

# hope + wellth

MAGAZINE

Starting Over in  
Your 40s, 50s,  
and 60s

Dreaming of a  
New Career But  
Terrified to Take  
The Leap?



# RYLYNDA

## THE POWER OF GROWN WOMAN ENERGY

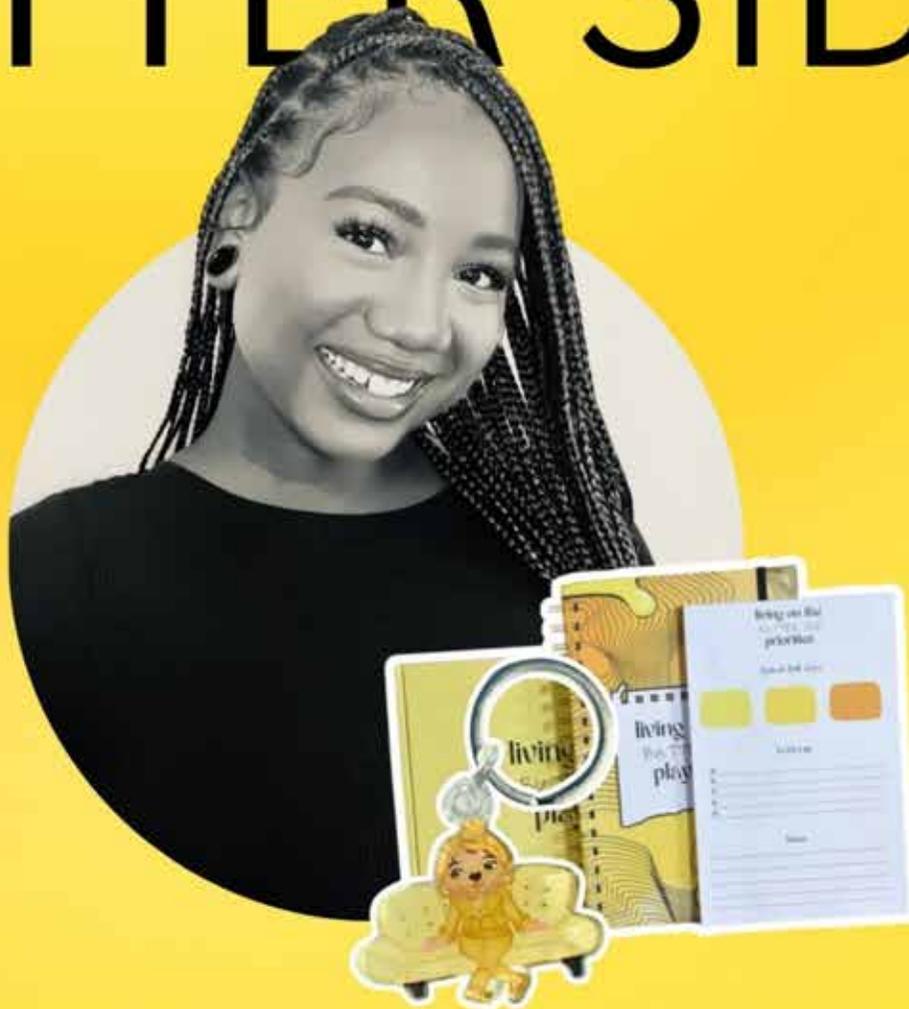
Menopause,  
Sex & Intimacy

PLANNERS

LIVING ON THE BUTTER SIDE

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# LIVE ON THE BUTTER SIDE



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& MORE

Issue 4 | Fall 2025

Falling for You  
Every Chapter, Every Change, Every Age

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Falling for every chapter of her life



Cover Photo by Cindy Ralat /  
Ralat Photography

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# EDITOR'S LETTER



## *Hey Friends,*

Reinvention is a part of life's evolution. It's nothing to be afraid of or ashamed of, no matter your age. Sometimes, you just know when a season has reached its expiration date, and you have to choose a new path. That choice isn't failure, it's freedom. It's choosing a life that honors your nervous system, your boundaries, and your peace. And when you do it without caring what anybody else thinks, that's called grown woman energy.

This issue is dedicated to my grown woman BAEs, the ones who embody that Big Auntie Energy. You know her. She carries herself with grace and boundaries, wrapped in self-love, personal style and a confidence that needs no validation. Her voice is unapologetic, she may choose her battles, but she refuses to shrink into the corner. But this issue isn't just for her, it's also for our little sisters coming up behind us. I want them to know that life doesn't end at 40 or after. In many ways, that's when it begins. Because with age comes an unshakable confidence, a deeper power, and a freedom that can't really be explained until you've lived it.

Inside this issue, we get real about life's resets. Our cover star, successful entrepreneur and fashion designer, Rlynda, opens up about divorce, grief, and the courage it takes to dream again. Cheryl Overton unpacks Big Auntie Energy (which she affectionately refers to as BAE), what it means, why it matters, and how pop culture has embraced the term. And Dr. Andrea Colón gets candid about intimacy and pleasure during menopause, because yes, sis, that part of life is meant to be fully lived too.

As a 49-year-old woman who has reinvented herself more than once, I can tell you that every ending really does make space for a new beginning. Reinvention isn't about loss, it's about reclaiming who you are and who you're still becoming. My hope is that these pages remind you that you are allowed to evolve, allowed to change, and allowed to show up in this world as your full, authentic, unshakable self, no matter your age.

Because every chapter, every change, and every age is not only something to learn from, it's also something worth celebrating.

With Love and Power,

*Lynnette Price*

Editor-in-Chief  
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## Your Guide to Hope, Wellness & Wealth

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*"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." ~ Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)*

Our magazine celebrates and uplifts the voices of all BIPOC women, creating a space where diversity is not only represented but celebrated. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where all BIPOC women feel seen, heard and empowered. We believe in embracing the full spectrum of identities and experiences, ensuring that our content reflects the beauty and strength of all BIPOC women, everywhere.

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Photo Credit: Erica Gilbert

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Dr. Colón's mission is to empower patients to feel vibrant at every stage of life through holistic, medically informed care tailored to their unique needs.

# Wander Lounge



At Wander Lounge, we believe in the power of storytelling and how it can transform the way we see ourselves and the world. Hosted by Ariel Travis—an expat of 7 years who has explored over 28 countries—this podcast invites listeners into a virtual lounge for engaging, heartfelt conversations with women who have boldly traveled the globe. Each episode offers a fresh perspective on adventure, identity, and the joy of discovering new cultures. Whether you're a seasoned traveler or dreaming of your first solo trip, Wander Lounge is your go-to space for inspiration and connection.

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Photo by Ever Brand Collective

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A laptop is shown from a slightly elevated angle, displaying the website for hope+wealth. The website has a dark red header with the 'hope+wealth' logo. Below the header, there is a navigation bar and a main content area with several featured articles and images of diverse people. The laptop is set against a dark red background that also features a large, faint 'hope+wealth' logo in the upper left corner.

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# STORIES THAT HEAL

At Hope+Wellth, we believe in the transformative power of storytelling. Stories allow us to learn, grow, and heal by sharing our experiences with others. Whether you're sharing a real-life experience, a fictional tale with a message rooted in truth or an anonymous account of a personal journey, your story has the potential to inspire, comfort and empower others.

We invite you to submit your personal stories to be featured in our magazine. Your story can be submitted anonymously or you can choose to share your name—whatever feels most comfortable for you. Our hope is to create a safe space where voices are heard, hearts are touched and healing begins.

---

To submit your story, email us at [stories@hopeandwellth.com](mailto:stories@hopeandwellth.com). We look forward to reading your unique experiences and celebrating the power of storytelling together.



# Healing in Layers: How my 20's, 30's, 40's and Beyond Each Brought a New Truth



BY JUDITH BREWER

## 20s

As a young woman in my 20's, I struggled each day with who I was. I didn't know my purpose because I was still learning my strengths and weaknesses, and most of all, just who Judy really was. Mistakes from my teenage years followed me into my 30's

where I still wasn't sure why God put me on this earth. I didn't go to college, so I was seeking to develop viable skills. I got my real estate license and "flipped" houses. By the time I was 35 I had four wonderful children, three boys and one girl. I was determined to be the best mother I could be, but how could I do that without knowing how to handle life's challenges? I lost myself in my children for a while until they reached their teenage years. I bought and sold real estate and worked a full-time job to make ends meet. Each day was a test, and I was determined to pass each challenge one day at a time.

## 40s

In my 40's, I finally stopped comparing myself to others and stopped worrying about whether or not I measured up to everyone else's expectations of me, and started learning to seek God. I stopped letting "Judy's" idiosyncrasies put me in

dark, lonely places that were detrimental to myself and my children. These were spaces that identified my low self-esteem, which I wasn't proud of at all. I wanted to leave a legacy for my children's children - something to make them proud of me even if they'd never met me.

## 50s

In my 50's things started to become much clearer to me, and I began seeking God for a more precise direction that was far above my own thinking and comprehension. I read and studied people and books that had made a difference in

society. I talked with my elders to see what wisdom they could share with me. It became apparent to me that the older I got the more I realized just how much I didn't know.

## 60s

My 60's were nice and comfortable, but I still hadn't accomplished anything out of the ordinary. I moved across the country to unfamiliar territory. This totally took me out of my comfort zone.

I had always told interesting stories to my children at night before bed, but never thought of putting pen to paper. But one day I started writing and illustrating a children's book, which opened up a whole exciting new world for me. To date, I have written and illustrated 11 books.

My website is: [www.judithbrewer.com](http://www.judithbrewer.com).

The paperback books are also available on Amazon, and the hardback books are also available on LuLu.com all for very reasonable prices. Being a mom and grandmother, I made each book a tool for learning. Addressing subjects like: the importance of having friends that won't get you in trouble, listening to your parents and not being afraid of changes in your life.

## 70s

Now at age 70 I'm enjoying my best life right now, for instance, I've opened a new business being a Notary Signing Agent. On my terms, I spend time only on days when I feel like I want to give time to the business. I take off days for writing, lounging, visiting my children and grandchildren, etc. I simply say, "I'm unavailable." I have a wonderful husband who supports me in everything I do, which is truly a blessing. I go to the gym twice a week doing one hour of my own water exercises and an additional hour with a water aerobics class. It's absolutely fun and mind-freeing physically and mentally and has become necessary for my well-being. I sing in my church choir which is very uplifting and assist with the youth choir. I do inspirational readings to music, as well as praise dance. I volunteer for extra duties when I feel led. I occasionally teach adult Sunday School class. However, I've learned to say "no" when it's best for me without any attached guilt which is something I always struggled with as a younger woman.

I spend each day in the comfort of my home with my husband, my dog, my plants, my books and, of course, my Bible. I get on FaceTime often with each of my sons, my bonus daughters, and my grandchildren who live many states away from me and pray for each of them every day. I try to visit them once or twice a year. I enjoy spending time with my daughter who still lives in my vicinity. We enjoy our valuable time together. On Sundays our nieces and nephews and my daughter have a standing invitation to dinner.

I have one sibling, an older sister, left from the five of us, who lives several states away as well. We enjoy talking and sharing life's most precious moments as we both age gracefully. We try to visit one another at least once a year.

I intend to learn something new each day so when I reach 80, I will have evolved even more toward the person God created me to be. Until the Lord takes me home, I will try to make everyday a great day and tell someone that God loves them, and they too have a purpose! Don't give up! Keep pushing forward! 

# Perimenopause & Power

*What You Were Never Taught but Need to Know*

BY ERIKA BROOKS



**T**For too long, the conversation around perimenopause has been wrapped in whispers. Many women hear about hot flashes and mood swings, but few are prepared for the full scope of changes that arrive during this natural life stage. Perimenopause is often portrayed as a slow decline into aging, but in truth, it is a season of powerful transformation. What most of us were never taught is that perimenopause doesn't just signal the end of one chapter—it ushers in the beginning of another. With knowledge, support, and a shift in perspective, this transition can be a time of clarity, empowerment, and renewed strength.

## Understanding Perimenopause

Perimenopause, often referred to as “menopause transition,” typically begins in a woman's 40s, though some experience it earlier. It can last four to ten years as the body gradually decreases estrogen and progesterone production, preparing for the end of menstruation.

During this time, hormone levels fluctuate dramatically, and those shifts trigger a wide range of symptoms. While the experience looks different for every woman, common signs include:

- Irregular or heavier periods
- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Sleep disturbances
- Mood swings, anxiety, or irritability
- Brain fog and memory lapses
- Weight gain and slower metabolism
- Aches, joint pain, or changes in energy

For many, these symptoms can feel overwhelming. Yet, when we understand what is happening inside the body, we can meet these changes with compassion and strategy rather than fear.

## The Silence Around Perimenopause

One of the most challenging parts of perimenopause is the silence that surrounds it. Unlike puberty or pregnancy, which are openly discussed and supported, perimenopause is often treated as taboo. Women enter this transition with little preparation, left to wonder if something is “wrong” with them.

This silence robs women of power. The reality is that perimenopause is not an illness—it's a natural process. Breaking the stigma, normalizing conversations, and providing education are critical steps in reclaiming control over this life stage.

## What You Were Never Taught—but Need to Know

### Hormones Are Shifting—and That's Why You Feel Different

Perimenopause is driven by fluctuating hormones, primarily estrogen and progesterone. These shifts influence everything from body temperature to mood. One day you may feel clear-headed, the next day scattered or irritable.

**What to do:** Keep a symptom journal. Track when hot flashes, sleep issues, or mood changes occur. Recognizing patterns can help you anticipate challenges and

give you language to discuss your symptoms with your healthcare provider.

### Mood Changes Don't Define You

As estrogen levels fluctuate, they also affect serotonin and other brain chemicals that regulate mood. The result: emotional ups and downs that can leave you feeling out of control. But these changes are biological—not personal failings.

**What to do:** Build healthy outlets for stress. Journaling, yoga, prayer, or simply walking outdoors can stabilize mood and reduce anxiety. If symptoms become overwhelming, therapy or medical support can provide additional relief.

### Your Body Is Changing—With Purpose

During perimenopause, metabolism slows, muscle mass decreases, and fat tends to settle around the midsection. While frustrating, these shifts are the body's way of adapting to a new hormonal environment.

**What to do:** Focus on support rather than punishment. Strength training preserves bone density and muscle tone. Nutrient-dense foods—lean proteins, leafy greens, and healthy fats—support energy and balance hormones. Instead of chasing your younger body, think about preparing your body for longevity.

