You might find yourself tagging along with your grandmother on a sunny afternoon, casually window shopping while soaking up the warmth of the experience. Friendly employees greeted you with genuine smiles, subtly guiding your journey

without pressure. Sales goals and staffing models were not on anyone's radar—it was all about the joy of being there.

For teenagers, the mall held an almost mythical allure. After school, it was the ultimate hangout spot—a symbol of independence and discovery. You and your friends would dress in your best outfits, eager for the afternoon's possibilities. Too young to drive but old enough to explore on your own, the mall was a rite of passage. Every visit held an air of unpredictability. Who might you see? What might you find? Even if you weren't looking for anything in particular, the vibrant atmosphere ensured you left with something—whether a small purchase, a fun story, or a fleeting moment of joy.

Retail spaces in that era were alive with energy. Stores felt like miniature parties, pulsing with upbeat music, colorful displays, and stylish young employees who genuinely enjoyed their roles. These employees didn't just work there; they embodied the brand, radiating enthusiasm and authenticity. Shopping wasn't a task or chore; it was an immersive experience. Customers often spent hours browsing, trying on clothes,



and enjoying the lively environment. It was less about what you bought and more about how the experience made you feel.

Retail was more than a marketplace—it was a social hub where people connected. Whether planned outings with friends or chance encounters with familiar faces, these moments shaped relationships and memories. Stores were more than places to buy goods; they were spaces that inspired creativity, connection, and a sense of belonging.

## The Shift: From Experience to Transaction

Today, the retail landscape looks dramatically different. The rise of e-commerce and changing consumer habits have reshaped the industry, while post-COVID restructures exacerbated the challenges. The existential highs and lows of rapid growth and steep losses have left retail feeling hollow. While online shopping offers undeniable convenience, it cannot replicate the energy and magic of bustling stores and vibrant malls. Retail has become more transactional and less experiential, leaving many longing for a time when shopping felt like an adventure and a celebration.



## What Happened to Retail?

As someone who has worked at the executive level and later stepped into the trenches of store operations post-COVID, I've seen firsthand how the industry's foundation shifted—and how it revealed significant gaps. Before the pandemic, I was part of a multi-billion-dollar acquisition during a period of extraordinary growth. Resources were abundant, training was innovative, and leadership inspired teams to thrive. Companies invested in their people, creating a ripple effect of positivity that energized every level of the organization.

## Then, everything changed.

The global pandemic disrupted the rhythm of retail overnight. Stability and comfort were replaced by uncertainty and survival mode. Leaders scrambled to respond, hastily implementing plans to address immediate challenges. Ideas were thrown at the wall to see what might stick, and priorities shifted from growth to survival. This reactive approach became a turning point for many brands.

In my experience, the disconnect occurred when companies focused solely on operational survival and neglected the human element. More than ever, employees at all levels needed clear communication,

strong leadership, and a sense of purpose. Instead, many were left navigating uncertainty with little guidance, leading to a morale, trust, and productivity breakdown.



### **The Human Element: What Works and What Doesn't**

Having experienced seven retail restructures post-COVID, I've seen both successes and failures. What works is strong, empathetic leadership that prioritizes connection and clarity. Empowering people, fostering innovation, and

rebuilding trust from the ground up are essential. What doesn't work is operating in survival mode for too long—short-term fixes may keep the business afloat, but they fail to sustain growth or inspire teams.

When teams aren't supported, it shows—and customers feel it. Disengaged employees, lacking passion and connection to the brand, create a cycle of neglect that impacts the entire experience. Associates, feeling undervalued, often lose motivation, reducing their role to simply clocking in and out. This lack of investment erodes both employee morale and customer trust, leaving stores struggling to recapture the energy and purpose they once had.



### **The Cost of Neglect**

The financial fallout from COVID left retail struggling to reclaim its former energy. Employees on the sales floor lacked the tools and support needed to deliver exceptional service. Twenty years ago, retail wasn't just about selling but building relationships. Corporate support ensured well-trained teams were in place to handle freight, maintain visual merchandising standards, and create a seamless customer experience. Today, cost-cutting measures have eliminated these key roles. The vibrant atmosphere that once defined retail has been replaced with a fight for survival, leaving employees and customers longing for what used to be.

### **The Path Forward: Rebuilding Retail**



The pandemic didn't just disrupt retail—it exposed vulnerabilities and highlighted opportunities to rebuild. The key to recovery lies in a simple truth: retail isn't just about products or transactions—it's about people.

Rebuilding retail requires reconnecting

decision-makers with the realities of the field. Leaders need to understand employees' challenges and provide them with the tools, resources, and training they need to succeed. It's about creating alignment across all levels of the organization and fostering collaboration between corporate strategy and real-time operations.

This approach demands innovation and agility. Retailers must embrace experimentation, trying new ideas and learning from the results. Rapidly adapting to what works is critical to creating an experience that resonates with both employees and customers.

### **A People-First Future**

Companies are already embracing this people-first approach, and the results are promising. Investing in talent has helped these brands recapture the vibrancy that once defined the industry. Employees who feel supported and valued are more engaged, motivated, and equipped to deliver exceptional service.

The future of retail depends on prioritizing relationships—between leadership, teams, and customers—over rigid operations. It's about creating an environment where people feel inspired to connect and collaborate. By putting people at the center of the retail experience, we're not just rebuilding the industry—we're reimagining it.

Retail has always been about more than products; it's about the connections we make, the relationships we build, and the experiences we share. The future of retail depends on prioritizing people. By embracing servant leadership, we create an environment where employees feel valued, empowered, and inspired to excel. This altruistic focus on connection and collaboration drives innovation, strengthens customer experiences, and ensures long-term success.

When we lead with people at the center, we not just rebuild industries but transform them. The magic of retail lies in its human connection, and by investing in our teams, we create a dynamic, purpose-driven industry that inspires employees and captivates customers.



**By Marissa Cherepanov**

[www.inspirewithmarissa.com](http://www.inspirewithmarissa.com)



# Building a Thriving Workplace

Imagine a workplace that is a crowd of activity, constantly developing and versatile in all aspects of professional life, including your career and the goals that must be met.

## Do you believe this exists?

Wishful thinking may be necessary in this fast-paced environment. I frequently remark in my posts that everything is changing so quickly.

Every workplace, without exception, should be dynamic. It is not an option but rather a requirement to remain competitive and achieve the desired goals and outcomes. It might be adaptable and imaginative, responding quickly to issues and encouraging staff collaboration.

It's not just about productivity and staying ahead of the competition. It's more than that. It is about employee satisfaction, job fulfillment, and retention. This is well conveyed, yet what can any organization do to become more dynamic?

## Here are a few options.

### The value of a dynamic workplace.

#### 1. Adaptability to Change.

Companies must respond quickly to changing market demands and technology breakthroughs, such as AI. A dynamic workplace encourages individuals to contribute ideas, proposals, and innovation to master and own certain issues. This method allows the organization to provide long-term assistance for personal progress.

#### 2. Innovation.

Innovation is a key component of a dynamic workplace. It promotes creativity and exploration. Furthermore, it promotes the well-known "thinking outside the box" approach, encouraging each individual to create ideas, process improvements, and continual learning. Innovation is not limited to new products or services; it can also involve existing processes, services, and products that improve consumer happiness and retention.

#### 3. Increased employee retention.

Each firm wants to keep its current staff. A dynamic workplace offers precisely that atmosphere, as it offers opportunities for growth, employee satisfaction and fulfillment, and a sense of purpose. In exchange, this is a cost-effective way to retain personnel, reduce high turnover rates, lower training and onboarding costs, and boost productivity, consistency, and outcomes.

#### 4. Collaboration.

Collaboration is one of the key components of a vibrant workplace. It breaks down silos and stimulates cross-departmental collaboration, resulting in creativity and a more inclusive workplace. Each perspective is valuable; the more you have, the better the results. Provided it is carefully controlled and orchestrated.

## How can we establish a vibrant workplace?

Here are some foods for thought options.

#### 1. Promote constant learning.

To build a dynamic workplace, organizations must give opportunities for skill development. Personal development and progress are critical for the next generation and micro-learning byte programs. Workshops, mentoring, and further education should be offered and supported on a regular basis.

#### 2. Promoting flexible work arrangements.

Trust in your employees is a vital part of a dynamic workplace; it ensures they will do their job and deliver the anticipated outcomes, regardless of how many hours they work. Choosing working hours, whether remote or in-office, is critical to a healthy and profitable business. Furthermore, this strategy attracts talents who are unable to commit to traditional working hours from 9 to 5 and thus remain under the radar.

#### 3. Transparent communication.

Open and honest communication is crucial for a dynamic work environment. Leaders should demand ongoing feedback and demonstrate their commitment to open talks in which it is safe to speak up.

#### 4. Using technology.

Technology plays a crucial part in fostering a dynamic workplace. Implementing collaborative tools for quick communication, online challenges, and process management processes are the first steps toward establishing an innovative organization. Having any more isn't ideal for remaining competitive, so keeping up with all of the new developments in this field is essential.

#### 5. Employee Appreciation and Reward

Every worker wants to be heard and noticed. Each organization's best option is to provide each employee a reward for their effort, no matter how modest. As a result, employees feel even more empowered and motivated to contribute to the organization's objectives and solutions. One of the best ways to build a vibrant workplace is to openly share, celebrate, and give praise.

#### 6. Lead by example

Be the example. Be present and demonstrate all the qualities you are looking for in workers. The tone of a dynamic workplace is set by its leaders. A great and agile work environment is driven by leaders who exhibit agility, are inclusive, and encourage innovation. A dynamic leader needs to be able to inspire, guide, and provide vision and meaning.

## What does the above really mean?

Businesses must be dynamic, adaptable, and nimble in order to foster an atmosphere where everyone feels secure and empowered. A dynamic workplace is one where people are encouraged to try new things, decisions are made fast, and people are involved in learning and upskilling opportunities, career growth, and continuous improvement initiatives. These activities lead to results, accomplish goals, and make your company one for which people want to work.

by Hulya Kurt  
[www.innkick.com](http://www.innkick.com)



# Tarot is your guide

My journey with tarot has been one of my life's most enlightening, enriching and interesting aspects. Tarot today is often considered taboo or scary, mainly due to the lack of understanding. However, with an open mind and a willingness to go within, having a tarot reading can be one of the most uplifting and positive things you can do for yourself. Forget the crystal ball on a velvet cloth with the reader draped in a shawl predicting oncoming woes and emotional turmoils; this could not be further from the truth.

Tarot essentially picks up on the blueprint of your destiny and will act as a guide to answer any queries you may have regarding a certain subject. Free will is always stronger; your decision on how you wish to go about a certain issue or area of your life is entirely down to you; this is why it is so important to understand that you always have control; you always are the one making the decisions, and you are the one who can change whatever you want in your life.

## Why should you use tarot as your unconventional guide?

Tarot is an ancient tool, with practices going as far back as the early 1430s in Europe. It holds all the key elements we require today to stay in alignment as a spiritual being, such as air (swords), water (cups), fire (wands) and earth (pentacles). They are all linked to various zodiacs, personifying multiple characteristics that can predict oncoming characters coming into our lives and the characteristics we display within ourselves. Each card holds a message, and depending on the spread, the card will let the seeker know what is blocking them, what is likely to be the outcome, and what external influences are at play regarding the situation.

It is important to understand that the tarot is not 'telling you' what is going to happen, and this is the beauty of using it as a tool to guide you. You are not walking into your boss's office and following instructions to be under fire if something is not done. There is no answering back, and there is certainly no judgement. Think of tarot as your spiritual advisor, as if you were to seek a financial advisor for all things money; your spiritual advisor would assist with all things sacred. Its connective ability goes beyond words; it is something to experience. Here is an example of how tarot could be used as your unconventional guide.

I see a woman who has booked in for a reading, and she explains to me that she is worried about her relationship;

she thinks her boyfriend might be losing interest in her, and she is eager to find out if he would stay and what steps she could take in ensuring she keeps him. She shuffles the cards and focuses on her question, and I lay out the spread. The cards have started to guide the questioner (the person having the reading) to the core issue and likely outcome. There are many swords (air) in her reading; this symbolises the mind and how much she is in her head about this situation. The 'past cards' show anxiety and lack of confidence; perhaps she has experienced cheating in the past, and her anxiety regarding this has not been released/ healed.

Her blockage position shows a limiting belief about herself, and the outside influence (situation or person) was showing up to be very fruitful and optimistic. With guidance from the tarot and how I worded various situations I could see, we established she had a subconscious belief system that she felt she needed to work hard to keep a man as not only had she experienced cheating, but her Mother had also experienced the same thing, which she witnessed growing up. It became part of her subconscious programming.

Tarot did not tell this woman she needed to see the bigger picture; it showed her herself and what she needed to work on and reassured her that he (the boyfriend) was not showing up as a concern. The woman in question saw this as a chance to open up her heart and acknowledge her inner child, and she did some amazing inner work, having tarot readings as guidance every 6 months to maybe a year. This is the beauty, the 'how do they know that!' moment, the sacred connection between you and the cards, none of this 'Hocus Pocus' that surrounds the image of a tarot.

My message to everyone is that knowledge is a powerful tool, and if we use it correctly, we can be the amazing version of ourselves we see in our mind's eyes—you are your own solution, and the tarot is your guide. I will explain certain card combinations to assist you with your message. If you read something, it is meant for you; that is the beauty of divine timing.

By Hannah Dawe

Facebook is Ivory Moon Holistics - <https://www.facebook.com/ivorytarot>  
Instagram is: @ivory\_moon\_holistic\_official

[www.ivorymoonholistics.com](http://www.ivorymoonholistics.com)





# Do mums have a 'human giver' syndrome?

In my work with my female clients, there is a strong theme of carrying the 'extra' – extra mental load, extra worrying, extra anxiety, extra guilt, extra house chores.

On the surface, these 'extras' seem to be self-imposed burdens. It's tempting to simplify and say that you should be able to set clear boundaries, have role-setting conversations with your partner, and get on with your share of the load.

Then why is it so hard? Why do women struggle to let go of some of the load and choose to carry the extra? Is it really all self-imposed?

While some burdens may appear self-imposed, they are often deeply rooted in societal expectations and cultural norms. Historically, women have been seen as the primary caregivers and homemakers, a role that has been ingrained over

generations. Even as more women enter the workforce, these traditional expectations persist, creating an internal conflict between professional ambitions and perceived domestic responsibilities.

All this makes the modern working mum a bit of a social experiment. There is a seeming movement towards gender equality; however, the infrastructure and social reality have not yet been established to support that equality.

Here are some of the things we talk about with my clients to help us set the scene in which they are trying to be a good mum and stay on their career path. Being aware of these is a good first step:

## Societal Expectations and Gender Roles

From a young age, girls are often socialised to be nurturing and responsible for the well-being of others. This conditioning can lead to an ingrained sense of duty to manage household tasks and childcare, even when they have demanding careers. Emily and Amelia Nagoski cleverly label women in their book *Burnout* as 'human givers' vs. men who are 'human beings'. The pressure to excel in both domains can be overwhelming, leading to an 'extra' mental load.