### Self-Care Is No Longer Optional

Sleep, nutrition, hydration, and exercise are no longer luxuries—they are essential survival tools in perimenopause. Even small lapses in self-care can worsen hot flashes, mood changes, and fatigue.

**What to do:** Establish a consistent bedtime, drink plenty of water, and add foods rich in calcium, vitamin D, and omega-3s. Consider layering clothing and keeping a fan nearby to manage hot flashes.

### Redefinition Is the Hidden Gift of Perimenopause

This transition often sparks deeper questions: What do I want for the next season of my life? What no longer serves me? Many women find themselves less willing to please others and more committed to living authentically.

**What to do:** Treat perimenopause as a season of reset. Revisit your goals, explore new hobbies, or lean into spiritual growth. This is your chance to redefine success on your own terms.

### Professional Support Is Powerful

You do not have to suffer in silence. From hormone therapy (HRT) to natural remedies and lifestyle strategies, there are many safe and effective ways to manage symptoms.

**What to do:** Speak openly with your healthcare provider. Ask about treatment options, including counseling, nutrition support, and medical interventions that can help you feel your best.

**“Perimenopause is not about losing control—it’s about stepping into wisdom.”**

### Practical Tips for Thriving in Perimenopause

- **Prioritize Sleep:** Aim for 7–9 hours with a calming bedtime routine.
- **Move Daily:** Incorporate strength training and low-impact cardio.
- **Eat for Balance:** Focus on whole foods, protein, leafy greens, and healthy fats.
- **Hydrate Well:** Dehydration worsens hot flashes and brain fog.
- **Cool the Flashes:** Layer clothing, reduce caffeine and alcohol, and keep a fan nearby.
- **Manage Stress:** Practice mindfulness, prayer, or deep breathing daily.
- **Track Symptoms:** Journals or apps help you spot triggers and cycles.



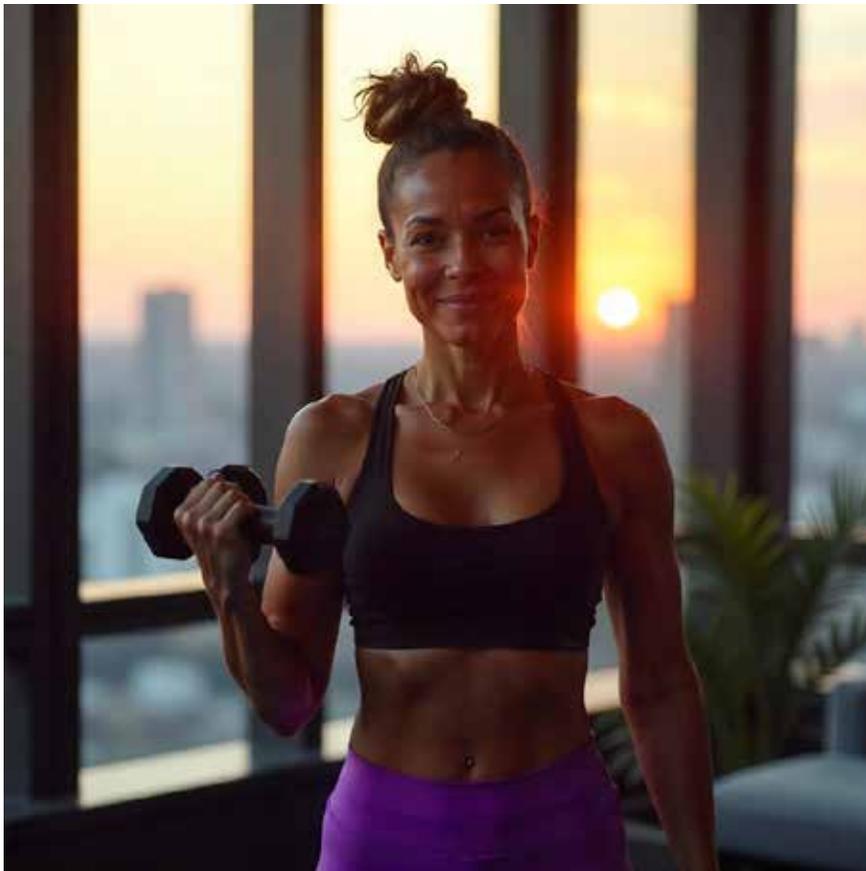
- **Seek Support:** Counseling, women’s groups, or medical care can provide relief and community.

### Reframing Perimenopause: From Loss to Liberation

Instead of viewing perimenopause as the loss of youth, consider it an awakening. This stage can sharpen boundaries, deepen resilience, and inspire bold new directions. It is not a decline, but a pivot into power. Perimenopause is not about losing control—it’s about stepping into wisdom.

### Final Word: Own Your Season

If you are in perimenopause, know this: you are not broken, and you are not alone. You are entering a season of strength, clarity, and renewal. When approached with knowledge, self-compassion, and support, perimenopause can become one of the most empowering chapters of your life. You were never taught this—but now that you know, you can claim your power. 



# The Myth of the Prime Years

## *Challenging Age Based Milestones That Don't Serve You*

BY MAYA RUFINO, LCSW

### **The Weight of Expectations**

When you were a child, adults asked “what do you want to be when you grow up?” Maybe your parents saw you playing with another child and talked about you getting married to them one day. The expectations start young. They become ingrained and automatic, interwoven throughout our thoughts, driving our behaviors. Some expectations are stated explicitly, like when your mom says she wants you to start giving her grand babies or when your boss says they need you to start hitting higher revenue targets. Other expectations are more implicit, like when people often comment that your mom must be your sister (she looks so young!), or when your boss only praises you when you work overtime. Regardless of explicit or implicit, these expectations can weigh heavily.

### **When Timelines Become Traps**

As a therapist, and as a human with people in her life, I hear others express disappointment about where they are in life all the time. They thought they would be the CEO or have the ring already. They compare themselves to people more attractive/older/smarter/insert adjective here. It is common for people to believe we are behind or failing in some way. When we see ourselves not meeting expectations, we feel guilt, shame, regret, disappointment, and anxiety! The weight of the expectations, and the emotions, is often much heavier when we add the deadline of a certain age. This age deadline creates more pressure to accomplish particular goals, including an implicit comparison to others your age.

*What if all your years could be your prime years?*



## The weight of the expectations, and the emotions, is often much heavier when we add the deadline of a certain age.

### Who Sets the Rules?

If you are going to give these expectations so much power, at least make sure they're actually what you want. When you decided to spend 10 years in med school because it's what your parents always wanted for you, did you consider what being a doctor would actually be like? What about when you decided to settle for the first okay-ish partner because the rest of your siblings are married? If your expectations were not met on your timeline, how did you decide on the date? Who said you have to own your own home by 30? How did you imagine yourself accomplishing this, and what does it say about you that you missed the deadline? Maybe you now think you're a failure, or not a real adult. How do you define "real adult?" 18 years old, matching towels, or owning a home? If the goal you set had no real possibility of being accomplished, the failure was in goal-setting, not in you as a person, and we all fail sometimes.

### Flexibility and Control

Of course, your expectations for yourself will be influenced by many factors including your family, friends, culture, media, education, and experiences. Your culture might say get married by 22, but your mom says you should never get married based on her experience in relationships. Which one do you listen to? You get to decide, so maybe neither. You can even decide one way now, and change your mind later based on your own experiences. Since we only have so much control in life, the ability to be flexible can be invaluable. The balance looks like this: recognizing where you have control and taking steps with intention, while acknowledging that unpredictable obstacles will happen and you can pivot or scrap the goal altogether if needed.

### The Biological Clock: A Different Kind of Deadline

Maybe you've read this far, feeling angry or discouraged because your biological clock is not just ticking but *screaming* in alarm. This age-related milestone is not just a goal with an arbitrary deadline that we decide. Age is an important factor here and cannot just be mentally and emotionally released like many of the other examples. You can date, marry, graduate, see yourself as beautiful,

Your Guide to Hope, Wellness & Wealth



get promoted, change careers, pierce your eyebrows, move to another country, twerk on a yacht, make new friends or run for office, at pretty much any age. You can't get pregnant at any age, but the limit also has huge variations. This topic could be an

**YOU CAN DATE, MARRY, GRADUATE, SEE YOURSELF AS BEAUTIFUL, GET PROMOTED, CHANGE CAREERS... AT PRETTY MUCH ANY AGE.**

entire book. It's important to acknowledge that just because we can decide many other deadlines in life, there are others that we do not choose. Perhaps oversimplified, coping with this looks like focusing on doing what is within your control and processing your grief and pain when facing undesired outcomes. Lean on your support system, take good care of your basic needs, acknowledge your feelings with compassion for yourself, or talk to a therapist.

### A Reflective Exercise

Let's do an exercise. It tends to be more productive if you write it down, but you can do it in your head if you prefer. Take a deep breath from your belly and focus on your exhale.

What have you accomplished so far in your life?

What did you think you should have accomplished by your current age or earlier, but didn't?

Where did these expectations come from?

Do they still make sense for you?

Are there any dreams that you thought you wanted in your life, but once reached were not for you?

What feelings are coming up for you?

If your best friend went through something similar, what would you say to them?

### Shifting from Judgment to Curiosity

Most people will beat themselves up when not meeting expectations. One alternative is bringing some curiosity to what is happening, without judgement, and with the same support you would give your best friend. The questions above can be said to yourself with warmth and kindness, giving you the space to answer honestly and without defensiveness. When you assess your goals in this way, you can make a more informed decision about how or whether to move forward with it.

### Redefining Your Prime Years

Here is my hope for you: you will hope and want and dream big for yourself, in alignment with your personal values, while also planning realistic steps within your control and holding kindness for yourself when things don't go as planned. You will let go of your attachment to being a certain way by a certain age. What if all your years could be your prime years? 🌱



# Finding Peace in Your Pace

## What To Do When It Feels Like Everyone is Moving Ahead But You

BY DR. JANINE O'BRIEN

*Letting go of "on time" and finding  
meaning in your own timeline*

### **Turning 30: Questions Without Answers**

I remember the morning I turned 30. I woke up next to my then-partner, wondering what the day and the year ahead had in store for me. I also remember that alongside the anticipation there was a sense of unease. A kind of questioning I could not quite name.

At the time, I had just started my career after spending most of my twenties in graduate school, unsure where it would all lead. I didn't have a dollar to my name, I was living in a small, converted garage apartment that I rented, was in a relationship that I knew deep down was not right for me, and was honestly pretty lost. I have always been someone who questions the status quo and who doesn't necessarily feel pulled toward the traditional milestones or timelines, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't still hear that inner voice asking: Why am I not "there" yet? Or worse: What's wrong with me that I don't want those things?

### **A New Lens Approaching 40**

A decade later, as I approach 40, I've found myself revisiting those questions through a different lens – not with shame, but with curiosity. What does it really mean to be "on pace or on time"? Who defines progress and how do our identities shape the ways we navigate life's transitions?

### **Change Isn't Always Empowering**

Change is often sold as empowering, like a reinvention or fresh start. But whether intentional or not, it can bring discomfort: doubt, grief, comparison, and confusion.

That discomfort becomes especially present when it seems like everyone else is moving forward; getting promoted, settling down, buying homes, starting families while you're still in the thick of it. Still figuring it out. Still waiting.

It's in these moments that the question "am I behind?" can feel loud, disorienting, even suffocating. And for women, especially women of color, that question rarely comes without context.

### **The Script We're Taught**

From a young age (or even before we are born), you're often taught to believe that there is a correct "script" to follow: do well in school, go to college, find a partner, build a career, start a family, and maintain it all effortlessly. For some, this timeline feels aligned. But for others, it simply doesn't fit.

What you're taught is the "right" pace often centers white, cis, heteronormative, and economically privileged experiences. These cultural narratives leave little room for differences like complex identities, unpredictable paths, real-life happening, or different preferences that don't fit neatly into a linear timeline.

### The Weight of Context

And, if you've had to navigate trauma, cultural expectations, systemic barriers, or invisible labor your path may look different. That doesn't make it less meaningful. It simply just makes it yours.

### Beyond the Highlight Reels

Feeling behind isn't just about a delayed milestone. It's about the meaning you attach to it. The shame. The internalized belief that you're failing or are failures. That you've missed your moment. That you're somehow less than because your pace doesn't match what you see around you.

And let's be honest, aspects of modern living, namely social media, amplifies this. You're constantly flooded with curated success stories and milestones showcasing just the highlight reels. Rarely do you see the mess, the mistakes, or what it took to land at a particular outcome. But growth often happens in those in-between spaces. The quiet, subtle shifts. Reinvention isn't always dramatic or flashy. Sometimes it's simply a slow return to yourself.

### Culture, Choice, and Self-Trust

Our backgrounds and cultures deeply influence how change and different timelines are perceived and whether you feel free or safe enough to pursue them. Maybe you come from a culture where stability is prioritized over risk, where women are taught to stay agreeable and self-sacrificing. Maybe you're the first in your family to go to therapy, to set boundaries, or to choose a non-traditional path. That can feel both liberating and lonely.

But honoring where you come from while choosing what you need in the present can be one of the most important acts of self-trust.

### So, What Can You Do When You Feel Behind?

Although it's important to note that each of us are in our own processes, here are some places to start when you find yourself feeling behind:

#### NAME WHAT YOU'RE GRIEVING

Acknowledge that there are aspects of feeling behind that involve grief. It is



a process of letting go of identities, roles, relationships, dreams that you might have imagined for yourself or that others have imagined for you. Give yourself permission to name these things and give yourself space to feel it.

#### GET CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR TIMELINE

Ask yourself: Whose timeline am I following? Are these expectations mine, or inherited from family, culture, or comparison?

#### REDEFINE PROGRESS

Progress isn't always loud or visible to the outside world. Sometimes it's choosing rest, saying no, setting a boundary, doing something different, or simply continuing on when you feel unsure.

#### CREATE COUNTER-NARRATIVES

Surround yourself with stories that reflect complexity. Look for women (especially those with layered identities) who are carving nonlinear, non-traditional paths. Let their presence remind you that your way is valid, too. Let their stories and experiences serve to show you that other paths exist.

#### ANCHOR INTO SUPPORTIVE SPACES

Find spaces where you don't have to explain yourself and where you are instead met with compassion and understanding.

#### PRACTICE COMPASSION OVER CRITIQUE

Remind yourself that you cannot bully yourself into transformation. Ask yourself: How would I support a friend in this exact moment? How can you extend that towards yourself?

#### Peace in Your Pace

In closing, I want to leave you with this truth: you're not behind. You're healing, you're growing, and you're living your own life.

There is no singular pace, no universal checklist that guarantees meaning or fulfillment. And remind yourself that redefining what "pace" means to you in your own life doesn't have to be dramatic or even visible to the outside world if you don't want it to be. It can be quiet, subtle, and intentional. There can be peace in your pace. Even if the world tells you otherwise. 

# **MENOPAUSE, SEX & INTIMACY GUIDE**

BY DR. ANDREA COLÓN





Menopause is more than just a phase of life, it's a profound transition that touches everything from energy and mood to sex and intimacy. For many women, it can feel overwhelming to sort through the changes, but our expert, **Dr. Andrea Colón**, believes it's also a time to reclaim vitality and connection. As a licensed Naturopathic Doctor and founder of Revive Wellness in Newport Beach, she specializes in hormone optimization, menopause care, and holistic approaches that address health at the root. Through her Menopause Mastery Program and Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT), Dr. Colón equips women with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to navigate this season with grace.

In this guide, she answers your most pressing questions about desire, comfort, and intimacy during menopause—offering not only practical tips but also reassurance that this chapter can be one of growth, reconnection, and renewed vitality. Her mission is simple but powerful: to help women feel vibrant in their bodies, supported in their relationships, and fully themselves at every stage of life.

## Is it normal for desire to change as I age?

Yes, desire can decrease as we age but that doesn't mean it has to be a normal part of your life. Several factors can influence our libido as we age including stress, fluctuation of hormones, lifestyle, self esteem and relationships with significant others. During perimenopause and menopause, declines in estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone often play a big role but any hormonal imbalance can affect libido. Thankfully there are ways to support these changes so that we can continue to have a healthy sex life as we age.



## What can I do about dryness or discomfort?

Many women experience vaginal dryness even before menopause begins. Oftentimes it can be attributed to the drop in estrogen levels which help lubricate the vaginal canal. There are natural options that can help with lubrication including hydration suppositories, clean lubricants, and vaginal moisturizers. If that's not enough, localized vaginal hormones can be a game changer. The lubrication can help reduce vaginal pain during intercourse and they can also help improve orgasms!

## What if my partner and I aren't in sync anymore?

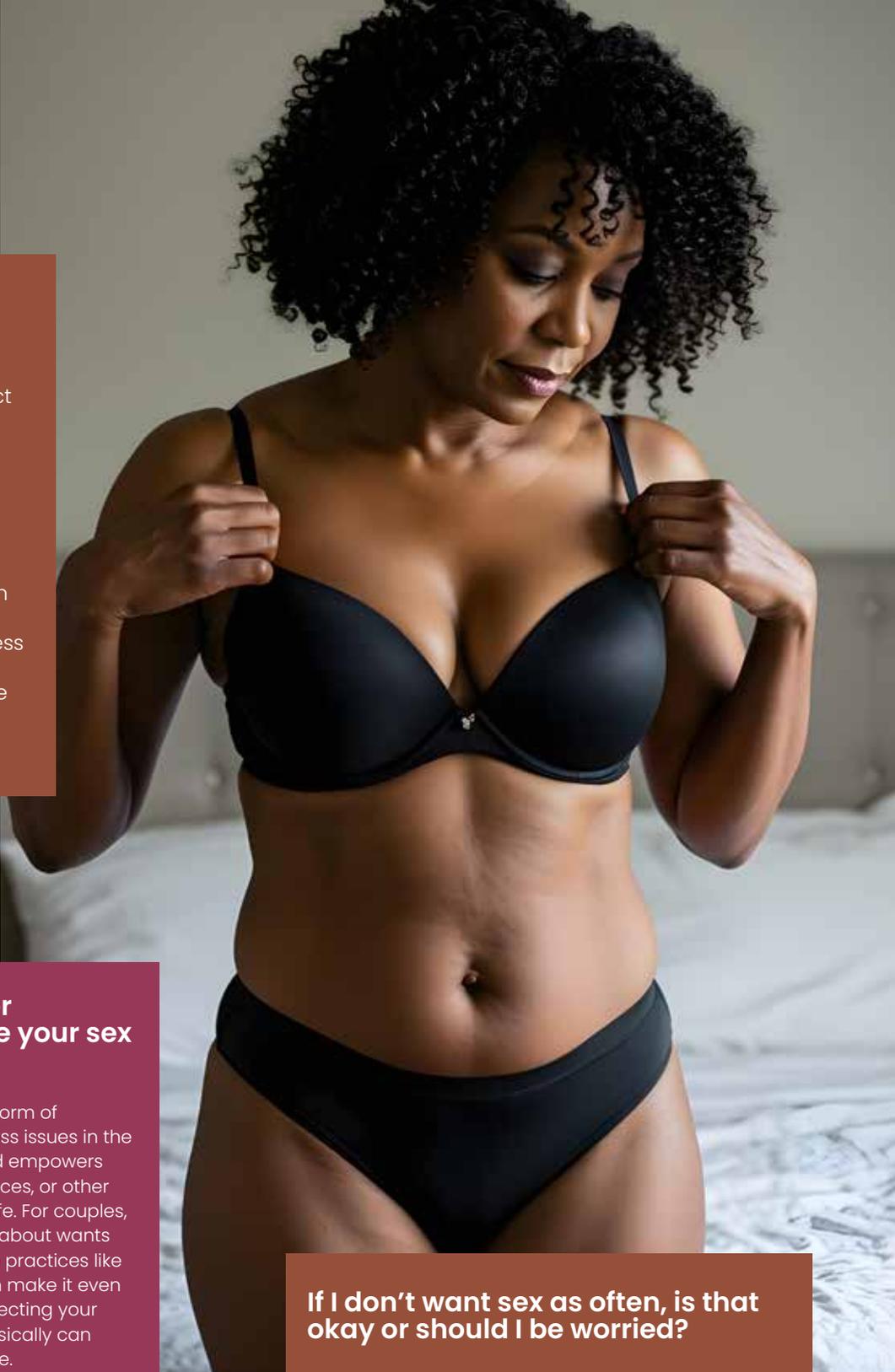
This is a common topic discussed with my patients and happens to so many couples. I find that many partners are busy working crazy long work hours or tied up with kids and grandkids that they barely communicate even though they live under the same roof. This creates emotional distance and then the lack of physical intimacy. I encourage couples to make time to spend with their partners but also themselves during the week to help manage stress. If hormones are part of the issue, rebalancing them can help get you back on the same page. In many cases I see both partners to help get them back in sync!

## How do I navigate intimacy if I'm single again later in life?

It helps to start by getting comfortable with your own body again. Taking care of vaginal health with hydration, pelvic floor exercises, or even localized hormone support can build confidence. When you're ready to date again, go at your own pace and be open about what feels good for you. Intimacy later in life can be deeply fulfilling, especially because you know yourself better and feel more confident.

## I don't feel sexy in my body right now; how do I reconnect with desire?

This is a common concern I hear from women. Desire often starts with how connected you feel to your own body. Many women I see don't want to be intimate with their partners because they are not secure with their own body's due to hormonal imbalances. I encourage them to find activities and hobbies that focus on their mental and physical health. Simple things like movement, dance, yoga, or even just breathing deeply can help you feel more present. If symptoms like fatigue, weight changes, or mood swings are holding them back, then it might be worth looking at hormone levels. Balancing them can make a huge difference in how you feel in your skin.



## How do hormones really impact my sex life?

Hormones are basically the drivers of your sexual health and can affect urge and desire. Estrogen helps with lubrication while testosterone supports desire and pleasure. Decrease in progesterone often causes poor sleep and when we are tired there is less urge for sex. Stress can affect any and all the hormones and cause a decrease in the sex drive. Supporting the body naturally with diet, lifestyle, and stress reduction helps, but sometimes bioidentical hormone therapy is the missing key that gets everything working in sync again.

## Can therapy (individual or couples) actually improve your sex life?

Most everyone can benefit from some form of therapy. So, yes, it really can help address issues in the bedroom. Therapy gives you space and empowers us to work through stress, past experiences, or other blocks that may be affecting your sex life. For couples, it helps to have open communications about wants and needs. Pairing therapy with lifestyle practices like stress management, or breathwork can make it even more powerful. And if hormones are affecting your libido or comfort, addressing those physically can make the emotional work more effective.

## If I don't want sex as often, is that okay or should I be worried?

I think it comes down to the individual. Some women are okay not having sex while others want to have the same drive they had in their 20s. There's no magic number for how often you should want sex. If you're content with your level of desire, that's perfectly fine. If you're frustrated by it, or it's creating tension with a partner, that's when it's worth looking deeper. Stress, poor sleep, or hormone imbalances are often a factor and once those are addressed, sex drive usually improves.



# BECOMING HER, AGAIN

*Returning to the Version of You That You Miss*

BY ERIKA BROOKS

**T**here's a moment many women encounter when they look in the mirror and wonder, Where did she go? That vibrant, confident, joyful version of yourself who laughed freely, dreamed boldly, and carried a spark that lit up every room—sometimes she feels lost under the weight of responsibilities, pain, or life's unexpected twists.

The truth is, she's not gone. She may be buried under layers of stress, trauma, or endless "to-do" lists, but she is still there. Becoming *her* again is not about going back in time; it's about reconnecting with the parts of you that make you feel whole, alive, and authentically yourself.

### Why We Lose Ourselves

Life has a way of pulling us in a thousand directions. Careers, family, relationships, caregiving, and unexpected crises all demand our attention. Add in grief, burnout, or unmet goals, and it's no wonder many women wake up one day feeling like a stranger to themselves.

We lose ourselves when:

- We prioritize everyone else's needs over our own.
- We equate productivity with worth.
- We silence our passions in order to "fit in."
- We forget that joy is a necessity, not a luxury.

This disconnect doesn't happen overnight. It's gradual. But just as it happened slowly, returning to yourself is possible—step by step.

### The Journey Back: Becoming Her Again

#### Pause and Remember

Take a moment to reflect: Who is the version of you that you miss? Was she adventurous? Creative? Carefree? Prayerful? Start by naming the qualities you loved most about her. Remembering her clearly makes it easier to reconnect.

#### Release the Guilt

Many women carry guilt for even wanting to return to themselves—believing it's selfish to want joy, rest, or freedom. But reclaiming yourself isn't selfish—it's survival. When you thrive, everyone around you benefits too.

#### Reclaim Your Passions

What did you once love to do that you've stopped doing? Reading novels, traveling, painting, dancing, singing in the choir, journaling? Re-engage with

these passions, even in small doses. They are pathways back to yourself.

#### Redefine Self-Care

Self-care isn't just bubble baths and spa days. It's setting boundaries, saying no when necessary, scheduling your doctor's appointments, and giving yourself permission to rest. Caring for yourself is an act of radical love.

#### Surround Yourself With Mirrors

Spend time with people who remind you of your strengths, who reflect back the best version of you. Whether it's girlfriends, mentors, or faith communities, these "mirrors" help you see yourself more clearly.

#### Invite Healing

Sometimes, the version of you that you miss feels unreachable because of trauma, loss, or unresolved pain. Counseling, prayer, and support groups can create space for healing, helping you peel back the layers so you can shine again.

#### Becoming Her Doesn't Mean Becoming the Same

It's important to recognize that you're not going backward—you're moving forward.

You're becoming her *again*, but wiser, more resilient, and more grounded. This isn't about fitting into old jeans or reliving your twenties. It's about embracing your essence while honoring the lessons you've gained along the way.

The version of you that you miss may be waiting—not in the past—but in the choices you make today.

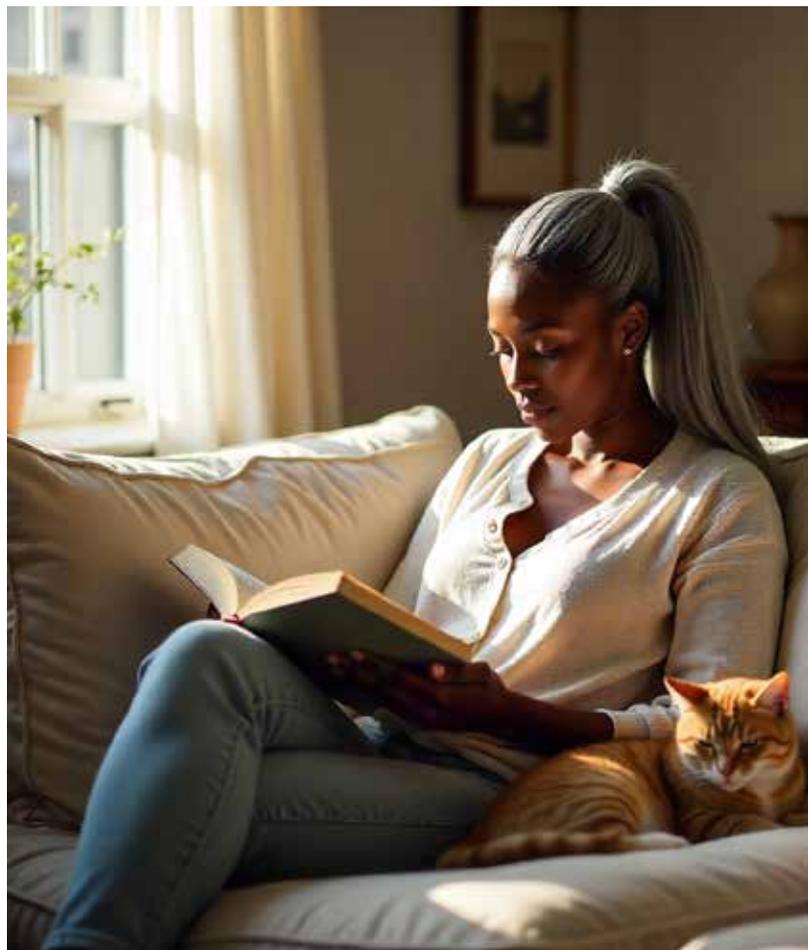
#### Practical Steps to Begin Today

- **Journal Prompt:** Write a letter to your younger self, reminding her of everything she brought to the table. Then write one to your future self, describing who you're becoming.
- **Joy List:** Create a list of 10 activities that bring you joy and commit to doing one this week.
- **Affirmation Practice:** Speak affirmations

daily: I am still me. I am becoming her again.