## The Invisible Load

The mental load, often referred to as the 'invisible load,' includes the planning, organising, and remembering that goes into managing a household. This load is not always visible to others, including partners, which can make it difficult to share or delegate. The constant juggling of tasks and responsibilities can lead to chronic stress and burnout.

## Guilt and Perfectionism

Many working mums struggle with guilt and perfectionism. They may feel guilty for not spending enough time with their children or for not being able to keep up with household chores. When I did my market research on my recent coaching offer, one of the mums said these words that made us both laugh but also cry a little – 'will I go to my grave still wanting a cleaner house?'. This guilt can drive them to take on more than they can handle, striving for an unattainable standard of perfection.

## Lack of Support Systems

Another significant factor is the lack of adequate support systems. While some partners are supportive and share the load equally, this is not always the case. Extended family support, affordable childcare, and flexible work arrangements can also be limited, making it harder for working mums to balance their responsibilities. This is even harder for women trying to continue climbing the career ladder and growing in their professional roles.

## So, what is there to do to break the cycle?

While it may seem like a pretty bleak scene, there are ways to address these challenges.

- *The best starting point is working out what is real and what results from the human giver syndrome – anything in the second bucket – is a load we must drop.*
- *Having a brave conversation with our partner about these extras on our mind, introducing a concept of teamwork where sharing responsibilities is the new normal.*
- *And fundamentally, the most important - learning is that you are worth the self-care. Learning to truly believe that creating time for your well-being is the opposite of selfish. It's a long-term contribution to your relationship with yourself, your partner, and your children.*

By *Eve Ostrovskaya*



# Unlocking Your Intuition

## A Guide to Trusting Yourself

Have you ever experienced a gut feeling, an inner feeling of knowing what to do? Perhaps you didn't listen to it. You looked back and said, "I knew I shouldn't have done that!" But you did it anyway. That was your intuition talking to you. So, what exactly is your intuition?

Intuition is a gut feeling, an intuitive feeling. It's the ability to understand something immediately without the need for conscious reasoning. We are born with five physical senses, but we are also born with what's known as our sixth sense, and that sixth sense is our intuition. Our intuition has many different names. It's also referred to as our gut feeling, inner self, guidance, spirit, psychic sense, higher self, instinct, and more.

When we connect with our intuition, we trust what our hearts want. We connect with what we want deep down inside to live a truer, more authentic life. Our intuition works in tandem with our personal needs, memories, and core values.

### Step 1: Ask

Ask your intuition a question. You don't want to ask your intuition a yes or no question; when you're first starting, you want to ask something small. An example of a small question to ask would be, should you go for a walk or eat breakfast first tomorrow, not something as big as should you change your career tomorrow?

### Step 2: Feel

Feel an instant answer somewhere in your body. This is also known as a "download." It's when you know something without knowing how you know, you just know. And there will be no emotion attached to its answer because it gives calm, clear answers. When feeling your intuition's answer, pay attention to your senses. You may see an image or a vision in your mind's eye, or you may hear a voice from deep down inside of you.

### Step 3: Trust

Because your intuition is guiding you to your most authentic self, you need to trust your feelings and ignore your thoughts. This will strengthen your self-trust.

### Step 4: Act

The last step is to act on what your intuition tells you to do. It's guiding you to live your truest, authentic life, so if you don't act on it, you're missing out on your own inner wisdom. Try these steps any time you need to make a decision in your daily life. They will help you train and maintain your intuition's strength. Your intuition may not have all your answers, like the "hows" and "whys" of a situation, but it will always lead you to the answer of "what" you truly want.

### Here's the kicker:

*You only have 4 seconds to feel your intuition. Once you move onto the 5th second, your rational mind kicks in and starts to talk you out of what you want deep down inside because there's no logic attached to it.*

Once you start implementing this four-step process into your life, I recommend you keep a journal of the questions you ask, the answers you receive, and the actions you take.

In a few weeks or months, review your journal. You should start to notice a pattern of your life changing for your greatest good—a life that feels freer and one filled with more energy, joy, and passion. It takes practice to connect with your intuition, but the more you do it, the easier it will become. Practice self-compassion and be patient with yourself. You'll get there.

**BY BRANDI VAN**  
Psychic Medium Mentor

To learn more about intuition, visit my website, [www.brandivan.com](http://www.brandivan.com). I am a Psychic Medium Mentor, helping individuals overcome their self-doubt so they can fully embrace their psychic gifts, through my 90-Day Psychic Development Mentorship Program.

[www.brandivan.com](http://www.brandivan.com)



# From ME to WE

We all set some sort of goal to achieve, and usually, the world does this on New Year's Eve as we strive to achieve something new and different. On New Year's Eve in 2023, I said I would deliver a TED talk. I didn't know what on or what the process was, but it was on my bucket list. Sadly, like most New Year's resolutions, I didn't achieve it (that year). Fast forward 12 months, and whilst I didn't restate my aim, it was bubbling below the surface for when I could just free up some capacity to follow my dream.

As you may well know from reading my articles, I love a big, audacious goal that we can get excited about and then figure out the components that can make that goal, or dream, a reality. Fast forward to July 2024, and I achieved one of my life goals, but the purpose of sharing that with you here is not to receive credit or plaudits. In fact, the title of my chosen talk explains why the topic is far from shining the light

on oneself. My chosen talk was titled 'From ME to WE' and how we can shine the light on our often-invisible team members who may not get a fair share of the limelight but are equally as important as those who do.

As a 'Pracademic' – combining practical and lived experiences with a measure of academic rigour and theory, I wanted to explain my take on the importance of collaboration within high-performing teams. In a world that often emphasises individual achievement, the concept of shifting from "me" to "we" in teamwork emerges as a transformative approach to collaboration and success.

The essence of effective teamwork lies not just in combining talents but in nurturing a shared purpose and collective identity. This idea resonates deeply with Tuckman's model of group development, which outlines the stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing,







highlighting how unity and cohesion are essential for moving beyond individual contributions towards shared goals.

In my recent TED Talk, I explored this theme, sharing personal insights and reflecting on the profound impact a collaborative mindset can have on individuals and teams. Embracing this shift enhances productivity and fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support, ultimately leading to achievements far more significant than anyone could attain alone.

Here's an example of how the concept aligns with each of Tuckman's stages of group development:

### **Forming**

Team members tend to concentrate on their individual roles and responsibilities, approaching the situation with a mindset centred on "me." At this early phase, individuals are exploring the environment and beginning to familiarise themselves with one another, often uncertain about the group's dynamics.

**Me Focus:** Participants are primarily concerned with understanding how they integrate into the team, defining their roles, and anticipating the benefits they will receive from the experience.

### **Storming**

This stage is characterised by conflict, as differing perspectives and objectives commonly collide. At this point, individual egos and personal ambitions can overshadow team interactions, making collaboration a significant challenge.

**Transition from Me to We:** Friction emerges when team members prioritise their own visions, creating obstacles that need to be addressed in order to shift towards a more unified, collective mindset.



Image: Adam Birkett from Northern Powerhouse Media

## **Norming**

In this phase, the team establishes standard norms, clearly defined roles, and a cohesive sense of unity. Members transition from focusing on personal accomplishments to prioritising the team's success as a whole, marking the emergence of the shift from "me" to "we."

*We Focus:* Team members actively embrace collaboration, recognising that shared success benefits all. The emphasis is placed on team objectives, with individual recognition taking a backseat to collective achievements.

## **Performing**

The team operates effectively as an integrated whole. Members have completely embraced the "we" mentality, concentrating on how their individual efforts contribute to the team's broader objectives rather than seeking personal recognition.

*Complete We Focus:* The team is now synchronised around shared goals, with members depending on each other's strengths and appreciating that success is rooted in their collective efforts.

## **Adjourning**

As the team completes its work and separates after finishing the task, members take the opportunity to reflect on their collective achievements. In this phase, individuals come to appreciate the significance of teamwork, acknowledging that the collaborative "we" mentality proved far more beneficial than any individual "me" contributions. I believe reflecting on the profound impact this shift can have on teamwork and collaboration is essential.

In our interconnected world, embracing a collective mindset enhances cooperation and fosters innovation and resilience. This concept resonates deeply with Tuckman's stages of group development, which highlight the necessity of forming, storming, norming, and performing. By moving from individual perspectives towards a unified goal, teams transform challenges into opportunities for growth, ultimately achieving a synergy that exceeds the sum of its parts.



During my TED Talk, I shared personal anecdotes and practical strategies that illustrate this powerful transition. By recognising our interconnectedness and the potential that arises when we collaborate, we can inspire each other to strive for shared success. My challenge was not getting my universal message across but convincing a panel that it was an idea worth sharing and ensuring that the message resonated with the live audience and the global online TED supporters who would potentially view it forever. This would only happen if it was deemed TED-worthy and was uploaded to their YouTube platform.

Spoiler Alert--- I'm pleased to say that it received sufficient traction and was thankfully accepted. It takes its proud place amongst the thousands of amazing ideas and stories worth sharing on its platform. As a former professional rugby player, my biggest challenge was ensuring that my story was relatable, whether you liked rugby or not or enjoyed playing or watching sport. To parents, children, corporate executives, charity volunteers and retirees, we have all played many roles in many teams, and that is where the magic lies. Referring back to Tuckman to ensure it is not just anecdotal when we achieve a shared goal, the rewards and emotions are amplified when he states the "we" mentality proved far more beneficial than any individual "me" contributions. I invite you to view it, and please do provide your feedback, as there are messages throughout that cater to all of us.

As someone who has had his fair share of the limelight and primarily as a result of the hard work of my team, I needed to land this message well. As a reminder to the live audience in attendance that night, I closed by saying it's not necessarily essential to recognise our role in our teams. Instead, try to shine a light on others by appreciating their roles and contributions. I did this by gifting every audience member a mini torch as a reminder to shine a light on their invisible team members.

As we move forward, let's carry the spirit of "We" into every team and nurture a culture of inclusivity and support. I invite you to find an opportunity to shine a light on someone.

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# The Door that led me to 'The Self Worth Secret'



Although I am not a mother yet, being an aunt to four beautiful children has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. I didn't realize it was possible to love that intensely or have that love reciprocated unconditionally in return. This led me on a journey towards increased awareness of the little girl inside of myself, and subsequently, when I knocked on that door, my life transformed!

What is the inner child?

Your inner child is the childlike part of your personality that includes what you learned as a child and how it influences your thinking and reactions as an adult.

Interestingly, a child's brain absorbs information like a sponge due to its rapid development and high plasticity in the early years. From birth to around age six, children experience the "absorbent mind" phase, where they unconsciously and then consciously soak up vast amounts of information from their environment. This period is crucial as the brain forms numerous neural connections that lay the foundation for future learning and development.

Your "Self-Worth" can be described as your internal 'Sense of Self' and perceived worthiness of love and belonging from others.

Furthermore, this can drastically be affected by childhood conditioning and belief systems. If this is the case, learning to self-soothe and repent will be crucial in your journey of healing and discovery.

I want you to take a moment and imagine a perfect red shiny apple hanging on a beautiful tree in an orchard. This image symbolizes how we arrive flawlessly into this world as tiny newborn babies. Ten years later, imagine an apple with 50 tiny pins in it, which symbolizes a child. This harm could be caused by not feeling seen or heard or from not having basic needs met.

Eighteen years on, imagine the same apple with a knife stuck in it after your first heartbreak as a teenager. All these 'injuries' 'wounds' deplete the sense of self. Consequently, we often cannot see our own value; we lack confidence, which contributes to low self-esteem, and these 'wounds' can send us on a catalyzing downward spiral to seek external validation and love.

Our inner child can manifest in our daily lives through fear, anxiety, feeling guilty, or a deep sense of shame or unworthiness. This part of ourselves will go above and beyond to try and keep us safe, but it could also prevent us from taking a leap towards something new and amazing.

One of the secret ingredients to mastering self-worth is that it must come from within. To enable us to feel truly fulfilled, we must be able to fill our own cup first. We must 'Love' ourselves. We must 'Feel' complete entirely on our own. Everything outside of our 'Self' simply only adds to or enhances our life.

I wrote a quote a short time ago describing how I define "Self-Worth." This is the mission behind my brand, which is to be powerful, real, and authentic.

## Self Worth is more than two words

*'It is the Core of your being.*

*It is your love for yourself when you're feeling pretty but also when you are losing hope.*

*It is a feeling from within derived from a deep knowing of your personal value.*

*It is a Light deep inside your heart.*

*It is Warm, and it Shines.*

*That energy is magical.'*

One of the first steps in reconnecting with ourselves and reclaiming our self-worth is an awareness and acknowledgement of the inner child.

Connecting with and calming your inner child involves several therapeutic practices:

**1. Visualization:** Communicating with your inner child through visualization or speaking aloud, offering reassurance and understanding.

**2. Writing and Journaling:** Writing letters to your inner child, acknowledging past pains and providing comfort and validation.

**3. Meditation and Mindfulness:** Using meditation to connect with your inner child, fostering self-awareness and emotional acceptance.

**4. Creative Expression:** Engaging in activities like drawing, music, or dance to express emotions and reconnect with childhood joy.

**5. Self-Compassion:** Practicing self-compassion by validating your inner child's feelings and offering empathy.

- If you feel this resonates with you the next time your inner child requires reassurance, imagine taking them by the hand and saying

*"I am an adult now. I will keep us safe. Thank you for trying to protect me. We got this"*

Then, take that little person by the hand and keep walking towards your goals and dreams. Love yourself. Know your value. Embrace your worth in all its entirety and keep moving towards the light!

By Sarah Jayne Gwynne

Email: [theselfworthsecret@hotmail.com](mailto:theselfworthsecret@hotmail.com)

Insta: [theselfworthsecret](https://www.instagram.com/theselfworthsecret)

LinkedIn: [Sarah Jayne @theselfworthsecret](https://www.linkedin.com/company/theselfworthsecret)

# The Power of Pause

## How Taking a Career Break Can Transform Your Life

"Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is relax." – Mark Black

Have you ever considered what a sabbatical could unlock in your life? Taking a sabbatical was the best gift I ever gave myself.

In 2016, I was faced with a career crisis after being promoted to director, and I knew I needed to step off the corporate hamster wheel. I craved a period of sacred time to relax and reset. My husband and I took eight months away from our jobs to explore what we wanted from our next chapter. Through a lot of discussion and dreaming, we landed on three themes to shape our future:

### **Freedom - People - Sunshine**

In 2022, we left our corporate roles and took a leap of faith. I retrained as a coach, and we embarked on renovating a 16th-century derelict barn in France. Today, we live an endless summer across two continents, surrounded by our favourite people.

### **Vacation vs. Sabbatical**

Sabbaticals and career breaks are becoming more common. Gusto Inc. found that 6.7% of salaried workers were on sabbatical in January 2024, double the rate from 2019. But what differentiates a sabbatical from a vacation?

As a coach specialising in career transitions and sabbaticals, I see the key differences in time and intention. Sabbaticals are longer than a standard two-week vacation, ranging from a month to more than a year. While vacations are primarily for recreation, sabbaticals are about intentional pursuits that can't be achieved while working.