- **Set Boundaries:** Choose one area where you've been overextending and gently set a limit.

- **Revisit a Hobby:** Do something you loved before life became complicated—it could be as simple as playing your favorite music and dancing in your living room.



#### Final Word: She's Still in You

Becoming her again isn't about longing for the past—it's about reclaiming the essence of who you are. The laughter, the dreams, the sparkle—it's all still there, waiting for you to give yourself permission to return.

So take the pause. Make the space. Begin again.

Because the woman you miss is still here—patiently waiting for you to come home. 

***"The version of you that you miss may be waiting—not in the past—but in the choices you make today."***



# WHEN THE VISION CHANGES

## *Letting Go of Old Dreams to Make Room for New Ones*

BY MAYA RUFINO, LCSW

*Often we get so caught up in the pursuit that we forget that we have a choice of whether to continue.*

### **The Work of a Dream**

What does it take to reach a dream? Planning, preparation, action. Time, energy, motivation. I tend to think of dreams as big long-term goals. You might dream of starting your own company, getting married, or retiring early. When you begin planning and preparing, you may realize there are many smaller goals to reach before you get to the big dream, with steps to take for each smaller goal. You may succeed sometimes, fail other times, and still reach the larger goal.

### **When Dreams Stop Fitting**

Occasionally, you may wonder if you still want this dream. How do you know when to let it go?

Since dreams require so much from us, we need to be intentional about choosing what to work toward. We need to acknowledge when a dream no longer fits in order to put our resources into a more worthy goal. The myth of "having it all" neglects the reality of finite resources such as time, and fails to acknowledge our limits as humans. We need to prioritize, or we'll be spread so thin that nothing will be done well.

### **Loss That Becomes Gain**

When I look back on my journey in this life, I see growth through often painful failures. There were many times I grieved the loss of a dream. When I didn't get into business school, I was angry at calculus for existing, unsure about where to go next. Business school would have included many steps and goals on the way to my dream of working in advertising. Without it, there was space to explore a new dream, and I found the exciting and daunting path to becoming a therapist. I am incredibly grateful for this loss that became a gain. Can you think of a time when you failed, thought you might be lost forever, and eventually gained something you could never have imagined? I think of this often when considering whether to let go of old dreams.

What might you have space to start if you stop working toward the current dream?

### **The Role of Failure and Evaluation**

A failure on the way to a dream can be a good time to evaluate whether you really want it. Failures often prompt us to reconsider the path we're on. Alternatively, if you don't want your evaluation to be influenced by your negative feelings around failure, you can schedule assessments at regular

intervals. Ensuring that you evaluate your dreams periodically is key to figuring out if they are still right for you. This may seem obvious, but often we get so caught up in the pursuit that we forget that we have a choice of whether to continue.

### **Evolving With Your Dreams**

When you evolve, your dreams should evolve with you. As you have different experiences and learn new things, your values and priorities may change. What is important to you now, that was not even on your radar 10 years ago? What was important to you 5 years ago that you have since let go? Have any of your priorities shifted up or down the list in the past year?

### **A Compassionate Evaluation**

To conduct a productive evaluation of your dream, you can start with a nonjudgmental and self-compassionate stance. You may acknowledge pain as a part of life, failure as a staple of humanity, grief and shame as emotions we all experience, and change as inevitable. When we get too stuck in the painful inner experiences of goals or dreams, we can't see the path forward and we often hold on too tightly to what should be let go. You can hear yourself more clearly and you can listen to your inner wisdom, if you don't get pulled into a shame spiral that just shouts at you about all the ways you're not good enough. In order to move toward what you want, you need to be boosted up, not torn down.

### **Reflection Exercise**

Let's do an exercise. It tends to be more productive if you write your answers down, but you can do it in your head if you prefer. Take a deep breath from your belly and focus on your exhale. Remember to use your nonjudgmental/self-compassionate stance as you answer these questions for yourself.

Think about a current or past dream.

- What was your vision when you began?
- How has it changed?
- What informed the smaller goals along the way?
- What worked, and what didn't?

Think about a time you crushed a goal you had for yourself.

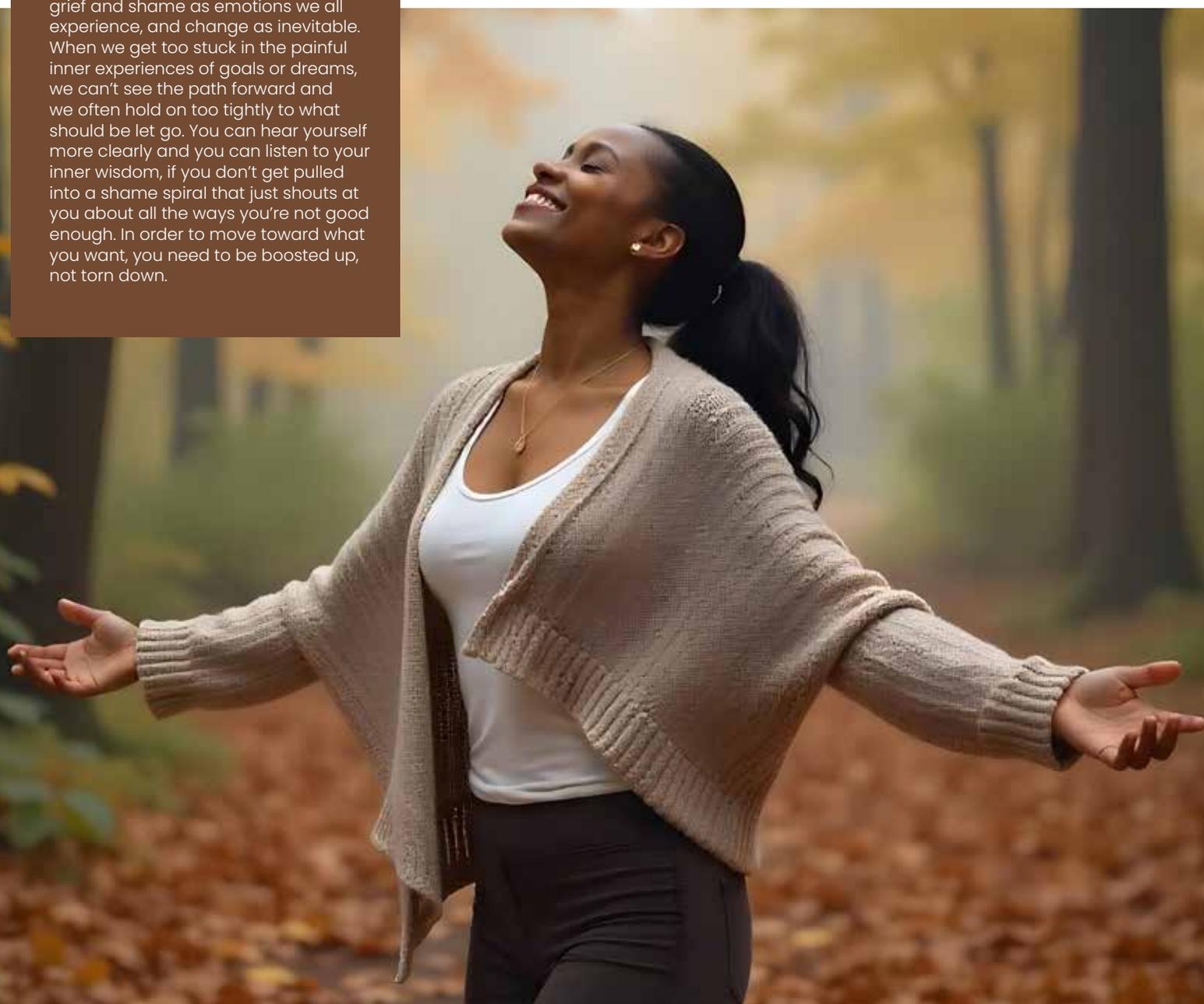
- How did you do that?
- Were there any unexpected obstacles you overcame?
- What was the goal-setting process for you?
- What feelings are coming up for you?

Now think about a time you didn't meet a goal you set for yourself.

- What happened?
- What was within your control, and what wasn't?
- What was the process for setting this goal?
- How did you decide on the steps and the deadline?
- What feelings are coming up for you?
- What would you say to a friend if they had a similar experience?

### **All Kinds of Dreams**

Here is my hope for you: there will be dreams, old and new, accomplished and scrapped, realistic and lofty, important and fun, basic and interesting, typical and unique. All kinds, and all befitting you. And you will pay attention to how they are serving you, while dropping those that aren't. 



# RELEASING THE PRESSURE TO STAY THE SAME

*You don't have to be who you were in your 20's*

BY GLENNY ROSARIO, CERTIFIED LIFE COACH

**As women, we are constantly told to “stay true to ourselves,” to “be authentic,” and to embrace who we are.**

Yet, there's an unspoken expectation that we should also remain frozen in time. Our appearance, our values, our relationships, and even our careers should fit some idealized version of youth and perfection. But what if we could release the pressure to stay the same, to evolve gracefully in every aspect of life, and to embrace change rather than fear it?

What if we gave ourselves permission to evolve—not just physically, but in our careers, relationships, values, and style as well?

## **The Challenge of Aging Gracefully: A Personal Story**

Turning 40 was a pivotal moment for me, a time when I began to feel the weight of society's expectations around aging. I noticed my body changing—wrinkles, cellulite, and a slowing metabolism. My friends, many of whom were navigating their 40s too, were all jumping on the bandwagon of Botox, lipo, and fillers, hoping

to maintain a youthful appearance.

I remember one friend telling me, “You should get lipo; that's all you need to look perfect.” Another gently asked, “Don't you see the lines on your face? Maybe Botox would help.”

It's a familiar scenario, isn't it? The pressure to “fix” aging, to stay young, and to conform to a standard of perfection that's nearly impossible to achieve. But here's what I realized: I didn't want to look 20 again. In fact, my 20s were the most insecure years of my life.

What I wanted was to evolve and embrace each age, each stage, with dignity and grace. I wanted to welcome the wrinkles, the gray hairs, and all the wisdom that comes with aging.

## **Evolving in Your Career: Embracing Change as a Strength**

One of the most powerful aspects of evolution is the ability to grow and shift in your career. In our 20s, many of us are

still figuring out what we want to do professionally. By our 30s and 40s, we may realize that the career path we once dreamed of no longer aligns with our values, desires, or lifestyle.

I've seen countless women—friends, clients, even public figures—struggle with this shift. We've spent years climbing a ladder, only to realize the view from the top isn't satisfying.

But here's the beauty of evolution: We don't have to stay stuck in roles that no longer serve us. We have the power to change directions, take risks, and find fulfillment in new and unexpected ways.

Take Viola Davis, for example. She didn't land her breakout film role until her 40s, yet she went on to win an Oscar, Emmy, and Tony Award—becoming one of the most respected actors of our time. Her story proves it's never too late to rise.

The key is to listen to yourself: What



do you really want? What excites you? What sparks your passion? By giving yourself permission to evolve in your career, you give yourself permission to pursue what truly makes you happy.

**Evolving in Relationships: Letting Go of What No Longer Serves You**

In our 20s, we may have built relationships based on where we were at the time—often driven by insecurity, the need for validation, or a desire to belong. As we age, we naturally outgrow some of these connections.

This might mean letting go of toxic friendships, reevaluating family dynamics, or embracing new romantic



possibilities. It's about creating space for people who truly uplift and support you—people who accept you for the person you are now, not who you used to be.

When I hit my 40s, I realized my friendships, romantic relationships, and family dynamics needed to be rooted in mutual respect and genuine love. I no longer had the energy for toxic dynamics or unhealthy expectations. Evolving in relationships is not just about walking away from what no longer serves you—it's about cultivating connections that reflect the woman you are becoming.

**Evolving Your Style: Owning Who You Are**

Style is another area where we often feel pressured to conform. In our 20s, we may have followed trends or dressed to impress others. But as we age, we realize true style is about feeling powerful and confident in our own skin.

For me, that meant shifting from trying to look youthful to dressing in a way that reflected my evolving self. I began to lean into comfort, simplicity, and elegance—exploring colors, fabrics, and silhouettes that

felt authentic to *me*, not what was trending.

That's where the magic happens. Style becomes a personal expression of our evolution. We no longer need to fit into someone else's idea of beauty. Instead, we show up boldly, gracefully, and unapologetically ourselves.

**Evolving Your Values: Letting Go of Perfection**

I've spent years helping women reframe their self-worth. One of the most common struggles I see is the pressure to cling to values that no longer align with who we've become.

In our younger years, we often value external success—appearance, status, approval. But as we grow older, our values shift toward authenticity, peace, and purpose.

For me, what once mattered—looking a certain way, fitting in, proving my worth—has transformed. Now, I value inner calm, real connection, and self-love. I no longer chase perfection. I embrace the imperfection that makes me me.

**Evolving Your Body: Embracing Aging with Grace**

One of the most obvious and difficult parts of aging is watching our bodies change. From sagging skin to slower metabolism, it's easy to feel frustrated.

But what if we stopped fighting time and started honoring it?

For me, embracing aging meant accepting my body as it is while still caring for it deeply. Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness became my way of reconnecting with my body—not to "fix" it, but to love it better.

Wrinkles, stretch marks, and gray hairs aren't flaws. They're proof of a life lived, of strength earned. That's what makes us radiant. ☺

**A Love Note to My Readers: You Have Permission to Evolve**

To every woman reading this: you don't have to stay the same.

You don't have to be who you were in your 20s.

You don't have to chase youth or perfection.

You don't have to apologize for evolving.

You are allowed to shift, grow, and rewrite your story.

You are allowed to release roles that no longer fit.

You are allowed to show up as your full, radiant, ever-changing self.

You are not falling apart.

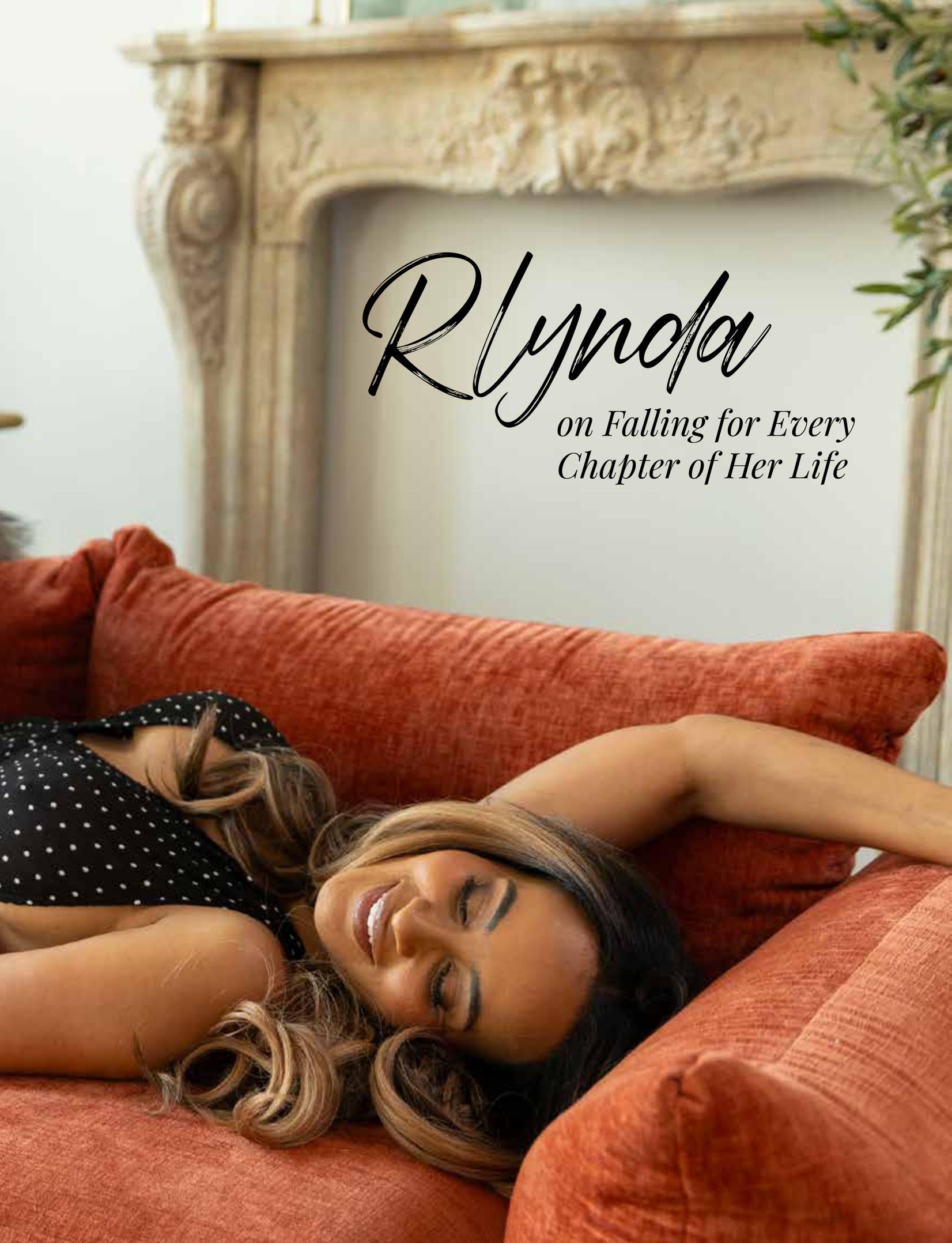
You are unfolding.

With love,  
Glenny Rosario



# THE POWER OF GROWN WOMAN ENERGY

Photo by Cindy Ralat / Ralat Photography



*R. Lynoda*

*on Falling for Every  
Chapter of Her Life*



Photo by Cindy Ralat / Ralat Photography

At 49, Rlynda is standing tall, not because the road has been easy, but because she has chosen, again and again, to rise. Every wrinkle, every reinvention, every step forward or backward is part of her story, and right now, she's falling for all of it.

Rlynda's story is not an ode to change as loss, but as power and it echoes the theme for this issue; *Falling for You. every chapter, every change, every age.* From her childhood in Cape Verde to the runways of New York, from divorce to rediscovering love, from surviving an accident to building new dreams, she has embraced every chapter not as an ending, but as an opportunity for reinvention.

There are people whose lives inspire you, and then there are people like **Rlynda**, women who remind us that resilience isn't about avoiding challenges, but about rising after each fall with more grace, wisdom, and strength. As she tells *Hope+Wellth*, her mantra has carried her through every chapter: **"Rooted in love, rising in light."**

## Falling for Resilience

Rlynda was born in Lisbon in 1976, the daughter of Cape Verdean immigrants. Her childhood, however, took a dramatic turn when her parents divorced and her father invited her and her brother to Cape Verde for what was meant to be a two-week visit. Instead, they stayed for five years.

*"In Portugal we had everything," she recalls. "But in Cape Verde, we had nothing; no electricity and not even running water. At just 11 years old, I was cooking, cleaning, carrying water so we could bathe, even gathering wood to make fire for meals."*

**It was a jarring shift, but one that gave her a foundation for everything that followed.**

*"That was one of the biggest transformations of my life. I understood early that life can change overnight. We don't always control what happens, but we do control how we adjust."*

When she returned to Portugal as a teenager, she carried with her resilience and gratitude; two qualities that would shape her career, her artistry, and her outlook. She poured herself into school while also dancing, modeling, and exploring creative expression.

*"After Cape Verde, I didn't take anything for granted. I wanted to live fully, without regrets."*





*“At almost 50, I feel like I can start over anytime. If this doesn’t work, I’ll try again at 55. If not then, 60. The only thing I won’t do is give up.”*

Photo by Cindy Ralat /  
Ralat Photography

# “My voice was stronger than their predictions.”

## Falling for Reinvention

Rlynda's career story is not linear. It's a collage of reinventions and each pivot reflects her willingness to fall in love with change rather than fear it.

*"I started as a dancer and performer when I was just 15," she says. "By 25, I got married and left that world. Ten years later, I launched my fashion brand, RLYNDA, and it took me to New York Fashion Week, Atlanta Fashion Week, Charlotte Fashion Week, even a museum show in Indianapolis. But when financial struggles hit, I had to close it down."*

From there, she became a flight attendant, bringing her sense of style to the skies and even in uniform, she found ways to express herself.

*"Fashion has always been part of who I am," she says.*

Later, she returned to music, performing as an international pop star in Africa, Portugal, and Malaysia, and even opened another boutique in her hometown of Lisbon, Portugal. It felt like everything was finally falling into place again and she was so happy. Then the pandemic hit and everything was shut down. Once again, she rebuilt. She closed her Lisbon boutique and launched an online store, learning web design and marketing herself.

*"My daughter was only ten at the time, but she became my photographer. She'd take pictures of me in the clothes, and we built something together."*

Then came a Miami store in Bal Harbour, which she ran while continuing to fly; proof of her tireless drive to create and adapt.

*"At almost 50, I feel like I can start over anytime," she says. "If this doesn't work, I'll try again at 55. If not then, maybe 60. The only thing I won't do is give up."*

## Falling for Healing

The last three years have tested Rlynda's strength more than ever before. She ended a 20-year marriage, and moved from Miami to New York.

*"Divorce was painful," she admits. "It was hard for me, my kids, my ex-husband. But we remain good friends and parents. I'm grateful for what we built."*

But just when she thought she could finally exhale after her divorce, she was hit by a car while walking just two months after moving to New York. The accident nearly broke her, leaving her with severe injuries, surgeries, and over a year of recovery.

*"It was excruciating; surgeries, constant pain, the feeling that life was moving forward without me. I cried so much. I felt left behind," she says.*

But once again, she made a choice.

*"Doctors told me all the things I would never do again. I stopped listening. My voice was stronger than their predictions. I decided to believe I would be okay."*

During recovery, she turned to something that had always brought her joy: makeup. She studied it formally, earned certifications, and turned it into a new career path.

*"Makeup gave me something to look forward to, something to distract me from pain. Now, I'm proud to say I'm a certified makeup artist. That feels like a victory after such an exhausting recovery process."*

And yet, Rlynda is quick to remind us that her greatest triumph isn't a certification, a store, or even a performance.

*"My biggest accomplishments aren't things. They're my two wonderful kids. When I have those moments where I feel weak, I think of their faces. Just knowing they exist gives me the strength to do or face anything."*

This is a beautiful reminder that, even in the hardest chapters, love is her anchor.

## **Falling for Love, Again and Again**

Rlynda's journey has also taught her a great deal about love; what it means to love herself and what it means to love another person.

*"When I was younger, I thought love was a fairytale; just you and a boy living happily-ever-after. Now I see love as presence, action, respect. It's not just romance and sometimes love can even be letting someone go."*

**With this revelation she also discovered new layers of herself, like loving someone other than a man.**

*"I never imagined I could fall in love with a woman, but I did and it was beautiful. It taught me that love has nothing to do with gender. Love is love. It's about connection, honesty, and emotion. Today, my love is quieter but no less profound. It's finally building happiness with someone who understands the true meaning of love. Love that is simple, clear, without barriers. The kind that warms your soul without asking for anything in return."*

***"Love has nothing to do  
with gender.  
Love is love."***



Photo by Cindy Ralat / Ralat Photography

*“Fashion has helped me heal, helped me celebrate and helped me feel powerful when I needed it most.”*



Photo by Cindy Ralat / Ralat Photography

## Falling for Beauty

Style has always been Rlynda's language, her armor, her celebration. From the stages of Lisbon to New York runways, from flight uniforms to boutique ownership, she has used fashion to declare her identity and her confidence.

*"The way you present yourself speaks before you even open your mouth," she says. "Fashion has helped me heal, helped me celebrate, helped me feel powerful when I needed it most."*

Today, at age 49, Rlynda is constantly stopped by people who comment on her beauty and style, and though she believes mature women are finally being recognized as relevant and sexy, she still feels like society has a long way to go.

*"We've made progress, but women still hear too often, 'You look good for your age.' Why not just say, 'You look good'? Beauty isn't about age; it's about the love you pour into yourself, how confident you feel in your own skin and the choices you make to maintain your beauty. For example, if you want Botox, do it. If you don't, don't. There's no box."*

## Falling for the Present

What keeps her grounded, even now, is her devotion to simple rituals. She embraces the present moment as her greatest love story.

*"I meditate every morning. I thank God for another day. I read. I breathe. When life feels overwhelming, I pause and breathe. That one simple thing changes everything. Tomorrow isn't promised. The past is a memory that you can't change. The future hasn't arrived. So all we have is today and I want to live it fully."*

**When asked to describe her current chapter in three words, she doesn't hesitate:**

*"Abundance. Freedom. Fulfillment."*



Photo by Cindy Ralat / Ralat Photography

## Falling for It All

Standing tall at 49, she embodies the theme of this issue: falling in love not just with the highlight reels of life, but with its challenges, its lessons, and its quiet moments of grace. Hers is a story stitched from resilience, reinvention, and the courage to keep expanding even when the world says “enough.”

*“Standing tall and embracing the woman I am today fills me with an immense sense of pride,” she reflects. “Each challenge I’ve faced has shaped me. Each lesson learned has fortified my spirit. And every triumph, no matter how small, has added to each chapter of my life story.”*

She is very transparent about her hardships and refuses to gloss over them; divorce, financial struggle, injury, pain. But she reframes them as part of a greater design.

*“I celebrate my resilience, my passion, and my unwavering commitment to growth,” she says. “If I fall, I rise. If I lose, I learn. That’s what it means to keep falling for your life.”*

**Her gaze toward the future is equally fierce.**

*“I will continue to push boundaries, chase my dreams, and stand firm in my beliefs. I will invest in myself, nurture my passions, and surround myself with positivity. I will not shy away from my ambitions; instead, I will embrace them wholeheartedly.”*

**This is not just midlife confidence; it is midlife radiance.** For Rlynda, self-love has become both anchor and compass.

*“With every step I take, I will strive to become an even better version of myself. I will celebrate my accomplishments, learn from my setbacks, and never lose sight of the incredible strength within me.”*

**When asked what’s next for this chapter in her life, it’s clear she is more committed than ever to helping women look and feel like the most beautiful versions of themselves.**

*“I plan to relaunch her brand, RLYNDA, in New York in 2026, and envision a space that is more than a boutique. It will be a place where women can come exactly as they are and leave not only more stylish, but also more confident.”*

Her vision for RLYNDA blends fashion and beauty seamlessly. For her, it isn’t just about clothes or cosmetics; it’s about equipping women with the tools, confidence, and self-love to shine in every chapter of their lives.

*“Clients will discover clothing that flatters their body type, learn to dress in a way that reflects their personal style, and gain everyday makeup skills that enhance their natural beauty,” she says.*

**As she speaks, there is no doubt: the woman before us is proof that so much power comes with the journey of aging, not in spite of the years, but because of them.** With time comes a confidence that no longer needs external validation, a kind of wisdom that can’t be rushed, and a beauty that radiates from a woman fully at home in her own skin.

*“I am proud of the woman I am today, and I am determined to rise even higher,” Rlynda says. “My journey is one of empowerment, courage, and unwavering self-love. The future is bright, and I am ready to shine.”*

**And with that, she offers a lesson for us all: that beauty at this stage is layered.** Yes, it’s in the glow of your skin and the curve of your style, but also in the stories etched into every laugh line, and in the strength carried through every scar. This is the gift of midlife; the ability to honor every version of yourself while still looking forward with excitement. Aging, in her hands, is not about resisting change, but embracing it, allowing it to expand the definition of who we are and falling for all of it.



Photo by Cindy Ralat /  
Ralat Photography



## ***This or That?***

**One non-negotiable beauty ritual that makes you feel beautiful no matter what life throws your way?**

My morning skin care routine

**Go to song when you need an instant mood boost?**

Sade's "Cherish the Day"

**One fashion trend you'll never give up, no matter what age?**

Little black dress

**Heels or sneakers?**

Heels

**A nude lip or a bold red lip?**

Bold red lips





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# The Beauty of The Slower Climb

## *Success That Honors Your Nervous System*

BY ARDENNA DOWNING

For the woman choosing sustainability over burnout.

### **The Culture of Hustle**

In the Western world, we are inundated with phrases like “Time is money” and “The early bird catches the worm.” These sayings give off the impression of an endless fast paced cultural environment of “grinding” and if you wait too long opportunities can pass you by. [Roberts and Karatsoreos](#) (2021) reviewed brain body responses to stress, and have indicated that certain stressors such as unstable social environments, can lead to burnout.