### **Benefits of a Sabbatical**

#### **Gain Clarity and Perspective**

Stepping away allows you to assess what's important and whether your current life aligns with your values. Our sabbatical gave us the clarity and courage to explore alternative lifestyles and

time to set a five-year plan to work towards our dream life.

### **Burnout - Prevention & Cure**

In a world that celebrates "hustle culture," burnout is a growing issue. A 2022 McKinsey survey found that one in four employees globally reported burnout symptoms. Prolonged stress impacts health, but a career break can restore well-being, resilience, and a healthier work-life balance.

### **Rediscover Your Passion**

Taking a break from routine can open mental space to rediscover passions or uncover new ones. Often, we're stuck on autopilot. I entered my career without a clear direction and, 15 years later, realised I didn't know what truly fuelled me. Our career break reconnected us to our love for travel, community, and sunshine, ultimately inspiring a life more aligned with our values.

### **Enhance Your Skills and Broaden Your Horizons**

Many people use a break to learn new languages, retrain, or pursue hobbies that keep them mentally engaged. During our break, I tasked myself with building a travel blog website—a tech challenge for me! Though I didn't love the tech side, it improved my patience and problem-solving skills, which I brought back to my job.

### **Reignite Your Creativity**

Creativity often feels elusive under routine. However, a change in scenery and the space to daydream can spark creativity in unexpected ways. The sensory inspiration from travel helped me improve my creative writing while blogging about our adventures, reigniting a spark I hadn't felt in years.

### **Strengthen Relationships and Build New Connections**

We often underestimate the impact our careers have on relationships. A career break offers time to reconnect with family and friends or meet new people with shared passions. Our break allowed us to spend quality time with loved ones we hadn't seen in years, re-establishing those bonds.

### **Invest in Future You**

Ultimately, a career break is an investment in your future self. It's a time to reflect and make intentional choices about who you want to become. Our eight-month break was the best investment in our future life, not merely a luxury but a vital opportunity for growth.

In a nonstop world, pressing pause can feel counterintuitive, yet it's often exactly what we need. As a sabbatical coach, I've witnessed how stepping away can empower people to return to their lives with fresh perspectives, renewed energy, and a clearer purpose. If you're feeling stuck, burnt out, or simply curious about what else is out there, a career break could be the transformation you're looking for.

**By Rebecca Thomas**

**Transformational Career & Life Coach  
Sabbatical & Career Break Coach**

[www.feelgood-getaways.com](http://www.feelgood-getaways.com)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rebeccasianthomas/>



# Are We Giving Our Kids Too Much Freedom, or Not Enough?



Ever feel like you're stuck in a tug-of-war between giving your kids too much freedom and trying to maintain control? Parenting can feel like an endless balancing act—juggling connection with authority. On top of that, we're all so busy with school runs, work deadlines, socialising, and endless household tasks! Knowing where to draw the line between giving kids too much freedom or not enough is tough. But sometimes, the smallest adjustments can have the most significant impact, especially at this stage of a young person's life. Let's explore how a few shifts in approach can restore balance and harmony to your family life.

## My Top Tips!

### Let Kids Experience Consequences

When kids refuse to wear shoes or coats, let them feel the natural consequences. Going barefoot outside or being cold without a coat will teach them the value of being prepared. It's a simple lesson that removes the need for constant nagging and could lead to smoother mornings.

### Keep Bedtime Sacred

I often ask my clients if they still put their teens to bed. Even as kids grow older, bedtime is a prime opportunity to connect. Those last moments before sleep are when kids often feel most open. These quiet, intimate moments can build trust and understanding, making them more valuable than a long conversation earlier in the day.

### Share Meals Without Distractions

One of the easiest ways to connect as a family is by sitting down for meals together. Even one meal a day without distractions can strengthen bonds. Turn off the TV and put phones away to focus on connecting with each other; avoid using this time to just solve problems or give advice, though!



## The Changing Landscape of Parenting

Parenting has evolved over the years, certainly since I was a child! Many parents today are moving away from the old, authoritative styles—where rules were clear and firm consequences followed—and adopting a more democratic approach. This style values communication, equality, and respect for children's individuality.

But as the pendulum swings toward leniency, it can blur boundaries. In an effort to avoid conflict, parents unintentionally allow certain behaviours to slide. This leads to endless and exhausting negotiations and rising concerns about their child's well-being: Are they happy? Are they safe? Are they prepared for life's challenges? With the increasing stresses of modern life, many parents are left wondering if they're giving their children too much freedom—or not enough!

## The Power of Small Adjustments

Creating a harmonious home doesn't require radical change, though. Often, small adjustments make the biggest difference. Healthy family dynamics thrive when everyone knows their role but also has room to grow. Conflicts are resolved more easily when each member feels heard and respected, and the family functions better overall. From my experience as both a parent and a hypnotherapist supporting families, I've found that these simple strategies are crucial to creating a calmer, more harmonious home.

## Prioritise Consistent Bedtime Routines

A predictable, calming bedtime routine creates comfort and security for children. Sticking to a routine that signals it's time to wind down, such as brushing teeth, reading, or chatting about the day is important. This creates stability and helps both children and parents unwind.

## The Role of Cognitive Behavioural Hypnotherapy (CBH) in Parenting

These small strategies are helpful, but sometimes parents need extra support. CBH can help parents shift their mindset, reduce anxiety, and gain clarity in managing the balance between authority and connection with children. Through CBH, parents can become more confident in their decisions, and children can develop better emotional regulation. It's not about eliminating freedom—it's about having the skills to navigate family dynamics.

CBH helps my families feel more secure and grounded, enabling them to handle the stresses of modern life without losing their sense of balance. Parenting is never easy, and there will always be moments of doubt. But with small, strategic adjustments, families can regain balance and harmony. It's not about being perfect; it's about being present, setting boundaries, and creating an environment where everyone feels heard. So, take a deep breath, try a few new strategies, and watch your family thrive.

## By Rachel Bernard



Rachel supports parents, children, and teens through a combination of cognitive behavioural techniques, hypnotherapy, and mindfulness.

# The Grief Window

## Letting go into the circle of life

*“As we let go of grief, we create more space for love...”*

As I write this article, I gaze out of my window at a clear blue sky dotted with fluffy clouds, looking out onto a garden ablaze with the vibrancy of reds, purples, oranges, and golds. It is wearing its Autumn overcoat. I am reminded that change is the essence of life itself.

### BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS:

These are everywhere, all around us, in our bodies, our lives, and the natural world. Between the ending and the beginning lies a necessary transitional place. I am getting ready to move house, to make a leave-taking. This house has been my haven for three years. So much life and healing has happened here. So many departures and arrivals. I have let go of old dreams and wishes. I have healed much of my personal grief here. In the space of healed loss, I have welcomed in much love, friendship and self-growth. I have supported so many of my own clients through the process of grieving and loss.

### A NEW LIFE BECKONS:

A new life now beckons. A new adventure. A new love. New dreams call to be fulfilled. At the same time, I recognise the sadness inherent in leaving behind a place I feel a deep connection to. These feelings are soft now, like autumnal mornings when the mist rises, and the departing geese call overhead. They, too, are following the call of the turning world.

### GRIEF IS NATURAL:

Grief is part of the cycle of change, a natural human response to loss. We may have an unconscious attachment to grief itself, believing that letting go of grief is letting go of what matters to us. When we are asked to surrender to the passing of someone or something we hold dear, sadness is inevitable. But when old griefs are unresolved, fresh, raw grief can act as a trigger for all the unresolved griefs of a lifetime. Sometimes, this can touch generational and karmic grief.

### THE GRIEF WINDOW:

This is sometimes called The Grief Window. It can become a place of opportunity when we welcome it rather than seeking to deny it. It contains a vulnerability from which we may heal, transform and grow. This can require courage, but to ignore it is to risk more suffering. When we continue to hold onto the patterns of the past because they have become familiar to us, we simply create more pain by our resistance.

### THE HURT CHILD:

Often, the Grief Window is created from all that we did not receive as children, from the potentials that we feel we have lost, and from actual losses in our lives. Within many people lies a hurt, grieving child who may have felt abandoned, neglected, rejected, abused, shamed, punished, unworthy, unwelcome, unsafe and unloved. Often, this grief lies buried beneath anger. A Grief Window may have opened within you, and the loss of a lifetime may be with you. Begin to simply acknowledge the feelings and let them go softly and gently. They will release and flow into ease over time. Moving through grief is a process: denial, anger, grief, bargaining, acceptance and self-forgiveness.

### LOCKING INTO GRIEF:

When we are locked into grief, we remove ourselves from the flow of life. Our world grows smaller. Our hearts shrink in self-protection. Ultimately, suppressed grief can cause dis-ease in the body, particularly the lungs. The grieved one would never have wished that for us.

### CREATING SPACE FOR MORE LOVE:

To move through loss, begin to recognise that you are creating space for something better. Trust you can flow forward and that life will support you. If you are grieving lost love and connection to others, gently remind yourself that anything and anyone you have loved will always be part of you.

Moving through grief allows you to hold life less tightly, reclaim your ability to live lightly, and naturally breathe more deeply. Thus, you create space for more love.

If you would like to be supported through the process of grieving or receive the Breath of Life Healing Journey Meditation to download and listen to, please contact Elizabeth.

*For the past 20 years, shamanically trained Reiki Master, Elizabeth Chanter of Honour Being has been transforming lives by honouring all aspects of being. She does this through interweaving the gentle healing art of Golden Way Reiki, compassionate listening, energy medicine and Dreaming Your Inner Child Sacred Art Workshops and Retreats. She is passionate about helping others to create bright, beautiful and balanced lives through in person and remote healing.*

[www.honourbeingreiki.co.uk](http://www.honourbeingreiki.co.uk)  
[elizabeth@honourbeingreiki.co.uk](mailto:elizabeth@honourbeingreiki.co.uk)





# The Art of Giving and Receiving

Holistic living is the knowing that when we give, we are contributing to the universe as a whole.

When we receive it, we also accept it for the whole.

Giving and Receiving is an art found in all things. When we think that our acts of giving are dominant or vice versa, we are out of harmony, and our ability to move freely in life is limited.

The giving is the masculine energy, whilst the receiving is of feminine power.

And both are playing their part in our growth and survival.

We see this in all forms of nature. Plants take minerals from the soil, carbon dioxide and water from the air, and light from the sun to survive and grow, giving us fruits, vegetables, wheat, and herbs for food and medicine.

***The art of giving and receiving can be physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.***

***Mental, spiritual, and emotional giving is at the core of our human connection.***

The Art of Giving is to give or do without expectation. All actions always begin with intention. Let's look at the simple act of opening a door and receiving a thank you. When received, that simple thank you can elevate your spirits. Your act of opening a door, when acknowledged, provides the other person with a sense of being seen. But what happens when the other person does not give thanks?

## **So, what is the Art of Giving?**

Knowing that there is no obligation, it's a choice—a choice to give a little of your time or service with intent and not receive anything in return. This is the art of giving, having the pure intention to be of service, nothing more.

In the ancient Hindu sacred text, the Bhagavad Gita describes this path as Karma Yoga. The path of action or deed is done with the pure intention of giving. To give service to others for the good of others, selflessly without attachment and without expecting something in return. This can be any action: being a mother or nurse, volunteering, opening doors, or offering a glass of water. It can be any form of activity that provides service to others and in which you require no recognition or financial reward. In return, we receive spiritual liberation, purifying the mind and opening our hearts.

## **The Art of Receiving:**

When we are receiving, we are in our feminine energies. The opening of our hearts to the kindness that we have been offered. We are opening our minds to the wisdom shared and opening our hands to receive help. When another selflessly extends their arm to help lift us up.

We take their offer with grace, we allow the exchange of good intentions, and allow the other person to participate in Karma Yoga without feeling obligated to “payback” but instead let their kindness fill our heart with love, and in that, it overflows and appreciation that drives you to continue the cycle of giving and receiving.

Whether conscious of it or not, our human experience is one of give and take.

Once we measure what we are giving and taking, the love of it all diminishes.

As you move through the rest of your days, may you freely be open to receiving and gracious giving, as each without the other is impossible for survival.

May you find spiritual liberation rewarding and, with it, a true sense of your contribution to the whole of existence.

**By Tania Abouzaki**





# Three ways to notice that changing your mind about alcohol is a zeitgeist.

by Jessica Betancourt

A few years ago, if you had brought non-alcoholic beers to a party or asked about the Mocktail menu at a restaurant,



you likely would have been met with some eye-rolls and closed-ended questions. "Are you sober now?" "Are you pregnant?" "Are you on antibiotics?"

A few years ago, you might have felt awkward in becoming visible with your newfound self-awareness that - you just don't want to drink alcohol the way that you used to, whether that is not at all or in some form of mindful consumption.



But what can no longer be denied by many is that drinking less or not at all has become pretty popular. And not only that but in a few years, we will likely look back and see that it was also a movement within mainstream culture. If you look around, you can already see the indicators of this happening.

## 1) A plethora of alcohol-free options and designated non-drinking months.

Dozens of new non-alcoholic beer and wine options are popping up daily. The artistry of the faux-tail/ mocktail is looking second to none. Kombucha is everywhere - hard and soft versions. Dry bars are not just for Utahans anymore, and going for a walk around the neighborhood instead of opening a bottle is coming back as an evening pastime. We have Dry January, Sober October, and any other month for which you can find a rhyming or alliterative abstinence word can gain momentum both with returning participants and those who are sober-curious. Remember September, anyone?

## 2) The shared sentiments of people who are opting out of consuming alcohol.

There used to be a felt (or vocalized) sense of shame or embarrassment around saying that you were abstaining from drinking. It required an explanation or a doctor's note. To tell the truth, when I became visible about my experience in healing myself from Alcohol Use Disorder, I was a bit afraid. I had fears of losing friends, of being required to define myself in regards to alcohol, not being accepted by various communities for not labeling myself Sober, and just generalized anxiety around making myself available for criticism. But all of these fears, both mine and the collective, are piling in comparison to one thing. The lived experience of feeling liberated and alive when

alcohol, AND the thoughts that create an obsession around it, are removed.

If you've even experimented with drinking less alcohol in recent years, then you know that alcohol minimization has been one of the most underestimated life upgrades of our time. There's a weightlessness that accompanies waking up clear-headed, not rehashing regret from the night before. There is a physical sense of becoming more sensitive to and respectful of your body's needs and noticing how vastly better you feel when you abstain from drinking.

You notice how your perceived aging process slows or improves. Your relationships transform, allowing you to release the ones that no longer serve you and nurture the ones that may have been neglected. Your whole sense of self feels regenerated and grateful for life. And perhaps most importantly for some, you notice that your capabilities are much greater than you previously believed. You see that you CAN handle upsets, manage stress well, and prefer healthier alternatives to making yourself feel better, such as utilizing a healthy diet and active lifestyle.

## 3) The coming-of-age generation.

They may be vaping and phone-obsessed, but if you look at the Gen Zers, they are not exactly shoulder tapping in front of the liquor store, stealing booze from their parents, or hiding in the park with paper bags over 40 oz beer bottles. They are seeing and witnessing the downfall of alcohol addiction from the generations preceding them, and they are much more objective about what negative effects alcohol credibly has in a person's life. They probably notice the change in people's personalities when they drink, or they see how their parents or their friends' parents use alcohol, and they don't feel drawn to use it in the same way to relieve stress or to bond with their own friends.