### **Learning Your Rhythm**

When we focus on the image of success, we sometimes fail to understand the importance of pacing so we don't lose sight of ourselves in the process. Working towards success is not a race, or a sprint, it



## *A slower climb can be sustainable and healthy, benefiting you more in the long run.*



can feel more like a marathon. To be successful it's important to take into consideration your needs, strengths, abilities, weaknesses, obstacles and realistic human capacity. When taking all of this into account, you begin to learn about your "rhythm;" your patterns that contribute to some sustainability.

Learning your rhythm takes time; it includes understanding what motivates you and contributes to optimal and impaired self while you work towards success, whatever that may be. We cannot learn our rhythm to success if we don't take the time to slow down from time to time. When we act too quickly, we are more likely to overlook small details that can greatly contribute towards goal achievement. The truth is, if we are used to impulsive decisions influenced by anxiety and premature pressure to succeed, we may miss what is critical to our overall

well-being, including a balanced nervous system.

### **The Nervous System Connection**

Speaking of anxiety, you know that your nervous system is tied into all of this right? Our nervous system is sensitive to the inner and outer workings of our world; i.e. sounds, thoughts, physical experiences, emotional responses, etc. As mentioned earlier, what does the nervous system of an optimal or impaired person look, feel, and act like?

Stress is inevitable when working towards success and some of it can be helpful to move ourselves into action. However, overwhelming prolonged stress influenced by fast paced efforts can wreak havoc on our nervous system.

### **The Cost of Sacrifice**

The choices that we engage in to "get ahead" quickly such as diminished sleep,

living off of caffeine, working unrealistic hours, and cutting corners to get the job done all in the name of being successful can have a significant negative impact. Initially engaging in these choices may seem worth it as our beliefs about sacrifices override signals from our nervous system struggling to keep up with everything.

A slower climb can be sustainable and healthy, benefiting you more in the long run. Sure, the "here and now" pace is appealing and tempting, but the slow climb contributes to a more fulfilling life.

### **When Survival Mode Takes Over**

When we don't pace ourselves, we may find that we spend more time overcorrecting and fixing situations due to overstimulation, burnout, and breakdown as opposed to keeping a steady pace. Our mentality may also suffer; when too overstimulated, our nervous systems may enter into survival mode. This survival mode can look like hypervigilance, rigid thought patterns that keep us stuck, difficulty with healthy decision making, and sometimes shutdown.

For the neurodivergent folks, our nervous systems can easily become overwhelmed compared to others, so slowing our pace with the intention of understanding triggers, what helps, and contributes to ongoing stress is important. It is hard to focus on our endeavors when there is "too much noise" literally and metaphorically.

### **Anchors for Balance**

Our nervous systems constantly seek homeostasis; a stable environment.

In order to help ourselves achieve this, it is imperative that we develop and implement realistic patterns and choices in our day to day lives to sustain us. One way to think of this is identifying and using your "anchors." Anchors are consistent stable parts of our lives that keep us grounded and strengthened, despite ever changing circumstances.

The more stable and consistent we are with our anchors, the more prepared we are to reflect and regulate our physical, mental and emotional states.

Anchoring yourself into routines that support balance, decreases distraction

and contributes to positive deposits into your nervous system can be helpful in staving off burnout. For some this looks like prayer, a morning walk, meditation, silence, breathing exercises, etc. to contribute to daily balance.

It is helpful to anchor as much as you can as you can't control a lot of variables to success. Even this process can be a slow climb as you engage in trial and error to determine what works for you and your nervous system.

### Practical Steps for a Slower Climb

So how do we climb at a slower pace while also still being successful? In no particular order we can:

- developing flexible goals,
- compromise with self and circumstances,
- plan for obstacles and setbacks,
- rev up your anchors to keep you balanced, along with
- monitor and change unhealthy thought patterns that contribute to burnout.

Flexible goals include giving yourself a range of time as opposed to a very specific time frame to complete tasks and steps. For instance, instead of aiming for completing a task once a week on a specific day like a Monday, invite yourself to complete the task on any given day of that week; as long as it's done. This will not work for time sensitive circumstances, but when you have flexibility use it! This helps free up unrealistic expectations when you aren't able to complete something on a very rigid schedule.

Compromising with self and circumstances essentially means finding a middle ground of where you are currently and your capabilities. If there is a fast tracked goal in mind for instance, identify what you are willing to change to meet that goal at a slower pace; taking into consideration realistic effort and energy. When you reflect in this way, you will find that you are strengthening your ability to balance your needs and wants, while still working towards your goal.

### Examining Beliefs and Thought Patterns

Evaluating your beliefs influenced by your history and culture can help you understand the origins of the nonstop "hustle and bustle" spirit. For instance, asking one's self the following questions can be helpful: What beliefs and values do you have about success and pacing yourself? Where did this originate from; i.e. family role modeling, work experiences, etc? What keeps these beliefs and values strongly operating in your life? How can you realistically pivot from them if they

induce too much stress and pressure?

There are ways to detect harmful belief and thought patterns that can contribute to doubt and uncertainty when forging your own path at your own pace. One way is to listen to your internal dialogue. Notice any rigid language associated with your thoughts and beliefs such as "should, and must." For instance, if you notice that "I must complete this goal by tomorrow, or I should have done this by now" becomes the dominant vibe of your internal dialogue, then there may be concerns. Noticing and tracking this can provide an opportunity to shift to a more adaptive attitude and thought patterns. Flexible thinking tends to give more room for pivoting which is important on any journey to success. This is in alignment with taking breaks and recalculating when needed instead of "pushing through" when it is not best.

### Listening to Your Body

Another way to detect too much stress and pressure is to pay attention to how your body may respond to anticipated choices. In Yevhenii Lozovyi's book: [\*Somatic Therapy Workbook: Exercises to Treat Trauma, Complex PTSD and Dissociation\*](#), there is an emphasis on awareness and engagement of the body to reduce stress and help regulate your nervous system. One exercise from this book explores asking yourself a question while scanning parts of the body, seeking a response and/or answer. Oftentimes our bodies are our first indicators of our authentic self and true feelings and when we listen, we are accessing the state of our nervous system as well. Noticing how your nervous system responds to your thoughts, feelings, and choices can provide valuable information to how you approach success.

### Honoring Your Pace

When you are connected to your nervous system, you are able to listen to and honor your pace amongst the noise and expectations of society, culture, family and friends. A slower climb is strategic, which is imperative to long term success. Learn to support your nervous system, it will greatly thank you as you continue your life's journey. 

Lozovyi, Y. (2024, April 12). *Somatic Therapy Workbook: Exercises to treat trauma, complex PTSD and dissociation: Mindfulness, self-compassion, and the mind-body approach to reduce stress and heal trauma* (218 pages) [Paperback]. Fiola Publishing

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# Launching After 40

## *The Rise of the Midlife Mogul*

BY GLENNY ROSARIO, CERTIFIED LIFE COACH

### **The Women Who Raised Me**

As a young girl, I grew up watching my mom, my aunts, and my grandmother juggle housework and jobs—devoting their lives to their kids, husbands, and families. Then somewhere around 50, the kids got married, they retired, and many of them faded into the background of everyone else's lives. Some became full-time babysitters for their grandkids. Others quietly surrendered their femininity, dreams, and passion for the future.

### My Mother Broke the Mold

Then one day, my mother did the unthinkable. After 30 years of marriage and four grown children living their own lives, she decided to get divorced and go back to work. This woman didn't speak English and never had a formal career—she'd worked in factories her whole life. But she did it.

She told us plainly:

*"I'm going to live my life the way I want—and I'm not babysitting your kids."*

She became certified as a home attendant, got a job caring for an elderly woman, and even enrolled in English classes. In the process, she met someone new, remarried, and lived a joyful 15 years before she passed away. She has always been my inspiration.

### My Turn to Leap — The Internal Struggle

When I decided to change my life at 42, I hit a wall of internal resistance. I had spent so long prioritizing others—my children, my husband, my community—that I no longer knew what I wanted.

I battled thoughts like:

*"I'm too old to start again."*

*"Who's going to listen to me now?"*

*"I should just settle."*

Despite the fear, I enrolled in coaching certifications, started building a business, began writing, and launched my podcast, Manifesting Mamas. But it wasn't smooth. For almost five years, it felt more like stumbling than soaring. I was often frustrated, lost, and unsure whether this path was even meant for me.

Eventually, I went deeper—unpacking what society taught me, what family expected, and how I'd been conditioned to always help others before myself. I had to rediscover my own desires, clarify my vision, and shift my mindset.

That slow, intentional journey became unstoppable.

So if you feel stuck now—trust me, I've been there. It's messy. It takes time. But you can do it too.

### Midlife Muses: Women Who Prove It's Never Too Late

#### Grandma Moses: A Late Bloomer Who Blossomed

Born Anna Mary Robertson Moses, Grandma Moses didn't start painting until she was 78—after arthritis made embroidery too difficult. What began as a simple hobby became a celebrated art career. Her work was eventually recognized by The New York Times and museums around the world. ([Wikipedia](#))

#### Mary Kay Ash: Building an Empire at 45

Mary Kay Ash launched Mary Kay Cosmetics at age 45, after years of being passed over for promotions in male-dominated corporate settings. She borrowed \$5,000 from her son and started her company in 1963. Within a year, it turned a profit.

Her Golden Rule—"Make every person feel important"—became the foundation of a global empire that still empowers millions. ([marykay.com](#), [biography.com](#))

#### Martha Stewart: Reinvention at Midlife and Beyond

Martha Stewart launched a catering business in her mid-30s, wrote best-selling cookbooks in her 40s and 50s, and founded Martha Stewart Living in 1990. She took her company public in 1997 and became the first self-made female billionaire in the U.S. by 1999.

Even after a legal setback in the early 2000s, she came back stronger—reclaiming her platform in publishing, TV, and e-commerce into her 70s and 80s. ([Bejarano, 2016](#), [Wikipedia](#))

#### Vera Wang: Fashioning Success in Her 40s

Vera Wang didn't design her first wedding dress until she was 40. Before that, she was a figure skater, then a fashion editor at Vogue, and later worked at Ralph Lauren. After designing her own wedding dress out of necessity, she opened a bridal boutique in New York and launched what would become one of the most influential bridal and eveningwear brands in the world.

Today, her name is synonymous with elegance and reinvention. ([Wikipedia](#), [forbes.com](#))

#### Why Late Starts Matter

All of these women—my mother, Grandma Moses, Mary Kay, Martha Stewart, Vera Wang—launched or reinvented major chapters of their lives well past what culture considers the "prime" age.

Why? Because by midlife, many of us have emotional maturity, a clearer sense of purpose, and the resilience to stand in our truth.

#### Why Women Still Feel "Too Old"

Too many women still carry the belief: *"I've missed my moment."*

I hear it all the time in my coaching practice. But these are false limits. I'm living proof—and so are these women—that it's never too late. 



#### Life Begins Now

The truth is: life doesn't end at 40 or 50. It actually starts.

If no one has told you lately:

You are not too old.  
You are not too late.  
You are not behind.

You are just getting started.  
The best chapter of your life is the one you're brave enough to write next.

Fall in love with who you're becoming.

With love and possibility,  
Glenny Rosario

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**PRITI PATEL**

Redefining

*Aging,*

Redefining

*You*



At 52, Priti Patel has not only embraced each chapter of her own life with grace, but she's also dedicated her career to helping other women do the same. As the co-founder of Revitalize SkinMD, Waco's #1 voted medspa, Priti blends medical expertise with a deeply personal philosophy: aging beautifully is less about chasing youth and more about feeling at home in your own skin. With a focus on subtle, natural enhancements, she empowers her clients to align how they look on the outside with how they feel on the inside; confident, radiant, and unapologetically themselves.

This Fall, as we celebrate "Every Chapter, Every Change, and Every Age," Priti embodies the essence of aging gracefully. She believes beauty is not defined by erasing lines or turning back the clock, but by embracing the evolution of each decade with gratitude, care, and confidence. Through her medspa and her own personal journey, she encourages women to see cosmetic treatments not as a mask, but as a tool for highlighting their best selves. For Priti, the true art of aging gracefully lies in honoring every stage of life while choosing what makes you feel your very best.

**At age 52 and the co-founder of Revitalize SkinMD, how has your own personal journey shaped your philosophy on aging gracefully?**

I believe we all have the right to choose what makes us feel our best, which might mean embracing natural aging or opting for treatments like Botox and fillers. I've found that these gentle enhancements can not only smooth lines, but help you align what's inside with what's outside. It's all about confidence and feeling at home in your body.

**The theme of this issue celebrates "Every Chapter, Every Change and Every Age," how do you see beauty evolving as women move through different decades of their lives?**

I've noticed that more and more women are seeking treatments that help them look more naturally refreshed. Rather than chasing youth, I see women chasing the best version of themselves, and using aesthetic treatments to make the process of aging as graceful as possible.

**Your medspa, Revitalize SkinMD, was voted the #1 medspa in Waco, Texas. What makes your approach to cosmetic treatments unique and how do you ensure clients feel beautiful both inside and out?**

We customize all of our treatments to fit what our clients are needing, taking the time to weigh different options in order to ensure that every client receives the best possible outcome. We also believe in subtle enhancements—we never want a client to look "fake" or "plastic" but rather happy with a natural result.

**In your opinion, what's the biggest misconception people have about non-surgical cosmetic treatments like Botox, fillers, etc.?**

A lot of people believe that Botox and fillers make you look unnatural or they worry about looking overdone. In my opinion, the most important thing is making sure that





you go to an experienced medical professional for these types of treatments. A good medspa will ensure that clients receive optimal results without it looking out of place.

**You specialize in both corrective and preventive treatments. What's your best advice for women in their 20's and 30's who want to prevent or delay common skin concerns? And what about women in their 40's and beyond who may not have taken those earlier steps?**

In your 20's, it's important to make sure that not only do you establish a good skincare routine, but that you also invest in a medical-grade, broad spectrum sunscreen. These two things are absolutely critical as a foundation for great skin down the road. In addition to this groundwork, light skin resurfacing like microneedling, or lasers such as Moxi or Ultra Glow can ensure the skin stays healthy and supple. For women in their 30's, they'll want to increase the frequency of these treatments, and supplement with Botox and Dysport for any static lines, to prevent lines from getting more prominent. In their 40's, deeper laser resurfacing can help women to continue to age gracefully and prevent any concerns that may arise.

**How do you personally define "aging beautifully" and has that definition changed for you over time?**

To me, aging beautifully has always meant feeling completely at home in my own skin. Over time, my confidence has grown by embracing who I am today rather than trying to recapture who I was in my 20's, and this is something that has cemented for me even more in recent years.

**You've been in the industry for quite a while. What changes have you seen in how women approach beauty, wellness and self-care?**

In 2015, when I first started our medspa, the trend seemed to be catered towards a more obviously augmented look. Everyone wanted it to be clear that they were getting work done. Now, I see even more women getting Botox and fillers, but they prefer a more natural look that enhances the features they already have.

**With so many options in skincare and cosmetic treatments, how do you help clients find the right balance between enhancing their appearance and maintaining a natural look?**

We consult our clients with honesty and integrity, and we customize each treatment plan to suit the client's skin goals and needs without going overboard. The most important thing is making sure that our clients are happy with their results and more confident in their appearance.

**Beyond the treatments themselves, what daily habits or lifestyle choices do you personally swear by to maintain healthy, radiant skin?**

I believe that you have to take care of yourself and your health day to day in order to maintain healthy skin, including refraining from smoking, avoiding unprotected sun exposure, and having a proper diet while exercising regularly.

**If you could leave our readers with one empowering message about embracing every stage of life; lines, laugh marks and all, what would it be?**

I love the age that I'm at. Every decade of my life, I've embraced it and enjoyed it fully. In my mind, it's important to keep a positive outlook and find gratitude in every day that I get to be on this journey that we call life. Beauty is more than what's on the outside. Love yourself at whatever stage you're at and enjoy the ride.

**Morning skincare steps you never skip?**

Medical Grade Sunscreen is a skincare must. It has a higher concentration of active ingredients to protect your skin against UVA & UVB sunrays. My personal favorite is Alastin's Hydratint.

**Your guilty pleasure beauty product or treatment?**

My guilty pleasure treatment would have to be lip filler. As I am aging, I notice my lips looking dehydrated and less plump. Lip filler helps me achieve the look I want without looking overdone.

**Fall scent you can't resist, pumpkin spice, warm vanilla or crisp apple?**

Pumpkin spice is one of my favorite fall scents.

**Coffee, tea or water to start your day?**

I love two cups of coffee every morning.

**Go to comfort food when you need a pick me up?**

I love a good cheese pizza. 🍕

# JOY LIFE COUNSELING BLACK MOTHERS WELLNESS PROGRAM



## PURPOSE

Are you a new or seasoned mother looking for support and community? Joy Life Counseling proudly presents a Wellness Program tailored exclusively for Black mothers. We understand the unique beauty and challenges of your journey, and our program is designed to support your well-being every step of the way.

## SERVICES

- Group therapy (children 0-3 years old)
- Group therapy (children 4-18+)
- Individual therapy
- EMDR
- LENS Neurofeedback
- Yoga

## GROUP THERAPY TOPICS

### Moms with Children 0-3

- Postpartum Recovery
- Mental Health
- Basic Newborn Care
- Self-Care for Mom
- Relationships & Support
- Returning to Work & Children
- Finding Yourself Again

### Moms with Children 4-18

- Mental Health
- Self-Care for Mom
- Relationships & Support
- Parenting Challenges
- Work/Life Balance
- Identity Beyond Motherhood
- Support Network

## INFORMATION

### WHERE

In-person at Joy Life Counseling  
2953 S Peoria St #110  
Aurora, CO 80014

### COST

Free



## THERAPISTS



Veronica Mugi



Joy Ewing

APPLY BY EMAIL OR PHONE:  
JOYLIFECOUNSELING@GMAIL.COM  
(720) 815-5251

# LETTING GO TO GROW

*When Outgrowing  
Friendships is a Good Thing*

BY RENE MONDY, LPC

I've spent more than two decades helping women navigate life transitions as a therapist. And as a Black woman who has walked through divorce, remarriage, and shifting circles of friendship, I know firsthand what it feels like when the people you once leaned on don't quite fit anymore.

When I divorced 15 years ago, my girlfriends were my lifeline. We had Saturday brunch rituals with strawberry waffles and fried chicken at my house, comfort food that helped me heal. They were my confidantes, my cheerleaders, my "we've got you" circle. But when I later met my now-husband, things shifted. The phone calls slowed. The brunches fizzled. By the time I announced my engagement, I could feel the air change. I got congratulations, but it felt hollow, like I was celebrating in a room full of strangers who looked like my closest friends.

Some eventually admitted they resented the changes. Others said we simply grew apart. Both were true. Both stung. And both taught me something that's now at the heart of my work with women, friendships evolve just like romantic relationships. Sometimes they last a lifetime. Sometimes they're seasonal. And sometimes, letting go is exactly what makes room for growth.

## Signs a Friendship May Be Shifting

When I sit with clients struggling through these changes, I help them pay attention to the signs:

- You leave interactions drained instead of nourished. If being together feels like work or like you're competing for attention, something's off.
- The love doesn't flow both ways. You pour in energy, calls, support, showing up, but it isn't returned.



- Life changes are met with distance or judgment. That spark of cheerleading is gone.
- There's no room to grow. Conversations feel heavy, and connecting feels harder than it should.

But here's the nuance. Not every shift means a friendship is over. Sometimes it's burnout. Sometimes grief. Sometimes life transitions that need tending. That's why I encourage clients to pause before making assumptions.

Ask yourself:

- Have I truly checked in with them?
- Could they be carrying something I don't know about?
- Is this an ending, or just a new season?

According to psychologist and friendship researcher Dr. Marisa Franco, author of *Platonic: How the Science of Attachment Can Help You Make—and Keep—Friends*, friendships require ongoing intentionality, especially through major life changes. She notes efforts should be made to learn a friend's love language. "People want to be and stay friends with people who value them, and generosity is a way to express that," Franco says. (source: [NPR interview](#) with Marisa Franco, 2022).

### How to Move Through the Shift

If, after honest reflection, you realize a friendship has reached its natural close, grief is part of the process. Yes, grief. Author Guyan Yankovich examines the unique pain of friendship breakups in the Teen Vogue article, *Friendship Breakups Can Be Just As Painful as Romantic Ones. Here's Why*. (source: [Teen Vogue](#), G. Yankovich, 2024) I know first hand, that pain is real.

Here are markers that healing is happening:

- **You can reflect without blame.** I still make those strawberry waffles, not with bitterness, but as a celebration of the women who carried me through.
- **You've grieved the loss.** Tears, journaling, therapy, whatever helps you honor the space that friendship once held.



“

FRIENDSHIPS  
EVOLVE JUST  
LIKE ROMANTIC  
RELATIONSHIPS.

- **You're curious, not critical.** You've learned what you need in a friend, and you're open to new connections that align with who you are now.
- **You still carry love.** Even when the friendship ends, you can miss someone without holding them hostage in your heart. That's powerful growth.

### Growing Through Goodbye

The lesson I carry, and offer to my clients is that outgrowing friendships doesn't make you selfish. It makes you aware. It teaches you the value of reciprocity, of boundaries, of choosing connections that feel life giving.

My circle is smaller today, but it's richer. I show up more intentionally for my best friend now because I know what it feels like to lose that rhythm. I love harder, I listen better, and I let go sooner when the season has run its course.

Letting go isn't about abandonment. It's about growth. And in that space, the best friendships, the ones that fit the woman you're becoming can bloom. 🌱

George, K., & Douglas, S. (2024, September 20). *How to show your friends you care about them*. NPR Life Kit. <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/01/1120550646/how-to-show-your-friends-you-love-them-according-to-a-friendship-expert>

Yankovich, G. (2024, September 18). *Friendship Breakups Can Be Just As Painful as Romantic Ones. Here's Why*. Teen Vogue. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/friendship-breakups-can-be-just-as-painful-as-romantic-ones-heres-why>







# The Art of Reinvention:

## *Six Conversations That Remind Us That Reinvention is an Inside Job*

Fall is a season of change; a time when letting go makes space for what's next. In that spirit, we sat down with six extraordinary women who have each embraced the art of letting go and welcoming what's next. These conversations remind us that change isn't just about starting over, but about stepping more fully into who we've always been meant to be.

From career leaps to international moves, each woman shares what it means to fall into herself with courage, clarity, and grace. For some it was a choice, for others it was a calling. For all of them, it became a powerful journey of alignment. This is reinvention; raw, powerful, deeply personal and proof that every chapter and every age holds the possibility of something beautiful.

# Cheryl Haynes

Age Range: 50s

Executive Coach

*Authentic - On-purpose - Blessed*



## **What sparked this reinvention; was it a choice, crisis or calling?**

For me, it was a rare combination of all three. When the company I served as CHRO (chief human resource officer) was acquired, I had a moment of truth. With a generous severance and the gift of time, I could have rested, but instead, I chose to listen to a deeper calling. I'd long felt drawn to executive coaching, and the timing felt too aligned, too ripe with possibility, not to act. It was a leap of faith, but one that honored who I am and what I've always believed leadership should be about: growing others, not just guiding them.

## **What has surprised you most about this new chapter in your life?**

I assumed that once I had more control over my time, I'd automatically devote more of it to myself and my health. But I've learned that habits built over a lifetime, especially those shaped by corporate pace and people-pleasing, take time to unlearn. I'm still working on investing in myself with the same intention I bring to my clients. What's surprised me most is that even in this chapter of autonomy, the work, both inner and outer, continues. But the difference now? It's deeply personal and powerfully aligned.

## **How has your relationship with yourself changed (mind, body and soul)?**

I've become more mindful of how I show up. I nourish my body, and I honor my inner voice. Coaching others has been a mirror for me. In helping clients lead with clarity, I've had to confront my own blind spots. The most profound shift has been on the soul-level. I now feel an authentic alignment between the work I do and the person I've always aspired to be. This has been nothing short of transformational.

## **How has this reinvention increased your confidence?**

When you work for yourself, you quickly learn the meaning behind the phrase "time is money" and that your expertise has a tangible worth. I've become fiercely protective of both. This chapter has taught me how to own my value without apology. There's a quiet confidence that comes from building something from the ground up, from turning uncertainty into clarity, and from knowing you're making a meaningful impact on others, on your own terms.

## **How did you handle any doubt you experienced when you started to reinvent yourself?**

I reminded myself that every "overnight success" has years of unseen effort behind it. Reinvention isn't a clean break; it's a series of recommitments.

I also returned often to my personal "why": to leave people better than I found them. As an HR (human resource) leader, I sometimes struggled to fully live that value amid competing corporate priorities. Now, as a coach, I get to do this every day, with intention. That purpose steadied me when doubt crept in.

## **What advice would you give someone who is afraid to start over?**

Don't think of it as starting over. Think of it as reclaiming yourself. Reinvention doesn't mean abandoning your past; it means honoring it while choosing your future with

greater clarity. Get curious. Do the inner work. Ask yourself not just what you're good at, but what feels meaningful. Then take one step. Then another. You don't have to know the whole path, just trust that it's worth walking.

## **Give us three words you would use to describe how you feel in this chapter of your life.**

Authentic. On-purpose. Blessed.

# Dawn Belisle

Age Range: 50s

Pastry Chef/Owner of  
Delights by Dawn

*Peaceful - Happy - Fortunate*

## **What sparked this reinvention; was it a choice, a crisis or a calling?**

This was a choice. When I started traveling more I realized how much I didn't know and how much more there was to learn about the WORLD. I have always felt like I was not going to live my latter years in the U.S. but I didn't really plan for it. Having been married, having a child (one son) and then divorced, I knew I wanted to start living my life for myself when I turned 50. I had done everything and took care of others and it was time for me to take care of myself and do the things I wanted to do.

## **What has surprised you most about this new chapter of your life?**

What has surprised me is how lucky I have been to find people here in France that are now my friends and family. I would never have thought that at this age I would be allowing new people into my life. But my new friends/family have given me a true sense of peace, authenticity and happiness that I didn't really feel with many people in the U.S. The surprise has been discovering that family is not always the family you were born into but the family you choose.

## **How has your relationship with yourself changed (mind, body and soul)?**

My relationship with myself started changing in my 40's and I continued to make changes through time. Moving abroad has changed my relationship with myself in the sense that I now value my time, my peace and my happiness more than ever before which contributes to my making better decisions on what I want and who I want to be a part of my life. I feel more in touch with nature like I have never felt before and I now enjoy being present and living in the moment.

## **How has this reinvention increased your confidence?**

I have always been confident and had a strong personality. I would say it helped me to increase my appreciation for the smaller things I always felt were important to me but trivialized them in the past because I didn't think they were that important to make a big deal over them. Now I realize how important those things were to me and no matter how small or trivial it may be to others, it is of great importance to me and my spirit and I no longer allow them to be devalued by myself or others.

## **How did you handle any doubt you experienced as you started to reinvent yourself?**

I just took a look at my life and what I have accomplished so far and my successes and continued to push on. I learned



that the mind feeds off of doubt and fear and I make a concerted effort to push through those fears and doubts when they arise. I also use meditation a lot to calm my mind and move with a sense of my true purpose.

## **What advice would you give to someone who is afraid to start over?**

Fear will keep you in a comfort zone or box. If you remain in that zone or box you can't grow and develop into your true self. Do not allow your fears/doubts or anyone else's fears or doubts to prevent you from discovering your true being and purpose. Look at it as an adventure

learning new things, places, etc. that will add to your life experiences, true potential and happiness.

## **Give us three words you would use to describe how you feel in this chapter of your life?**

Peaceful, happy and fortunate.

# Deseri Kelley

Age Range: 40s

Founder of Women's Handbag  
and Accessory Brand, DESERI

*Compassionate - Purposeful - Empowered*



Photo by Kauwuane Burton

## **What sparked this reinvention; was it a choice, a crisis or a calling?**

It was a calling—one that had been whispering to me for years. Working in education, especially as the Assistant Director of an international school in Barcelona, was deeply fulfilling. But I always knew I had something else to create—something personal, expressive, and powerful. Fashion has always been a love of mine, and the idea of telling stories through luxury design kept tugging at me. Eventually, I couldn't ignore it anymore. It wasn't a crisis that pushed me—it was a deep pull toward purpose.

## **What has surprised you most about this new chapter of your life?**

I've been most surprised by how natural it feels, even in the unknown. You'd think starting over in a completely different industry would feel chaotic, but instead, it's been grounding. I've also been amazed by the support from women—especially Black women—who've championed DESERI from the very beginning. That sisterhood and solidarity have been such a gift.