In contrast, you may notice many older people who still chain-smoke and drink hard liquor in copious amounts, which seems like outdated behavior for the most part by today's standards. Where I live, there are still people who smoke in restaurants, and it feels a little bit Stone Age.

What is important to notice here is that everything is constantly changing in our external realities based on the changing evolution of people's level of consciousness. This is what a zeitgeist is. For many people, this is a very exciting time to be alive and participate in a movement that enhances not only our well-being but also the legacy of those who will come after us.

If you are new to the sober-curious, drink-less, mindful drinking experience, and you'd like a bit of support in changing your behavior around alcohol, feel free to get a copy of my complimentary Beginner's Guide to Mindful Drinking. And start your journey towards greater health and wellness now.

## Now IS the time!

*Jessica Betancourt is a certified Rapid Transformational Hypnotherapist and Life Coach, working with people to heal their relationship with alcohol since 2021. You can find her on Instagram and via the podcast - The Mindful Drinking Movement.*





# Developing Your Thought Leadership as a Start-Up

Start by defining what matters to you most. What principles do you stand by? What causes do you care about? Your legacy should be a reflection of these values woven into every aspect of your start-up. Whether it's through supporting diversity, advocating for ethical practices, or simply spreading kindness, your actions today will shape the legacy you leave tomorrow.

As you begin to shape your thought leadership, there are certain things you should avoid. These aren't the golden rules but rather guidelines to help you navigate your journey.

*'I will continue to stand by the fact that everyone deserves a seat at the table, and if we're doing it at my house, there will be more than enough dessert.'*

Here's a wild notion: you don't need to

be an influencer or have millions of followers to be a thought leader. True thought leadership goes beyond social media metrics and into the realms of credibility when you develop a narrative around your experiences and expertise, showcasing how and why you are an authority in your field.

Thought leadership starts with thinking differently and ends with making a difference. As a start-up, establishing thought leadership can be a powerful way to differentiate your brand, build trust with your audience, and ultimately drive growth. It's about creating a voice that others turn to for guidance and insight. Your unique perspective on your industry sets you apart from larger, more established brands, allowing you to craft a narrative that positions you as a credible and reliable source of information and innovation.

When you lead with intention and purpose, you create a ripple effect that inspires and empowers others long after you're gone. Every decision you make, and every action you take contributes to a legacy that reflects your values and vision. Your legacy is your story - make it one that matters.

As you build your thought leadership, it's crucial to consider the legacy you want to create. This is not just about how you want to position your brand today but also about how you can be an authoritative figure in your industry while leaving a positive, lasting footprint. While being featured in news articles, appearing on podcasts, or speaking on stage can elevate your brand, these achievements don't define your legacy. Ask yourself: Are you aligning your brand for the greater good? Thought leadership isn't just about building credibility; it's about embodying the ethos you promote. It's about living and breathing your brand values day in and day out.

A conscious legacy is more than just professional achievements; it encompasses the broader influence you have on your industry, community and even the world. When you lead with purpose, you inspire others to do the same. This goes beyond personal branding; it's about creating a movement that reflects your values.

## Respect Diverse Viewpoints:

Everyone has a right to their views. While it's important to share your perspective, avoid arguing or belittling others for theirs.

**Show Grace and Kindness:** Avoid calling out individuals or brands after a poor experience. Everyone has bad days, and extending grace can build stronger relationships.

**Stay Neutral:** To create an inclusive space, avoid aligning your brand with specific political groups or controversial topics. Focus on what you believe is right without using it to manipulate or alienate others.

**Champion Diversity:** Never discriminate against anyone based on race, gender, age, religion, or other factors. Embrace diversity and surround yourself with people from various backgrounds to enrich your perspective and demonstrate your commitment to inclusivity.

Thought leadership is about living the values you promote. By leading with integrity and empathy, you can build a legacy that resonates far beyond your professional achievements. This journey starts with self-reflection and ends with a conscious legacy that uses your influence to make a positive impact on the world.

So, as you build your thought leadership, remember to focus on the legacy you want to leave behind - one that reflects your values, inspires others, and makes the world a better place.

I live my brand's ethos. I will continue to stand by the fact that everyone deserves a seat at the table, and if we're doing it at my house, there will be more than enough dessert.

**By J. Rachel West**



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# Solo Travel Successfully

Let's take a moment and recall your last group trip. Did you travel with family and friends? How long does it take to coordinate schedules, acquiesce to everyone's preferences, and get plans solidified? How many hours did you spend in that trip group chat sharing tips and suitcase-packing woes? Exhausting, isn't it all? For these reasons and much more, solo travel should be your new method for exploring the world. Some may say, "Isn't solo travel dangerous?" Or the age-old adage, "There is safety in numbers." With any type of travel, there are inherent risks, so why not take a journey by yourself?

Solo travel can be exhilarating. Imagine traveling to a new place, unhindered and unaccompanied, free to explore and indulge in an area of your own volition. The only preferences you would have to cater to on this adventure are your own! Let's get our travel bucket list ready. I can feel the excitement stirring and flight booking confirmations rolling in. However, before you book that dream solo destination, here are a few tips on how to travel solo successfully.

Initially, you have to know the country you are travelling to for entry requirements. Each country's requirements vary, and we should never assume we can just arrive humbly. Customs agents will not hug you on arrival. When I traveled to Ghana, a beautiful West African country on the Gulf of Guinea, I was in for some surprises. After booking my ticket and Airbnb, I proceeded to prepare my essentials and shop for some stylish Safari looks. I thought my printed tops and bug spray would be enough for the journey, but I was wrong.

Upon further research, I discovered I needed a Yellow Fever vaccination and a tourist visa from the Ghana Embassy in my country. Both of the items required time and additional finances to acquire.

My tourist visa took three weeks to process and cost an extra \$130.00 USD. Also, my local pharmacy had to specially order my vaccine, which cost over \$200.00 USD. I cannot stress enough the importance of checking and double-checking your solo destination's entry requirements. Being an informed solo traveler is a must.

Secondly, it is a good practice to check the current travel advisories for the region you are visiting. Countries like the United Kingdom and the United States have government websites such as Gov.uk and Travel.State.

Gov that provide updated travel advisories on countries all over the world. These advisories can provide the level of danger and reasons why you should not travel to a specific country.

Some of these reasons can range from terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping risks, and crime. These websites are excellent at telling you which areas to avoid. Likewise, they can advise you regarding travel insurance and who to contact in an emergency. While no travel is guaranteed safe, it is always wise to check the lay of the land before venturing there, especially when venturing alone.

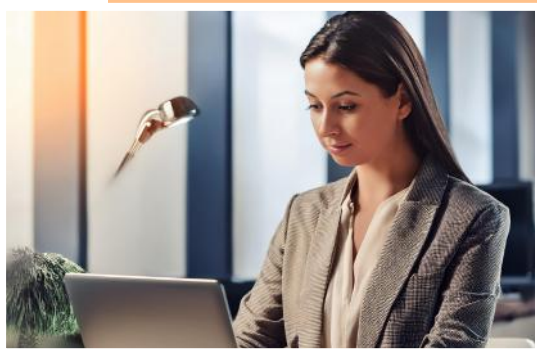
Lastly, be sure to book your stays and excursions with reputable companies. While staying on budget and traveling off the beaten path are equally satisfying, be sure to visit TripAdvisor, Viator, Booking.com, and GetYourGuide to have a successful journey. Some accommodations or tour operators may offer you an unauthorized, yet unbeatable bargain. No matter how tempting this may be, do not send money through channels that are not authorized.

For instance, while booking some excursions online for my trip to Egypt, I had a tour operator offer me some tour upgrades "off the books" through WhatsApp. I had not solicited these invitations, nor did I permit them to contact me privately. I felt unnerved by this encounter. In concern for my safety, I notified this particular operator that I was no longer interested in touring with them and canceled my booking.

In our solo quests, let's excursion and rest responsibly. There is no need to cheat yourself or anyone else to "catch a deal".

In sum, when traveling solo, know before you go! Be mindful of country entry requirements, check international travel advisories, and stick with reputable travel advisors. With the tips above, your solo treks are sure to be safe, fun, and amazing!

By Angelica James



# Preparing for Winter

## Staying Grounded in Your Business During Seasonal Lows

As the days grow shorter and the temperature drops, many entrepreneurs find themselves in a unique battle—not just with their business demands but also with their energy, focus, and overall well-being. For some, this time of year can trigger symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) or seasonal depression, making it harder to stay motivated and productive.

In my journey as a business owner, I've learned that thriving during this season requires a balance between taking care of your business and taking care of yourself. This is the essence of my #bodyandbusiness philosophy—nurturing both your physical and mental health as an integral part of your business success. The winter months are perfect for reflecting on strengthening this balance, especially as you prepare for the year ahead.

### Understanding Seasonal Shifts in Energy and Focus

It's no surprise that as the sunlight fades and cold sets in, our bodies and minds start to react. For many business owners, the hustle of daily tasks combined with the slower pace of the season can create a cocktail of stress and overwhelm. When Seasonal Affective Disorder comes into play, it's more than just a rough patch—it's a real challenge to energy and focus.

Studies have shown that shorter days can lead to lower serotonin levels, which contribute to feelings of depression. This drop in mood, paired with the stress of keeping your business running smoothly, can leave you feeling stuck. However, the key to navigating this season is understanding that preparation and self-care can meet these challenges.

### Building a Foundation of Self-Care for Winter

One of the most powerful ways to stay grounded during the winter months is by being proactive about your physical and mental health. Here are a few strategies that have helped me and many others manage the ups and downs of the season:

- **Prioritizing Physical Health:** Regular exercise is a natural mood booster. Finding a workout routine that works indoors can help maintain your energy and focus even when it's too cold for outdoor activities.
- **Mindful Nutrition:** What you eat greatly impacts how you feel. Focus on foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, whole grains, and leafy greens, all promoting healthy brain function and boosting serotonin levels.

- **Routine Adjustments:** It's important to accept that your energy may fluctuate during this time, and that's okay. Instead of fighting it, try adjusting your routine to align with the season. Focus on peak energy hours, and give yourself permission to rest when you need it.

### Planning for Business Success Even in Low-Energy Moments

Winter doesn't have to be a season of anxiety and overwhelm. By preparing in advance, you can safeguard your business's productivity, even when you're feeling low:

- **Batch Working & Planning Ahead:** Use your higher-energy days to batch tasks and plan ahead for those days when motivation is hard to find. Whether creating content, scheduling posts, or handling administrative tasks, batch working can give you peace of mind.
- **Delegation and Automation:** If you haven't already, now is the time to explore how automation and delegation can lighten your load. These strategies, from social media scheduling tools to outsourcing tasks, free up your time and energy for when it matters most.
- **Setting Realistic Goals:** This season isn't the time for overambitious goals. Instead, focus on realistic, achievable milestones that keep your business moving forward without overextending yourself.

### Recognizing and Addressing Mental Health Needs

Finally, it's essential to remember that it's okay not to feel 100% all the time. If feelings of anxiety or sadness start creeping in, it's important to address them head-on. Meditation, journaling, or seeking support from a therapist or coach are all valuable tools for managing your mental health through the season.

**Conclusion:** Thrive Through Winter with #bodyandbusiness

Winter may bring its challenges, but it also offers an opportunity to reflect, recharge, and renew. By preparing yourself both mentally and physically, you can stay grounded and maintain your business's momentum through the season. Let this be the season where your business and well-being thrive together.

By Taneka Johnson



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LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/taneka-johnson-3351b88b/>



## I WANT TO WRITE A BOOK - DO I NEED A WRITING COACH?

In a business world that abounds with coaches, it's a fair question for an aspiring writer to ask. First, though, let's explore what a book writing coach is and their role. A book coach is a professional mentor and guide who supports aspiring writers in writing their books from start to finish. It is an advantage for a writing coach to have extensive experience in the publishing world as a writer, book editor, or both. Writing coaches also work with previously published writers who want to improve their craft. This may be because sales of their books are low or they've received a significant number of negative reviews.



### Who Benefits From Working With a Writing Coach?

It's a huge undertaking to write a book, and it doesn't come easily or automatically to many people. Often, they don't know how to even begin. They may try, only to be confronted by a blank page or screen, which they struggle to move beyond. One reason is that they probably lack a structure for their book, which will stop them in their tracks. A book without a framework is like a house without foundations. Other people encounter blocks caused by self-doubt or imposter syndrome, the worry that no one will be interested in their book. This is usually because they fear failure, perceiving that their writing isn't good enough. They have no point of comparison.

Some aspiring writers have tried for years to write their books, struggling to get beyond a certain point because they don't have the benefit of professional, objective feedback on their writing. Yet others fail to progress beyond a few words because they lack the accountability a mentor provides to set them weekly writing goals and regularly encourage, inspire, and motivate them. Not everyone needs a writing coach to write their book. An aspiring writer with a clear idea of their topic or genre, well-placed confidence in their writing ability, and the discipline to achieve a set weekly word count is likely to successfully achieve their book-writing goal.

### Some Benefits of Working with a Book Writing Coach

Working with a writing coach will ensure you finish your book—assuming you put in the effort, attend all coaching sessions, and reach weekly goals. Your writing will be much more polished than if you wrote it on your own, especially if you've never written a book before. Why? Because you're receiving constant feedback and making constant improvements. A more polished book will likely reduce editing fees and result in more positive reviews of your published book.

In addition to producing a more polished book, having a coach supporting, goal-setting, tracking progress, and giving feedback means it'll take you less time than if you wrote the book without help. Often, people who choose to work with a book writing coach want to learn and improve the craft of writing because of a desire to write more books.



### What to Look for in a Writing Coach

Working with a writing coach is a medium-term professional relationship, so working well together is important. It's not about being best friends but about being compatible, and mutually respecting and trusting each other. A professional book writing coach needs to have good communication skills and be empathetic. Their approach should be professional but friendly.



When considering engaging a writing coach, ask how they determine if you're going to be a good fit. Do they offer a free consultation to discuss in depth your book-writing goals? Make sure you find out whether their coaching program is self-led or guided, 'cookie-cutter' or tailored, and if coaching sessions are one-to-one, group, or a combination.

What does accountability look like with them? How frequently are their touch points with you? How do they help keep you on track? You'll also want to know admin details, like if they offer a payment plan. Check out client testimonials on their website and Google reviews. Follow them on social media to see what valuable content they post. Ask if they've published any books themselves.



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# Surviving Christmas While Waiting for Your Baby

## 10 Tips for Women Navigating Fertility Challenges

'Tis the season to be jolly? That's what the songs and adverts tell us. But your current reality whilst trying to conceive, is that the holiday season can be anything but joyful. The relentless cheerfulness, imagery of happy families, and societal pressure to celebrate amplify the pain of what you are going through, making it feel as though your unfulfilled dreams are on display. If you're finding it hard to navigate this time of year, know you're not alone. An approach with womb-healing practices and self-compassion can help you find your way through this season.

Here are ten practical tips to help you survive—and even thrive—this Christmas.

### 1. Set Boundaries

Holiday invitations can feel overwhelming when you're dreading intrusive questions or unsolicited advice. You're allowed to say "no" to events you may already dread. For gatherings you do attend, prepare responses to steer conversations away from difficult topics. I quite like this one: "We're focusing on health right now; it's absolutely fascinating. Did you know that the gut is often referred to as the 'second brain'?" Also, ground yourself before these events using a womb meditation. Visualise a warm, protective light surrounding your womb, affirming her as a sacred space, free from external pressures.

### 2. Create New Traditions

Shift the focus from family gatherings to personal traditions. Whether it's a quiet night in, volunteering, or a holiday movie marathon, you can create a meaningful season without external pressure. Consider including a womb-healing ritual. Light a candle, place your hands on your lower abdomen, and express gratitude to your body. This simple act transforms the season into a time for reflection and connection.

### 3. Limit Social Media

Social media can be a minefield during the holidays, filled with pregnancy announcements, family photos, and targeted ads. Protect your peace by taking a break or curating your feed to include accounts that focus on healing and self-love. Seek out womb-healing spaces online, supporting you with practices to connect with your womb and surround yourself with like-minded ladies.

### 4. Practice gratitude

While it may feel difficult, grounding yourself in the present and acknowledging small positives can bring relief. Writing in a gratitude journal or reflecting on moments of joy—whether it's a favourite meal or a kind gesture—can shift your focus. Combine gratitude with womb healing by visualising positive energy flowing into your womb and acknowledging something you're thankful for. This helps nurture your womb space while fostering emotional balance.

### 5. Seek connection

Surround yourself with people who understand and support you, whether through a trusted friend or an online group of women with whom you resonate. Womb healing spaces are often nurturing and caring, where you feel safe and understood. They focus on gentle healing, taking the stress out of your journey.

### 6. Be Kind to Yourself

The holidays may bring feelings of inadequacy, but self-compassion can counter those thoughts. Take time for self-care. A warm bath, meditation, getting out and connecting with nature or curling up with a favorite book can offer moments of relief. Extend this kindness to your womb with

a gentle massage. Using circular motions and nourishing oils, connect physically and emotionally with your body, reminding yourself of her strength and sacred purpose.

### 7. Plan for Triggers

Holiday gatherings can be unpredictable, with relatives asking about children or sudden announcements catching you off guard. You need to be prepared for these moments by deciding how you'll respond, whether by stepping away, having a breathwork technique, or having something in your pocket to "grab on to". Try a simple womb-healing exercise before events by using one of the rituals or meditations mentioned above.

### 8. Allow Your Emotions

It's okay to feel sadness, anger, or frustration during the holidays. Suppressing these emotions often intensifies them, so permit yourself to grieve. Take some quiet time to journal to express your feelings and help you find clarity. Womb healing guides you to release any stuck emotions from your womb, which then helps you to flow in the fullness of who you are rather than being held back by feelings and experiences.

### 9. Focus on the Future

The holidays can also be a time for hope and planning. Look ahead to steps you'd like to take in your fertility journey, such as creating a clear vision for yourself and your partner or embracing holistic methods. Setting intentions can create clarity and purpose. Creating a shared vision board will help to boost your closeness in your relationship with your partner whilst also giving you a wonderful visual to remind yourself of your intentions each time you look at it hanging on the wall.

### 10. Remember: Your Journey is Unique

Comparison during the holidays can be all too easy, but your path is your own. Remind yourself that your journey, though perhaps different from others, is valid, and you are worthy. This Christmas, give yourself the gift of womb connection. By embracing womb-healing practices, you can navigate the season with greater ease. Your struggles do not define you—you are a resilient, hopeful, and deeply deserving woman on a sacred journey.

By Vicki Renz

[www.ohmymamabody.com](http://www.ohmymamabody.com)



# Hit your Mindset with Music

Have you been feeling a bit flat, stuck, or run down? Maybe your career path needs a bit of a twist of excitement. We all go through times when we need a powerhouse of creative juices to come floating into our brain—as Neuroscientists call it, new neural pathways. And this is the power of music resounding in our brains. It diverts us from the same familiar pathways we drive or think about every day to more scenic, fun, and thought-provoking routes.

Music, the root of fast change, is not just a collection of different sounds, shapes, and voices but a powerful inner booster that revives thinking. I call it renewal. Like looking at a family photo constantly, suddenly one day the family members are wearing different clothes complete with a more up to date setting. This shot has turned from murky black and white and pulsates with colour and vibrancy. Music in your brain can do the same thing. Years of scientific research prove this. And it works and happens fast!

Would you like to enter this world where mood change and solving problems are only a step away? Think of a Jukebox, all you must do is tap your phone, and you are the master of music for relaxation or stimulation. An on-demand support system that quickly revitalises your body and soul.

A few years ago, I lifted a coaching client out of a hole she had dug in her career. It was going backwards instead of forwards, and yes, she admitted she was the problem. But wait a minute. She was also the solution! I introduced her to a Vision Mapping Program using classical music, a “Mozart Symphonia,” at its core, to unlock her stuck Mindset that wasn’t going anywhere. Perhaps the daily driving to work and back? But that had to stop!

We started our music-based session one fine Melbourne day, and within 90 minutes, a transformation had begun to occur. I played Mozart for 6 minutes, asked her to envision a change in her noneventful life, and then when the music finished, she wrote about it, finishing at a collage. She was speedy.

This is normal; people stuck under a boulder, a job going nowhere, have been sleeping. And like bears who hibernate, it was time to get out and unit. Find those fish and salmon, be smart and crafty, and bask in summer temperatures. She was off out of the gates fast, from a job that was not going anywhere, keen to find her next adventure.

About three months later, she appeared in a session with her glamorous shopping tote full of clothes for an interview. There were bright red high-heeled designer shoes, a tight red knee-length skirt and a cream silk blouse. She resembled the page of a high-quality fashion

magazine instead of her past beige. She was ready for a new version of her job. And the music had turned around her stuck Mindset. In neuroscientific research, this change is ongoing. The sound and tones of music can influence our brains by stimulating neurotransmitter releases, such as feel-good hormones, dopamine and serotonin. She had unlocked new pathways, showing another route to a job that valued her skills and paid what she was worth. It is no different than getting off a highway stuck with cars going nowhere.

And yes, she found another role similar to that of a company which valued her. Recently, my client sped through an MBA degree, which would never have been possible in the past with her beige Mindset.

For effective change to happen to our Mindsets, we need a tool or inspiration, a bold lifesaver to break through all the chains that keep us from moving. Have you heard the stories of the tragic training of elephants to stop them from disappearing?

At birth, a light chain is put around a leg, which prevents them from moving far. As they get larger, that light chain is still there. Adult Elephants could break it down, but their Mind has been conditioned since birth to this imprisonment. It is horrible and barbaric, but no different to the chains that we can put around ourselves.

The composition and sound of Music can break these chains often. Think of a time when you heard a piece of music that connected deeply with you. It could be when you first fell in love, went away on a great holiday, or saw a fabulous show. Whatever the style of music, it stays within us. When we hear these sounds again, our Mindset is reminded of the occasion, with a variety of feelings from love, happiness, and excitement leading to an overall sense of well-being.

Ultimately, music thrives in the spaces it creates for us, encouraging emotional exploration and an ongoing journey of self-discovery. Keep Hitting up your Mindset with Music, and don’t stop. Prepare to surprise yourself!

**By Sally Arnold**



[www.creatingencores.co](http://www.creatingencores.co)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sally-arnold-2753414/#>

# Improve Winter Wellness - Natural Immune Boosters for Expectant Parents



With the changing season comes cooler temperatures, a clear sign that frost will soon cover the ground. Wintery weather is fast approaching. It is also the season when most respiratory illnesses appear in parents expecting a child.

Seasonal influenza infects up to 1 billion people a year. Despite these alarming numbers, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 290,000 to 650,000 respiratory causalities annually.

According to the Winter Illness Guide from Johns Hopkins Medicine, the most prevalent illnesses in the colder months include the common cold, flu, pneumonia, and Whooping Cough. Sufferers tend to spend much time indoors, allowing viruses to pass more easily from person to person. Also, the cold, dry air may weaken resistance in the body.

Parents who have a child on the way are also at risk of contracting seasonal illnesses. This is because of changes inside the body due to pregnancy, and the overall physical, emotional, and mental shifts needed to accommodate an expanding family. These changes can leave the body vulnerable to harmful viruses. Furthermore, the more often family members become sick.

However, there are ways to reduce the severity of these attacks. Better health must become the focus. The most effective tool expectant parents can use to combat seasonal illnesses is to build up their own body's ability to fight off viruses safely while using appropriate medications when needed. Doing so promotes quicker recovery and less time in the doctor's office or hospital emergency rooms. Adding natural immune boosters to dietary intake can significantly improve the overall health of expectant parents.

## What are Natural Immune Boosters?

Natural immune boosters enhance the body's immune system response, helping it fend off infections, viruses, and other health issues. These boosters come from various sources, including foods, herbs, and supplements.

For example, Vitamin C is known for fighting infections by increasing the production of white blood cells. Meanwhile, Vitamin D is crucial for the proper functioning of immune cells. Naturally sourced immune boosters are easy to incorporate into prepared meals. Foods rich in vitamins and minerals, like citrus fruits, melons, berries, leafy greens, herbs, and spices, are excellent options. Additionally, supplements, like

multivitamins, can be beneficial, especially when dietary intake is insufficient. For pregnant women, check with a primary care provider before taking any supplements.

## Benefits of Natural Immune Boosters for Overall Health

Boosting immunity helps prevent illnesses and keeps the body in tip-top shape. Supporting the body's defense mechanisms makes it easier to stay healthy and alert. Another benefit is improving energy levels and mental clarity. When the immune system is robust, the body does not have to work as hard to fight viruses and bacteria. This means more energy for daily activities and better focus in the workplace or school.

A healthy immune system promotes overall well-being and vitality. Consuming immune-boosting nutrients promotes physical and mental wellness. Boosting the immune system may also help prevent chronic diseases. Nutrients like antioxidants help protect cells from damage, decreasing the risk of conditions such as heart disease and cancer.

## Easy Ways to Boost Immunity Naturally

Adding immune-boosting foods at mealtime does not have to be time-consuming or difficult. For example, add spinach, broccoli, berries, and citrus fruits to breakfast smoothies or salads. Use garlic and ginger to ramp up the flavor of almost any dinner dish. Snacking on nuts, seeds, or yogurt can provide sustained energy without the crash of sugary treats. Drinking moderate amounts of coffee or herbal tea can also prevent fatigue and maintain alertness.

Adopting simple habits for maintaining a strong immune system can fit into even the busiest schedule before the baby arrives. Consider taking a short walk outside during lunch breaks to get a dose of Vitamin D from the sun. It is a good choice for low-impact exercise with the bonus of being kinder to the body's muscles and joints.

Drinking plenty of water, reducing sugar intake, managing stress, and getting adequate sleep are small changes that make a big difference. Before retiring to bed, try relaxation techniques like deep breathing exercises or meditation. These practices can help unwind the mind and body, improving sleep quality.

Natural immune boosters help expectant parents maintain optimal health all year round. Parents can protect themselves by increasing the body's natural ability to fight viruses and infections. Incorporating exercise, stress management, proper sleep, and healthy eating to boost the immune system ensures protection and fewer sick days, which is the best strategy for prevention this coming winter and beyond.

## By Maxcine Watson Life & Fertility Coaching

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







# The Importance of Community and Connection for Well-Being - By Jennifer Boyce

In today's fast-paced world, fostering a sense of community and connection plays a pivotal role in enhancing overall well-being. Here are ten reasons why these elements are vital for a healthy and fulfilling life:

1. **Emotional Support:** Strong social connections provide a safety net during challenging times, offering emotional support and reducing feelings of isolation.
2. **Friendship:** Close friendships contribute significantly to happiness, as they create an environment where individuals can share experiences, joys, and challenges.
3. **Physical Activity:** Engaging with others often encourages participation in group activities, such as sports or fitness classes, promoting a more active lifestyle.
4. **Healthy Eating Habits:** Communities that prioritize health can inspire individuals to make better dietary choices, share nutritious recipes, and support one another in maintaining healthy habits.
5. **Sense of Belonging:** Being part of a community fosters a sense of belonging, which is crucial for mental health and can lead to lower levels of anxiety and depression.
6. **Playfulness and Joy:** Connecting with others through playful activities, whether it be games, hobbies, or social gatherings, boosts mood and encourages creativity.
7. **Motivation and Accountability:** Communities can provide motivation and accountability, particularly in health-related goals, helping individuals stay committed to their objectives.
8. **Learning Opportunities:** Engaging with diverse groups allows for the exchange of knowledge and skills, enriching personal growth and understanding.
9. **Resilience:** Strong community ties can enhance resilience, enabling individuals to bounce back from adversity more effectively.
10. **Longevity:** Research suggests that people with robust social networks tend to live longer, healthier lives, highlighting the profound impact of connection on longevity.

In conclusion, nurturing community and connection is essential for well-being. By fostering friendships, encouraging active lifestyles, promoting healthy eating, and embracing playfulness, individuals can enhance their quality of life and achieve greater fulfillment.



## *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year, Right?*

### **There's Something About the New Year**

Ah, the New Year. For those of us who follow the Gregorian calendar, January 1st represents a new calendar year. A new calendar year often represents a fresh start, new beginnings, and a renewed sense of hope for the future. Cue the "New Year, new me" social media posts! But, if you're struggling with your mental health, the magic of the season may feel less accessible as the clock strikes midnight.

### **Being Mindful of Mind Over Matter**

And, our ability to feel the magic isn't always a question of willpower, but rather about the ways in which our brain and body respond when life is life'ing – throwing ups and downs often with an intensity that feels overwhelming. Such experiences, especially for prolonged periods of time, can lead to anxiety, depression, chronic stress and trauma, and often result in our brain perceiving the world as unsafe. This can create a sense of disconnection as we alternate between states of hyperarousal (i.e., overwhelm or anxiety) and hypoarousal (i.e., numbness or depression), which can cause us to feel stuck. In this place, our nervous system operates in survival mode, using just enough energy to keep us going. So naturally, our bodies may have other ideas when it comes to those grand "New Year, new me" resolutions.

### **The Transformative Power of Micro-Moments**

However, we can work this in our favour because the trick is in small moments. In the trauma field, we call this concept coined by Deb Dana, a glimmer – a micro-moment of connection or regulation which offers a cue for our nervous system to feel a sense of safety. Maybe it's a comforting scent, the feel of a cozy blanket, a warm smile from another, or cuddling with a pet that offers you a moment of ease. Tuning into these moments communicates to the mind and body that safety and much more are possible, even in the midst of difficulty, which also allows us to cultivate hope. So, if you find yourself feeling daunted by what it means to enter a new year, know that you're not alone, and remember that even the smallest moments are worth celebrating.

By Justine Allen

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## Envy into Inspiration

Feeling envious? You're not alone. It's a potent emotion that everyone encounters at some stage in life; for many, it can even become a daily experience. But what if we could channel that energy into something positive and uplifting? Instead of allowing envy to weigh us down, we can use it as a powerful motivator to achieve our own aspirations. When you notice feelings of envy toward someone else's success, take a moment to reflect on which aspects of their achievements resonate with you.

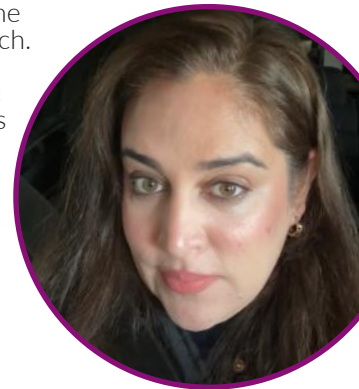
Is it their dedication, creativity, or resilience? Once you identify these qualities, consider how you can cultivate them in your own life.

Establish clear, attainable goals and create a plan to pursue them. Surround yourself with positive influences and seek out mentors who can guide you along your journey. Keep in mind that each person's path is distinct, and your journey to success will be no exception. By transforming envy into inspiration, you can fuel your own growth and strive to become the best version of yourself.

### A Personal Experience and a Lesson Learned!

Let me recount a time when I felt envious without fully grasping why. I held no ill feelings toward the person I envied, yet something they said or achieved would trigger a sinking sensation in my stomach. At times, this led to bitterness, which swiftly turned into frustration because I didn't want to feel that way. I took a step back, realizing that a change was necessary since this person was a constant presence in my life. I began to analyze the reasons behind my emotions, questioning what I felt was lacking or desired.

I also pondered how this individual radiated such confidence, which I recognized as my own struggle. Each time they spoke or accomplished something, they did so with unwavering confidence and fearlessness. It was the confidence I lacked that I began to work on and develop. This person has since become my source of inspiration. Whenever I think of them or meet them, I listen and reflect, feeling calm and content with my body language. I embrace it and join in their joyful celebration.



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## Let's Get Curious - Part 1 - "The Power of Letting Go"

Welcome 2025! A perfect time to spark curiosity! About what, you ask? The transformative power of letting go, the magic of self-discovery, the beauty of stillness, and the freedom of living authentically. Together, we'll cultivate a space for reflection and growth, guiding you toward purpose and empowerment. Let's explore the power of letting go and see where it takes us!

If I asked you what the heaviest thing you've ever carried was, what would you say? Your answer might surprise you. We often think that holding heaviness is solely a physical thing. Have you ever thought that frequently, the weight isn't physical? It's the emotional baggage we hold onto, like old grudges, fears, or beliefs, that no longer serve us. Letting go is the most liberating act of self-compassion we can offer ourselves. Yet, it's one we often avoid. Why? It's hard to shift our mindset. It's challenging but not impossible.

### Why is letting go so transformative?

Think about this: have you ever carried an oversized backpack? Initially, you think you need everything, only to realize that each unnecessary item slows your journey. The question is, what can you take out to move unburdened, free and fully aligned? Letting go provides clarity. We are stepping out of the muck because guess what? We don't have to carry it all! It's like a weight has been lifted off our shoulders. It is where transformation begins.

A powerful tool I offer clients is the "Leaning In and Letting Go" activity. Identify a negative thought holding you back, such as self-criticism, doubt, or fear, and replace it with something affirming. Try it. Write one thing you're ready to let go of and imagine how your life will shift without it.

Start small - 1% counts! Small shifts are not insignificant; they are powerful steps toward a you that is curious, discovering and growing. You're on the right path. I know you got this! Did this column

spark curiosity? Contact us at [www.talkbreathealive.com](http://www.talkbreathealive.com) for a free guided reflection. This article is the first of the four-part series "Let's Get Curious".

**By Darlene Wierski-Devoe**  
Wellness Facilitator, Author & Speaker  
[www.talkbreathealive.com](http://www.talkbreathealive.com)





# The Power of Conversation

Self-discovery begins when the conversation with yourself gets real! Before I discuss this topic further, let me introduce myself!

I am Aaliyah D. McGuire, owner and founder of Mindset of A Goddess. I am a spiritual life coach that focuses on self-discovery. I own a podcast where I talk about different societal topics and how you can change your life perspective and have a better understanding based on my own mindset. I often spend time writing books, music, and poetry. Prior to becoming a life coach, I was a colorist and loc specialist. I got the opportunity to create a safe space for my clients to have healthy conversations.

It is very typical to turn into a therapist being a hairstylist, but it makes a big difference when you can see an impact, enable change for the better, and make people feel more comfortable about expressing themselves. My wisdom, love for myself, and confidence in expressing myself have given me the opportunity to help people outside of the salon heal and gain a new perspective on themselves and life in general.

I come from a very traumatic background where I experienced pain and trauma in every aspect of my life. I experienced horrible betrayal from my own siblings, parents, and extended family. Instead of letting my circumstances define who I am since I was a teenager, I took it upon myself to become a student of life and focus more on my life experiences. Now, at 30, I have healed a lot of parts of myself and am thriving independently.

What is one thing I felt was taken away from me at a young age that could have greatly affected my adulthood? My voice. The inability to set proper boundaries, say no without feeling guilty, or not expressing my feelings or concerns in a healthy way nearly costed me my whole life. Prioritizing my self discovery journey and trusting my life experiences unlocked the door to happy and healthy relationships and conversations.



By: Aaliyah D. McGuire

## Supporting





## Ready to change your soundtrack?

The average person has 48.6 thoughts per minute going through their mind at any time. We need to take a moment to

examine those thoughts. For example, when you first wake up and stand in front of the bathroom mirror. What are those thoughts? When I did this exercise, I was amazed at how negative and angry those thoughts were.

I would stand in front of the mirror, toothpaste in hand, and my first thought was, "Ugh, I look fat" or "This is an ugly day". There was always something to that effect. I realized that I spoke to myself in ways that I would never talk to a stranger or my worst enemy.

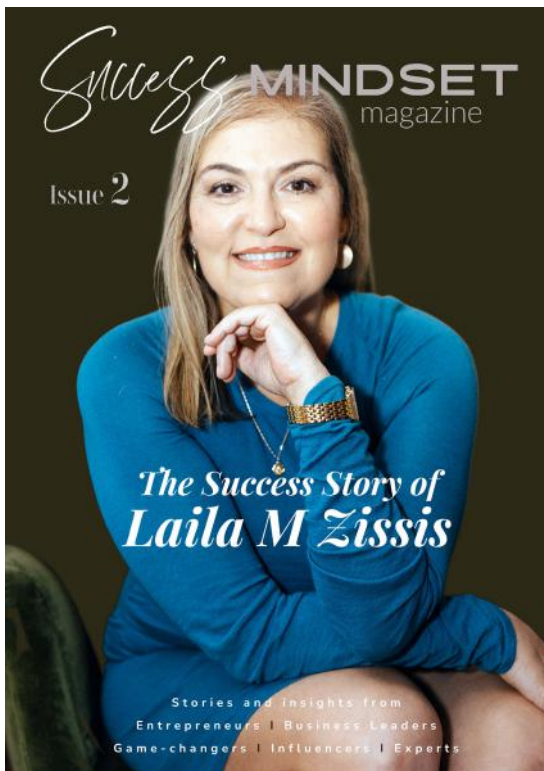
I started to pay attention to my soundtrack—the words going on an endless loop in my mind. Every time a negative thought came in, I flipped it. Incoming "Ugh, you look fat" to "You look pretty today" or Ugh, I am so stupid" to "You are a highly intelligent woman".

To strengthen my soundtrack, I started to list out the accomplishments I achieved to pump myself up. Most of us are not aware of what we are capable of until we do the thing we didn't know we were capable of.

So, to remedy that, I added it to my playlist. Are you ready to change your soundtrack? To one that is supportive and uplifting.

**By Tanya Brown**

**Tanya Brown Spiritual Business Coach**



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## How to Open Your Third Eye My Journey to Discovering My Psychic Senses

"I spent years thinking my third eye wasn't open—until I discovered my true psychic senses."

Like most people, I was expecting an epic visual experience as my third eye-opener—suddenly seeing auras, energy, or spiritual beings. I tried everything, from meditations to practical exercises, you name it, hoping for some kind of breakthrough. I was even jealous of people whose stories I read online had spontaneous third-eye openings during their spiritual practice. However, despite all of my efforts, I couldn't do it. I felt frustrated and even started to believe my third eye was blocked.

It wasn't until I deepened my practice as a Reiki healer that I began to understand something important: our third eye is our sixth sense. This means that in addition to our five physical senses, we have the ability to receive information from the spirit world through our psychic senses, which can work in at least four different ways: seeing, hearing, knowing, and sensing.

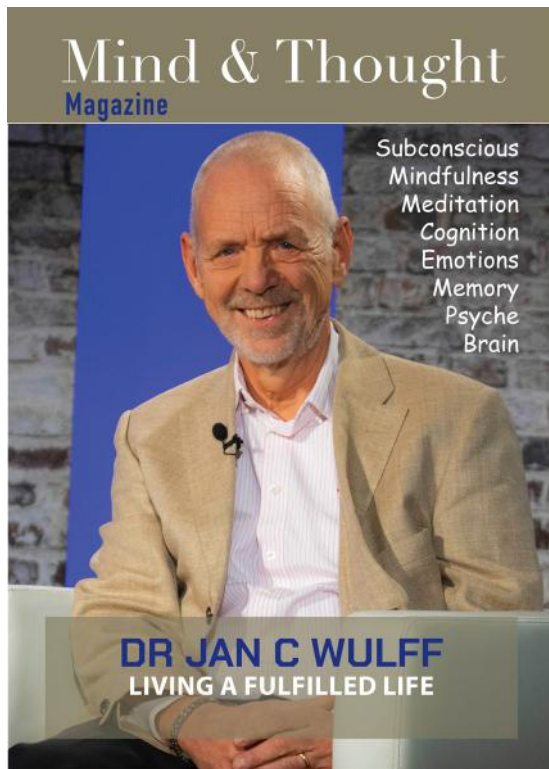
To my surprise, my primary sense wasn't visual at all, although I am a visual artist with a photographic memory of the physical world. In the spiritual or energy world, I have a different superpower to sense through emotions, and my secondary sense turned out to be knowing. During Reiki healing sessions, I would receive clear messages from angels—not through sight, but through an inner sense of knowing and flashes of images in my mind.

Once I embraced this, everything shifted. I learned that opening your third eye is about trusting how you personally receive spiritual guidance. Whether you see, hear, sense, or just "know," your third eye might already be open—it's just communicating with you in your own unique way.



By Eva Maria Hunt

[www.spiritual-wonders.com](http://www.spiritual-wonders.com)



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## How A Global Lifestyle Gives Us Opportunity, Freedom, and Shapes Our Life

You're sitting at a café overlooking the cobble streets of a historic European town. The air is fresh, the coffee is rich, and as you check your phone, you see updates from your child studying at a tuition-free university at one of Europe's top universities. Your next appointment is with a local realtor to tour homes in a neighborhood that blends affordability with elegance. Life feels safe, manageable, and full of opportunity.

This isn't a fantasy; it's the reality of those who have taken steps toward a life with options. By obtaining additional citizenships and residencies, families and individuals gain access to a level of freedom and security that many only dream of. Picture yourself having the flexibility to decide where you live, work, invest, and build memories, not limited by borders or bound by single-country policies.

In many countries, high-quality healthcare is available at a fraction of what you'd pay elsewhere, often subsidized or free to residents. You don't need to worry about skyrocketing bills or limited access—your family is covered, no matter what. With each passport or residency card you hold, you're unlocking access to a network of healthcare systems.

Imagine the relief of knowing your children can pursue degrees at world-class universities without accumulating massive debt. This isn't an unattainable luxury; it's a reality for those who plan carefully and choose a global path. Countries like France, Greece, and Argentina offer no-cost tuition for citizens attending college, allowing young people to start their lives debt-free.

Beyond the tangible perks, multiple residencies and citizenships give you true financial and personal sovereignty. You aren't tethered to any one economy or policy. With the freedom to choose your residence, you can shield yourself from economic downturns, political changes, or tax hikes that might come your way.

This life isn't just about escaping high costs or complicated systems. It's about peace of mind, having options, a safety net, and the ability to shape your life on your terms. If you're ready to explore what's possible, we're here to help you design a life without limits, where borders are another opportunity to thrive.

By Sally Pederson

[www.GlobalCitizenLife.org](http://www.GlobalCitizenLife.org)



# Supporting

# CALM



# Planning Ahead of Time

By Dayle Adams

## Pets are part of our family

Multiple surveys conclude that the majority of adults in the UK own a pet. Yet when I speak with people about their lives and what their death would look like for their loved ones, very few mention their pets without prompting. However, pets hold huge importance in our lives, and when we start planning ahead, most people definitely know who they would not want to look after their beloved animals if anything happened to them.

From dogs and cats to snakes and fish, considering their care in the event that you are unable to look after them is a must. Not only do pets require a person's time to care for them, but there are insurance, vet bills and food costs that someone else will need to take on. You need to think about allergies, fears and your desired person's ability to look after your pet to prevent the unfortunate reality of them ending up in shelters. I have two dogs (pictured). I have had conversations with the relevant people to get their consent, and money has been allocated out of my estate to pay for the dogs' needs for several years so as not to burden them financially. Do you need to add your pets to your will?

***Pets are also known to grieve and wait for or search for someone who does not return.*** When my Mum was taken into hospital unexpectedly and went onto end of life care, it was obvious that she was not going to leave the hospital again. I felt it was very important for the dogs, who loved her so much, to see her and realise how ill she was. The hospital agreed for them to be taken in. They kissed her, smelt her and lay with her (pictured). I believe this allowed them to understand why she didn't come back, which is why they didn't look for her.

***Would you want your pets to spend time with you?***

Pets are part of our family and it is important to consider them, where possible, in end of life plans. Who will look after them, how will that care be paid for and how can you help them understand where their human has gone so that they do not feel abandoned?

It is never too early to consider the options available to you. It is imperative to plan ahead of time to make informed choices so your wishes will be known and respected when you reach the end of life.

By Dayle Adams

[www.planningaheadoftime.com](http://www.planningaheadoftime.com)



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# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF RUNNING: HOW IT BOOSTS MENTAL HEALTH

In a world where stress and anxiety seem ever-present, finding effective ways to maintain mental wellbeing is paramount. While various strategies exist, one activity stands out for its simplicity and profound impact: running. Beyond its physical benefits, running holds tremendous potential to positively influence mental health, offering a holistic approach to emotional wellbeing.

## Stress Reduction and Mood Enhancement

Running triggers the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters that alleviate stress and induce feelings of euphoria - the "runner's high". It also elevates levels of serotonin and dopamine, improving mood and self-esteem. The rhythmic nature of running facilitates mindfulness, allowing runners to escape mental clutter and find inner peace.

## Emotional Processing and Resilience

Running provides a constructive outlet for processing emotions like anxiety and frustration. It helps develop coping mechanisms to navigate life's challenges with greater ease. The sense of accomplishment from each run can boost emotional resilience and optimism.

[www.coachbonniekaye.com](http://www.coachbonniekaye.com)



## Social Connection

Joining running clubs, group runs, and racing events fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie. This social aspect enhances enjoyment and contributes to mental wellbeing through increased social interaction and support networks.

## Empowerment and Self-Discovery

Setting and achieving running goals cultivates a sense of empowerment. Runners discover their strengths, push past limitations, and build confidence that translates to other areas of life.

## Trauma Processing

The steady cadence of running allows for processing and releasing emotional pain and tension. It provides a physical outlet that can help recalibrate one's sense of agency after trauma. By incorporating running into their lives, individuals can cultivate greater resilience, wellbeing and fulfillment. The mental health benefits make running exercise and "therapy for the soul."

By Bonnie Kimpling



# Supporting

# NHS

# Everyone IS A Part of You

Reflective YOU is me now in the imagery of YOU. Everyone mirrors part of you according to their beliefs and experiences in every moment of now. Each person you bring into your awareness is seen through your perspective based on what you know as truth.

## Love within you

This happens automatically when we love ourselves. If you, internally, do not have love for yourself, you do not know that love intimately. How can you give from that place of love that you do not intimately know?

## It's NEVER the other person.

Truth is known as the perspective in which one believes it is true for them. Blaming or praising another comes in reaction form, in which you perceive yourself in them. When relationships turn chaotic, you have created chaos within you from that perception of you in them. Blame says you did this to me; truth says I created you to do this to me for a purpose. Knowing the purpose of others in your life allows you to create the journey and perspectives you desire for your own journey in experiencing life.

## Stop resisting you

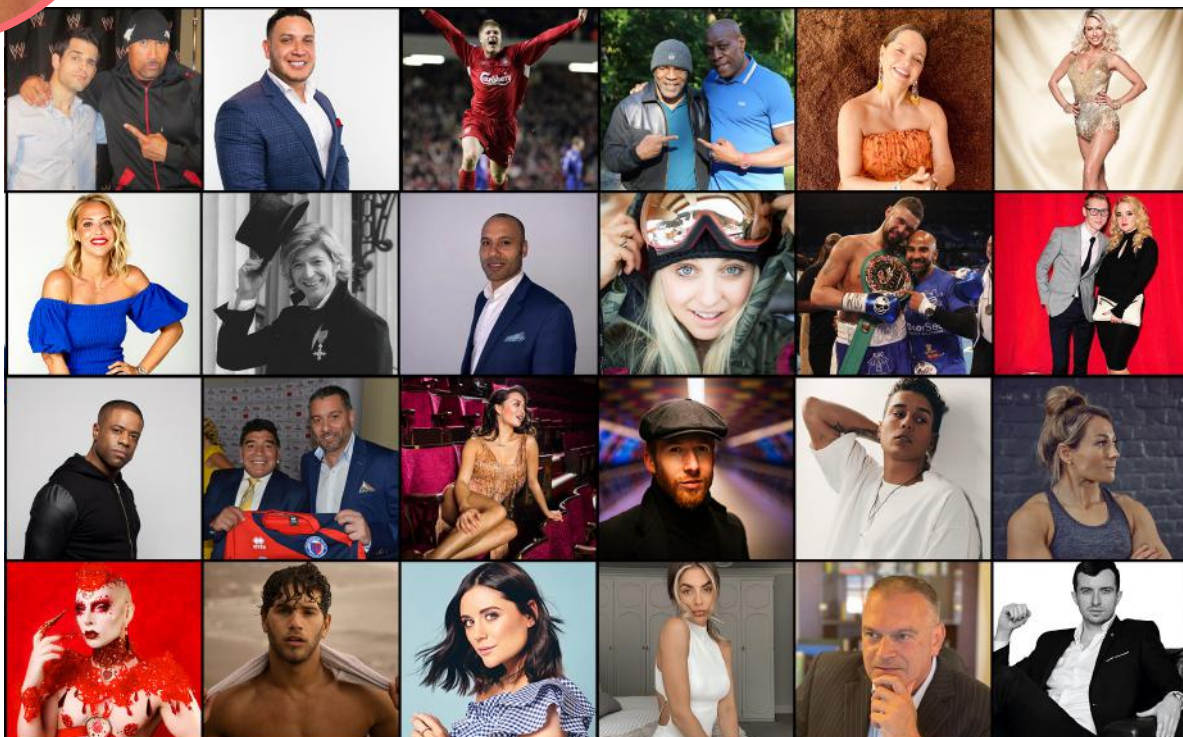
Resisting others in your life creates an energy block within you to love you completely. Begin to ask yourself, "What is the fear that's been created that is resisting that person?" There is an underlying story of fear that allows for resistance to be created. If you are resisting a person from being a part of your life, they will show up even more. What you resist, you persist! Allowing yourself to let go of their story and see them as light will enable you to see yourself in the same light. You hear it all the time, "If they would just, then I could," that is a controlling excuse keeping you from your truth, thus not allowing life to flow.

## Aligning and Allowing Love

Love is allowing each person to be themselves, right where they are, at all times. By letting go of judgements (which are limiting beliefs within you created from fear), you allow others to be themselves, which opens an energetic alignment of flow that happens naturally.

By Janyelle Huff

[www.Janyellehuff.com](http://www.Janyellehuff.com)



# What does acceptance mean to you?

I warmly invite you to take a moment to reflect on this.

For many people with differently thinking brains, it's a perplexing concept that seems just a touch too far from our grasp. This is often because we live in a world that was never designed to embrace the true brilliance of diverse functioning. Instead, we live in a world where we infer through murky narratives that it's not okay to be our authentic selves and that we should mask, augment & hide the very strengths that make us unique.



Thankfully, we are stepping into an age where terminology like neurodiversity is becoming more widely acknowledged. However, acknowledgement and acceptance are two very different things. I've observed and experienced a vast variety of settings where divergence is, at best, tolerated. The thing is, it's impossible to celebrate the very differences our current systems are built to dismiss. It's a mutually exclusive

situation to expect the exponential talents of diverse working teams whilst simultaneously skirting around the need to build psychologically safe spaces for them to thrive. Putting the proverbial cart before the horse, as the saying goes.

In my last column, I briefly mentioned psychological safety as a crucial element of successful, inclusive workplaces. Here's where it gets interesting. Timothy R. Clark references four stages of psychological safety, one of which is inclusion safety, defined as "genuine belonging, acceptance...feeling valued and respected for being..." Here, we can begin to understand one of the core differences behind acknowledgement versus acceptance.

To achieve the full potential of diverse workplaces, we must first create true, psychologically safe spaces. In order to achieve these, it is paramount that we not only acknowledge the rich variety in our ways of functioning and being but also accept and embrace these as fundamental facts. Once we've tackled this, we're well on our way to dismantling the ableist systems holding your workforce back from optimised outcomes. It's hard and scary at times, but as Brene Brown says, "...daring leaders are never silent about hard things..."

I leave you with one final question.

**Are you a daring leader?**

**BY BETH THOMAS**

References:  
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Dare To Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts  
Brene Brown

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



# Supporting



# How a Profit Acceleration Coach Can Boost Your Bottom Line



Running a small business can often feel like you're wearing a dozen hats at once. From managing operations and marketing to handling finances, it's easy for one of the most important aspects—profit growth—to get overshadowed. That's where a Profit Acceleration Coach steps in and can make all the difference. A Profit Acceleration Coach goes beyond traditional consulting. They don't just analyze your numbers—they provide tailored strategies designed to rapidly increase your profits by improving efficiency, reducing waste, and identifying hidden revenue streams. This means you're not just adding another expense to your business, but rather investing in a service that delivers measurable returns.

## How can a coach improve your bottom line?

- 1. Quick Revenue Wins:** A good coach will help you implement strategies that bring in revenue fast. Whether it's adjusting your pricing or uncovering underused assets, they'll help you tap into new income sources.
- 2. Reducing Costs Without Sacrifice:** Coaches identify where you're overspending and help streamline processes so that quality remains high, but unnecessary costs are eliminated.
- 3. Better Decision-Making:** Coaches guide you toward high-impact actions that lead to the biggest financial gains. Their insight helps you decide where best to invest your time and resources.
- 4. Sustainable Profit Growth:** Beyond short-term gains, a coach helps you build long-term strategies for continued growth. This ensures that as your business expands, it remains profitable.

A Profit Acceleration Coach can provide the focused expertise you need to align your business with strategies that lead to lasting financial success. It's not just about cutting costs or boosting sales—it's about creating a more profitable, resilient business. Investing in a coach isn't just an expense; it's the smart move that takes your business to the next level.



**By Jane Parmel**

Business Development & Profit Acceleration Strategist  
[www.cardinalprofit.com](http://www.cardinalprofit.com)

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## What's the secret to a full and happy life after menopause?

During perimenopause, it feels like we're never coming out the other side, but the "crazy" will diminish. The first couple of years see the worst symptoms, but by the time we reach post-menopause, many disappear. At menopause, we may feel we've lost touch with who we are. Our children may no longer need us, and we can feel redundant as mums. If we haven't carved out time for ourselves, we may worry about what life holds.

Our lives will be different as we've changed. Menopause gives us the chance to explore who we want to be for the rest of our lives. We can start planning for our future now. Does an athlete compete without training? No, of course not. They start early and build to where they need to be; they visualise winning; they believe in themselves; they look after themselves and get the right people on their team. Thriving through menopause and living our healthiest, happiest, and most fulfilled life is like preparing to run a marathon.

Start training now, take back control, and look forward. My Menopause Life Savers will help us win our "menopause marathon."

- 1. Fuel our Bodies** - Eat healthy, avoid high-sugar/processed foods that cause weight gain and clog our systems, drink more water, and limit caffeine or alcohol.
- 2. Move our Bodies** - Exercise daily to guard against weight gain, support bone density, and give our heart and lungs a workout.
- 3. Build connection** - Surround ourselves with positive people with whom we want to spend time.
- 4. Follow our passions** - Do what makes us happy more often. When we do what we love, we become more confident, happy, and fulfilled.
- 5. Find our purpose** - We can feel we've lost our purpose as our lives change, but a new purpose will give us back our mojo and help us feel more valued.

We have an exciting opportunity to decide who we want to be and how we want to live beyond menopause. Our fabulous futures start today!

By Jeanette Forder

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



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## The Truth About **Toxins** in Your Food What's Really on Your Plate?

Let's talk toxins. Yes, those sneaky little nasties hiding in the foods we eat. Picture this: you're at the supermarket, lovingly selecting your veggies and proudly adding a shiny apple to your basket. But what you don't see is the residue of pesticides clinging to that apple like a toddler to their favourite toy.

Modern food production has turned our plates into a chemistry set. Pesticides, herbicides, artificial additives, and even sneaky heavy metals can find their way into our meals. While these substances might sound like something from a sci-fi film, they're very real and capable of causing havoc on our health.

Here's the kicker—our bodies weren't designed to handle an influx of chemicals on a daily basis. Over time, these toxins can overload our natural detoxification systems (shoutout to our liver and kidneys, the unsung heroes of the body). The result? Chronic inflammation, hormonal imbalances, fatigue, and a host of "mystery" symptoms that make you feel like you're running on two hours of sleep when you've had a solid eight.

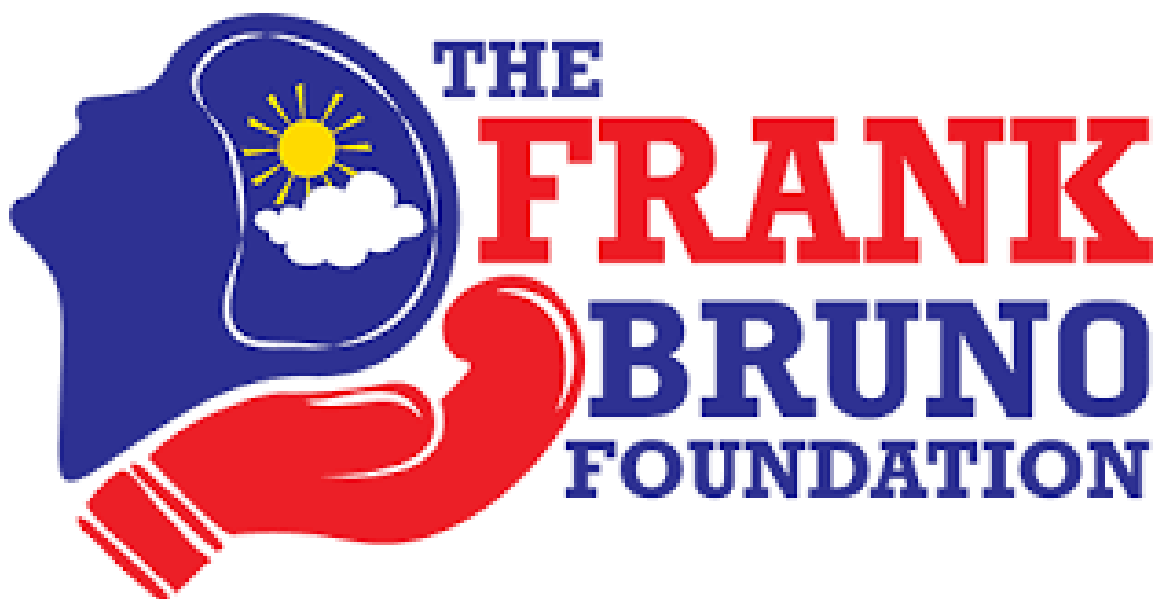
And let's not forget processed foods – oh, the irony of calling them "food". Laden with artificial sweeteners, colours, chemically processed oils and preservatives, these concoctions can mess with your gut microbiome, the control centre of your immune system and mental health.

So, what's the solution? Do we all need to go off-grid, grow our own organic kale, and churn butter by hand? Not quite. Start small. Opt for organic produce where possible and Google 'The Dirty Dozen/Clean Fifteen'. Avoid ultra-processed foods, and read labels like your life depends on it – because, well, it does!

As the holiday season approaches and we're all tempted by festive treats, why not gift yourself the best present of all? Clean eating. Your body deserves the best fuel. Think of it like a high-end sports car – you wouldn't pour cheap oil into a Ferrari, right? So, let's treat ourselves better. After all, health is wealth, and a little toxin-dodging today might just save you a world of trouble tomorrow.

By Marie Cherrett

[WWW.YOURHEALTHYHORMONES.COM](http://WWW.YOURHEALTHYHORMONES.COM)



# 5 Steps to Feel Less Awkward Talking Directly to Camera



We communicate with our phones. We call, text, email, dm, you name it. We take videos with our phones. Easy breezy. But using our phones to shoot a video of us speaking directly to the camera? For many of us, that's something entirely different...and entirely awkward. Maybe your company needs you to record an introduction video. Or perhaps you've realized you're the one who should be demoing your product on camera.

To get you ready for your close-up, here are five steps to make it less cringe-worthy.

**1. Write a script that's easy to say. Long complex sentences won't work as well here. Pepper in short sentences.**

**2. Picture one person who you would ideally like to view your video. How do you want them to feel when watching? Intrigued? Welcomed? Amused?**

**3. Hold your phone as though you were chatting with a friend. Picture the person that you chose in step three. Now rehearse saying your script out loud as though they were on the other end listening. Act as if it's a conversation, and they just aren't saying anything yet.**

**4. Hold the phone further away and keep rehearsing your message out loud, with the intention of connecting with that person.**

**5. Now turn the camera on and continue sharing your message out loud, STILL, with the intention of connecting. Watch it, see what's working, and try again.**

When we see our faces looking back at us when filming, it's easy to forget that we're actually trying to communicate a message to someone else. It's tempting to focus on that "weird hair that won't stay in place." Speaking directly to the camera becomes much easier once you keep your eye on the prize -that connection with your ideal audience member, who will receive your message in the future.

*By Amanda Hennessey*

Public Speaking Coach & Author Let's connect! LinkedIn:@AmandaHennessey

[www.sandiegopublicspeaking.com](http://www.sandiegopublicspeaking.com)



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# Life is Finite

My grandfather was a very successful man; he immigrated from India and moved to Birmingham in the UK without knowing the language or the culture. He worked very hard in a local factory when he moved to the UK, earning his keep and looking after my grandmother and their children by saving up enough to purchase a property. He quickly made friends. He was very sociable, and he loved going for walks in the local park, which had a lot of greenery and hanging out around town. Whilst he loved his roots, he immersed himself in the British heritage and became a fan of fish and chips, which used to be served in newspaper wrapping, that he and the family had every Friday.

In Dec 2013, we received the news that my grandfather was palliative. I hadn't experienced a close family death, and whilst I knew that day would come, I honestly never gave it any thought. I was utterly ignorant towards the topic of death, in all honesty. In the lead-up to his passing, I drove up to Birmingham from London every few weeks to see him whilst he was in hospital. I even took him fish and chips once, but he refused to eat them; this made me sad because I just knew he wasn't being his usual self.

When he received the call from close family that the doctors said he didn't have much time, in March 2014, I spoke with my line manager, then immediately left to go home and meet my cousins who were going to drive me to the hospital with them.

I remember when we got there, the private room he was placed in was full of people my grandfather loved and who loved him. My cousins were being a bit playful with each other, and I got angry about it internally; how could they laugh whilst he was in his final hours, I thought? However, everyone processes fear, death, and grief differently. There is no right or wrong way, and in hindsight, I'm sure he would've much preferred a room full of people he loved laughing whilst he came to the end of his life rather than crying.

The first night after he passed was the hardest; forget about sleep; it wasn't happening, and time simultaneously slowed down. It was the worst sleep I've ever had in my life to date. That night, I dreaded the arrival of tomorrow because tomorrow meant remembering and potentially confronting my grandfather's death if I wasn't in the denial stage of grief, that is.

Immediately after my grandfather's passing, we had a week of mourning in his home in Birmingham, where people came to visit us to pay their respects prior to his funeral. As soon as I got back to work, I had a huge multi-million-pound project I was involved in, which needed to be tested and signed off on. The weeks after that, I was preparing for two actuarial examinations. The pressure was immense. I felt I could not properly grieve his death as I had many commitments and responsibilities, so I tried my best to suppress my emotions.

Months later, I was still crying over his passing; I wondered when the outbursts would end. Towards the end of the year, I went to India with my grandmother. We visited his home, and finally, I found some inner peace.

My grandfather's passing shook me to the core; I was faced with a reality that I did not want to be faced with: the truth that this experience on earth is finite, and we never know how long we have.

I felt like I had a lack of discipline in my life when it came to long-term goals; I decided to really focus on my financial goals, which were triggered by his death as it made me think, 'What am I doing with my life?' - I decided to open an ISA and start saving for a property; 9 years later, I bought my first property. I couldn't be happier knowing that my grandfather would've been proud that I followed in his footsteps and reached a huge milestone.

Whilst I still miss him and reminisce when looking through photographs and key dates come up, etc, I can say I have come to find acceptance in his death and know that his legacy lives on through me.



**By Kiran Sidhu**

**Instagram@selfawarenesswithkiran**

# On Purpose or Accidental Incompetence?

Do you find yourself saying – ‘Oh, just leave it then, and I’ll do it’, or hearing things like – ‘You know you are better than me at doing that’, or that someone you know just never has the time to do the things they were supposed to do, ending up with you having to do it in the end?

My title is a little misleading, as this isn’t necessarily about whether it was done on purpose or by accident. But it is about whether someone is knowingly or unknowingly getting you to do something or playing it a bit dumb because they don’t really want to do it. Getting you to do it or trying to escape some consequences of doing things gives them a sense of control or power.

## Is it Weaponised Incompetence or Malicious Incompetence?

A good example of someone feigning incompetence was Boris Johnson and the whole ‘Partygate’ debacle during covid in 2020. For BoJo to suggest that he was unaware whether he was breaking the law or not seems to most a very flimsy excuse, but to others, it is a legitimate reason why he attended several parties during the pandemic lockdowns.

Was he genuinely

telling the truth or conveniently playing the innocent to cover up his mistakes? Was he doing something that can be put into the category of Weaponised Incompetence – pretending to be a bit useless in order to get away with something or cover his own misdemeanours?

**Weaponised incompetence** can be shady behaviour. If Boris was lying, then he

was using the excuse of not knowing he had broken the law to try to get away with something, which I guess we have all wanted to do at some point in our lives. But in this case, he was doing it to hang onto his job, to remain in power and to pretend to be someone he isn’t. By portraying himself in this way, he was being dishonest to get what he wanted.

In your day-to-day life, you may see examples of this when your partner doesn’t want to do a chore around the house, and so delays and delays doing it until you do it yourself, or will do something badly so that you step in and probably never ask them again. I recently spoke to a client who had this issue with their partner loading the dishwasher. ‘How hard can it actually be to load the dishwasher? No matter how many times I tell him where to put things so they wash properly, he just chucks them in so they need washing again. I should just do it myself!’ But guess what? In this case, that is exactly what he wanted her to do. The end goal is to do it in a way that aggravates, irritates, upsets, and gets you to step in.

It is a passive-aggressive way of getting someone to do something that you just, well, really don’t want to do.



When I joined the fire brigade, I was asked to make tea for the whole watch sitting around the mess table. I made a dozen cups of tea or so, and everyone seemed to enjoy their cup. That was me set in place, from then on, to make the tea every time. One of my colleagues then pulled me to one side and said, ‘Don’t do anything well around here that you don’t want to keep doing all of the time.’ By weaponising my incompetence at making the tea, they would never have asked me again. My pride in being a good tea maker stopped me from doing that one in the future.

This kind of behaviour has probably been going on for millennia, but the term ‘Weaponised Incompetence’ first seems to appear around 2007. It has been brought into the public consciousness recently via TikTok, where a video shows a husband using it towards his wife in a negligent and somewhat abusive way (this could actually bleed over into Malicious Incompetence in my book).

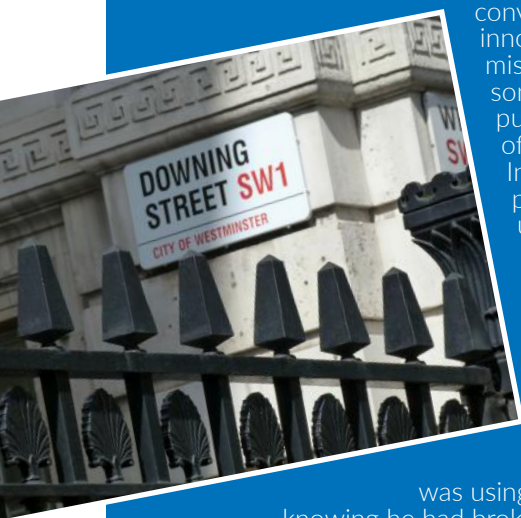
**Weaponised incompetence** is a learned behaviour, generally from childhood. It can be seen as a useful strategy to get out of doing things on a regular basis and stick with someone throughout their lives. For example, a child may learn that if they don’t tidy their room very well, someone else will step in and do it for them. They then get out of cleaning their room by doing it badly each time. In some cases, they then realise this is applicable in many other circumstances and in many different relationships, so the pattern of shirking begins.

A child may also have witnessed this in their parents’ relationship, seeing that one will shirk responsibility and ‘get away with it’—so they do the same or see the strain it puts on the other person and try to step in. Perhaps in the future, they become the person who assumes all of the responsibilities.

Someone may even see a certain role beneath them and so not even contemplate this task as one they should do, leaving it or assigning it elsewhere.

**Weaponised incompetence** is not limited to intimate relationships; it can also play out within families and work situations, as my examples have shown.

Caveat time: there will be situations where someone genuinely doesn’t know how to do something, is too ill to do it, is fearful of getting it wrong, or their selective filtering means that they forget it easily (or they





are just so disinterested they really don't want to learn it (anyway). We can't expect someone to buy into an idea and do it our way just because we want them to.

In the long term, it can be harmful. In the beginning, someone may play on your understanding and empathy by appearing 'helpless' or 'useless,' but if this continues, it can turn into a manipulative tool for gain or not to lose.

If you are becoming increasingly resentful of someone's inability to carry out simple tasks, watching them sit back while you carry out the lion's share of the work within your relationship, then it is likely that they are incompetent on purpose. This may even manifest not just in the chores but in the general effort they are putting into the relationship. To deal with this, first, sit down with the person concerned and communicate how you feel.

Tell them that you feel unsupported in certain areas of your relationship because of their consistent behaviour and would like them to share the load, make more of an effort, or be more attentive. No one really likes doing a, b, or c, but you are in this together, and they need to be done.

They may genuinely be unaware of what they are doing, and so this should resolve things quickly and easily. If they are aware of it, though, they may not be that quick to change, so be mindful when this is happening and do your best not to step in and take away their responsibilities.

If they really don't want to improve things for you and the relationship, then you need to consider your next step: an ultimatum and consequences, not doing things any longer, or moving on.

If you think that you may have high expectations, and so this is something you perceive to be happening rather than a real problem, speak to a non-judgemental and honest friend/colleague, someone you trust, as you may be placing too much pressure on someone to be as you need them to be.



Are you actually disempowering someone by taking on responsibilities that you don't need to, being in control, making sure it is done 'properly' (your way), and belittling their efforts so that they shy away from attempting anything?

**Malicious incompetence** takes things to a whole new level of toxicity.

This isn't just about being lazy, taking advantage and shirking responsibility. This is where someone uses their 'faked' incompetence to gain power, control and manipulate in the extreme—purposefully using someone to get them to do things for them at the detriment of the other person and keeping them in a place where they have all of the control, and using gaslighting techniques to make someone feel guilty if they don't do things or run around after them.

### Is it a gender issue?

Yes and no. Anyone can show signs of incompetence, whether on purpose or accidental. Several studies show that Weaponised Incompetence is more of a male thing to do, and this could be because of the indoctrinated behaviour

I mentioned earlier, stereotyping of roles within households, etc. It can be simply expected that women carry out the 'caretaker' role and assume responsibility where it isn't necessary or are given it when it needs to be discussed.

The term 'blue jobs and pink jobs' suggests that the masculine energy does certain things and the feminine does certain other things. However, taking this as read and not discussing what is appropriate for the relationship may lead to unrealistic expectations, misunderstandings, and problems.

In any case of Weaponised and Malicious Incompetence, if you can't seem to resolve this with the person involved or within yourself, then speak to a professional relationship coach who can help you figure out what to do next.

### By John Kenny

For help on this issue or any relationship problems or questions you might have, then you can always give me a call on 07709 350019 or book in for your complimentary 30 minute Relationship Breakthrough Session here.

### Connect with John

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# 5 Ways to Build Courage to Become Your Best Self

**“Have the courage to act instead of react.”  
- Oliver Wendell Holmes**

Every individual possesses untapped potential, waiting to be realised. To unlock this potential and achieve personal growth, one can embark on a journey fuelled by determination, perseverance, and most importantly, courage.

Courage acts as a catalyst, enabling us to break free from self-imposed limitations and transcend their current capabilities. By summoning the strength to confront fears, face challenges head-on, and pursue our passions, we can discover our personal best and push our boundaries. In this article, we delve into the power of courage and how it can propel you towards becoming your personal best.

## Embrace Vulnerability

To be your personal best, you must first be willing to embrace vulnerability. Courage involves stepping outside of your comfort zone, exposing yourself to the possibility of failure and rejection. Recognize that growth lies beyond the boundaries of familiarity and safety. Embracing vulnerability allows you to tap into your authentic self, explore uncharted territories, and discover hidden talents and strengths. Embrace the discomfort, view setbacks as opportunities for growth, and have the courage to try new things without fear of judgment.



### Overcome Fear and Doubt

Fear and doubt are natural companions on the journey towards personal excellence. However, it is essential to acknowledge that they are not insurmountable obstacles. Cultivating courage involves confronting your fears and challenging self-doubt. Identify the fears that hold you back and dissect them objectively. Often, fear is based on the anticipation of negative outcomes that are unlikely to materialize. Reframe your mindset to focus on the potential positive outcomes and the lessons you can learn from any potential failures. Develop a growth mindset that sees failures as stepping stones towards success, and let courage guide you to overcome your fears.

### Pursue Your Passions

Courage empowers individuals to pursue their passions with unwavering dedication. Your personal best lies in doing what you love wholeheartedly. Whether it's a career change, starting a business, or pursuing a creative endeavour, following your passion often requires a leap of faith. It may involve taking risks, facing uncertainty, and making sacrifices. Courageous individuals push through the fear of the unknown, trusting their instincts and persevering when obstacles arise. The pursuit of passion can be transformative, igniting a fire within that propels you to surpass your perceived limits and excel in your chosen field.

### Embrace Failure as a Stepping Stone

Failure is an inevitable part of the journey towards personal growth. However, it is through failure that courage finds its greatest opportunity to shine. Rather than being deterred by setbacks, embrace them as stepping stones on your path to greatness. Have the courage to view failure as a valuable learning experience, extracting wisdom, and refining your approach. Every setback is an opportunity to reassess, improve, and build resilience. By embracing failure and maintaining an unwavering commitment to your personal best, you cultivate the courage to persevere and surpass your previous achievements.





### Surround Yourself with Support

Courage is not developed in isolation but nurtured through support systems. Surround yourself with individuals who inspire and uplift you. Seek out mentors, coaches, or friends who believe in your potential and provide encouragement. These individuals can offer guidance, share experiences, and hold you accountable to your aspirations. Having a strong support network enhances your courage, reinforces your belief in yourself, and provides a safety net during challenging times. Remember, courage thrives in community.

### Conclusion

Becoming your personal best requires tapping into the wellspring of courage within you. Embrace vulnerability, confront fear and doubt, pursue your passions relentlessly, and view failure as an opportunity for growth. Surround yourself with a supportive network and let their belief in you bolster your own. The journey to personal excellence may be challenging, but with courage as your guide, you will rise above limitations, transcend expectations, and unlock your full potential. Step forward with courage and discover the remarkable heights you can reach as you become your personal best.

IMPROVE  
DEVELOP  
TRAINING  
MOTIVATE  
COACHING  
INSPIRE



**“Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can’t be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.”**

**- Maya Angelou**



**By Paul Corke**

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