## **How has your relationship with yourself changed (mind, body and soul)?**

I've grown so much more compassionate with myself. I no longer strive for perfection—I strive for alignment. Mindfully protecting my peace, honoring my creativity, listening to

my body when it says "rest," and nurturing my spirit have become non-negotiables. I used to operate in overdrive; now I operate in intention.

## **How has this reinvention increased your confidence?**

When I walk into a room and see women wearing DESERI—choosing my designs to express themselves—it fills me with a confidence that's not performative, but deeply rooted. Reinvention taught me that confidence doesn't come from having all the answers; it comes from trusting yourself enough to begin anyway.

## **How did you handle any doubt you experienced as you started to reinvent yourself?**

I talked back to it. Loudly. I reminded myself of everything I've already survived, learned, and accomplished. Doubt may visit, but it doesn't get to unpack. I also leaned on faith, my husband Kevin's unwavering belief in me, and the example I want to set for my sons—that reinvention is not only possible but powerful.

## **What advice would you give to someone who is afraid to start over?**

Do it scared. You don't need the whole blueprint—just the courage to take the next step. Starting over isn't failure—it's freedom. You're not starting from scratch; you're starting from experience.

## **Give us three words you would use to describe how you feel in this chapter of your life?**

Compassionate, Purposeful, Empowered

# Dr. Sonal Bhatia

Age Range: 50s

Founder of Ojas Vida

*Aligned - Liberated - Radiant*

## **What sparked this reinvention; was it a choice, crisis or calling?**

It was all three. After two decades in a high-powered career as a Chief Medical Officer, I hit a wall of exhaustion that felt like a crisis. But in that stillness, I heard what I now recognize as a calling: a quiet but undeniable voice urging me to live and lead differently. Ultimately, I made a conscious choice to honor that voice, return to school to study Ayurveda and Integrative Health, and build a new chapter that feels deeply aligned with who I am today. Through this journey I also discovered that my ancestor, paternal grandfather, was an Ayurveda practitioner in his day, and I am honored to be entrusted with his gifts, which was a pleasant discovery.

## **What has surprised you most about this new chapter in your life?**

That midlife reinvention isn't about shrinking or slowing down—it's about expanding. I thought I would feel "less than" by walking away from titles and corporate accolades, but instead I feel richer, more creative, and more alive than ever.

The biggest surprise? Joy doesn't just return—it multiplies when you start living in alignment with your truth.

## **How has your relationship with yourself changed (mind, body and soul)?**

For the first time in my life, I listen to myself before I listen to the world. I've learned to nourish my body with seasonal rhythms, quiet my mind with daily rituals, and reconnect with my soul through practices that ground me in purpose. I am no longer just achieving; I am receiving—space, energy, and deep self-trust. This gives me the energy and ability to create my business with pride, joy and love.

## **How has this reinvention increased your confidence?**

I no longer measure myself by external markers of success or the traditional metrics. My confidence comes from knowing I can rewrite my story at any age—and thrive. Reinvention showed me that courage isn't the absence of fear; it's the decision to move forward with it. That realization has made me unshakable in ways my former titles never could.

## **How did you handle any doubt you experienced when you started to reinvent yourself?**

I treated doubt like a traveling companion rather than an enemy. I acknowledged it, I felt it, I honored it but I didn't hand it the steering wheel. Instead, I focused on one step at a time—enrolling in my Ayurveda program, creating my first client offering, and surrounding myself with mentors and a



Photo Credit: Priyanca Rao - [www.priyanca.com](http://www.priyanca.com)

supportive community who reminded me that reinvention is not only possible, it's powerful.

## **What advice would you give someone who is afraid to start over?**

Start small, but start. You don't need the full map—just the courage to take the first step. Reinvention isn't about abandoning your past; it's about carrying the wisdom of the past into a new chapter that is only yours. Trust that it's never too late to begin again, and that every age, every wrinkle, and every lesson is an asset, not a setback.

## **Give us three words you would use to describe how you feel in this chapter of your life.**

Aligned. Liberated. Radiant.

# Hady Mendez

Age Range: 50s

Owner of Boldly Speaking LLC

*Compassionate - Purposeful - Empowered*

## **What sparked this reinvention; was it a choice, a crisis or a calling?**

I would say it was a crisis of sorts. When I was laid off from my tech job in January 2023, I started what I would consider a "side business" as I was looking for work. After a few months, it became evident that I was not going to get a job any time soon and that I would need to lean into my business on a full time basis in order to eat and pay bills. The moment I became a full time business owner is when the transformation started.

## **What has surprised you most about this new chapter of your life?**

I love it. It's scary because I can't predict the revenue I will bring in or how many clients will hire me at any given point, but the FREEDOM is off the charts. Plus I got the chance to become a solo author for the first time in my life at the age of 55. That's something I could never have predicted, or even thought I wanted for myself, yet here I am!

## **How has your relationship with yourself changed (mind, body and soul)?**

I'm happy. I get to align my choices with my purpose and values. I'm responsible for how hard I work, who I chose to partner with, and how much effort I want to put into a project or initiative. I get to try things I like that may or may not work but that bring me peace and joy. There's nothing

like it. I'm a new woman. I learned to depend 100% on me and I have delivered!

## **How has this reinvention increased your confidence?**

I'm no longer counting on other people to assign a value to what I bring to the table. I already know my value. I can trust myself to try new things or hard things and even if I don't succeed, I love that I put myself out there. Especially at this age. I'm still learning a lot and I'm not afraid to partner or co-create with younger people or folks that are different from me. I have found collaborators in many unexpected places.

## **How did you handle any doubt you experienced as you started to reinvent yourself?**

It was really scary at first. I wanted to give up so many times. But it really wasn't an option. I had to find a way to make it work. It was sad when some of my friends or past colleagues didn't show up for me. I learned to be positive and steadfast and to trust that what is meant for me will not pass me by.

## **What advice would you give to someone who is afraid to start over?**

Girl, do it. Be brave. You never know what you will uncover or discover. There is life beyond the world you know. There is growth in the discomfort. On the other side of fear lies so much possibility.



Photo by Dee Dee Thompson

## **Give us three words you would use to describe how you feel in this chapter of your life?**

Powerful, aligned, and impactful.

# Judia Black

Age Range: 60s

Founder of enJoie and  
Certified Sommelier

*Hopeful - Strong - Free*

## **What sparked this reinvention; was it a choice, a crisis or a calling?**

All three. Reinvention has been a constant in my life, always born of necessity. After earning my MBA and working 12 years in for-profit and nonprofit roles, I chose to start a family. My nonprofit employer didn't offer maternity leave, so I resigned during my third trimester. Freelance consulting followed, but the irregular hours conflicted with caring for my baby. I stepped back, choosing my child's development over my career.

During that time, I pursued passions in photography and wine, earning a sommelier certification in 2001. But life shifted again; first with the stillbirth of my second child, then the devastation of 9/11. Living in lower Manhattan, my family's safety became the priority. After a high-risk pregnancy, I welcomed another daughter in 2003 and embraced my calling as a devoted mother.

When both girls were in school, I launched enJoie, a wine education and event company that blended my business background with my love of entertaining. For a decade, it thrived. Then COVID-19 forced another reinvention; pivoting to gifts, virtual events, blogs, and vlogs. Though

I adapted, the economic fallout was hard to overcome. With both daughters grown, I left NYC in 2024 to return to Atlanta, spend time with my mother, and reimagine my next chapter.

## **What has surprised you most about this new chapter in your life?**

I've gained a deeper appreciation for who I am. In the past, I was thin-skinned and easily affected by others' opinions. Now I see my strength and resilience. Despite imperfections, I know I'm capable of handling anything life brings.

## **How has your relationship with yourself changed (mind, body and soul)?**

I'm gentler with myself. Mentally, I value downtime as much as productivity, knowing rest sparks creativity. Physically, I stay consistent with moderate exercise and mindful eating without obsessing over aging. Spiritually, I focus on uplifting content, positive people, and practices that keep me grounded.

## **How has this reinvention increased your confidence?**

As a wife, mother, and entrepreneur, I often put others first and struggled to say no. Dissatisfaction from others felt like failure. Now, as a divorcee and empty-nester, I've learned to protect my time and invest in what fulfills me. Returning to my hometown reminds me how far I've come and deepens my



Photo by Keith Major

gratitude for the foundation my family and community gave me.

## **How did you handle any doubt you experienced as you started to reinvent yourself?**

Confiding in family members, close friends, psychotherapy, prayer and exercise were all helpful to sort through my thoughts and feelings and clear my mind when I felt overwhelmed or incapacitated. Also reflecting on past challenges and how I overcame them to move through earlier stages of life to achieve success helped me realize I could do it again.

## **What advice would you give to another woman who is afraid to start over?**

You'll never know what's possible until you try!

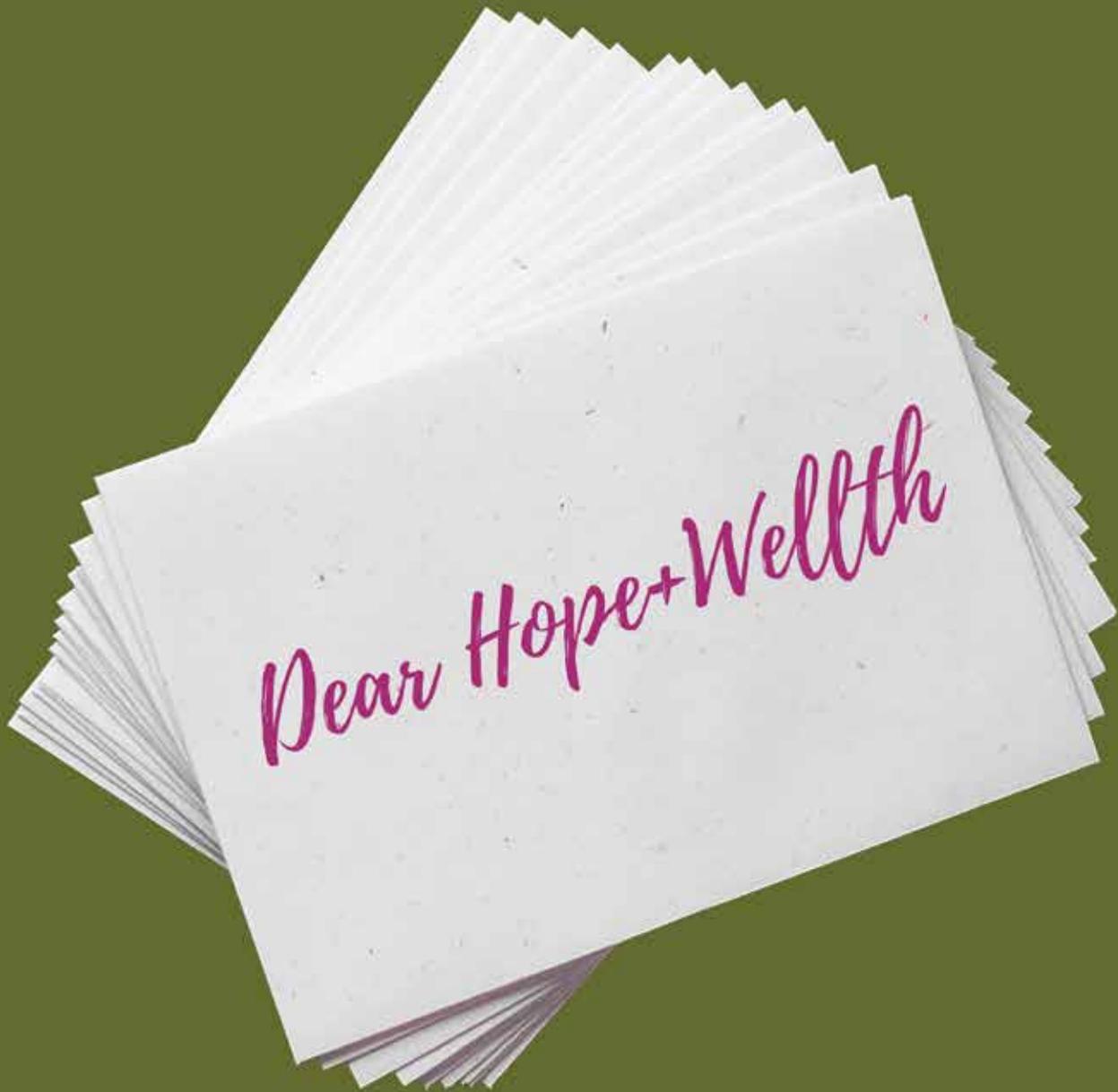
## **Give us three words you would use to describe how you feel in this chapter of your life?**

Hopeful, Strong, Free

# Dear Hope+Wellth

Welcome to the “Dear Hope+Wellth” section of Hope+Wellth Magazine, where our experts are here to answer all your burning questions on topics that matter most to you! Whether you’re curious about navigating mental health challenges, building healthier relationships, boosting your nutrition, enhancing your style and confidence, managing grief, cultivating wellness in the workplace or staying fit, we’ve got you covered. Our goal is to provide practical, compassionate advice to help you live your best, most balanced life.

We invite you to share your questions with us at [dearhope@hopeandwellth.com](mailto:dearhope@hopeandwellth.com). No topic is too big or too small – we’re here to listen and offer guidance tailored to your unique needs. Your question could be featured in an upcoming issue, helping not only you but also others who may be facing similar challenges. So go ahead, ask away! We’re excited to hear from you and support you on your journey to hope and well-being.



# *I'm dreaming of a new career but I'm terrified to take the leap. How do I know when it's time to pivot professionally?*

## **Dear Terrified to Take the Leap,**

What you're feeling is completely natural!

I've been exactly where you are – several times. I've left academia after earning my PhD, stepped out of a high-impact non-profit role, and walked away from a startup I co-founded. Each time, it looked risky from the outside. Each time, it felt terrifying from the inside. And yet, each time I knew: staying would cost me more than leaving.

One of those moments came late at night in my university office. I'd spent years traveling for research, interviewing people in remote mountain villages, and producing work I'd once dreamed of. But as I sat at my desk surrounded by books, drafting another grant proposal, I felt nothing.

That was my signal that it was time to pivot: the life I had built no longer fit the person I'd become.

## **Why the "safe choice" can still be risky**

We're taught to think of staying in a steady role as the responsible option. The salary arrives, the title looks good, the path is familiar. From the outside, it reads as safety. Yet over time, staying in something that no longer fits slowly erodes your energy, creativity, and confidence. What feels safe in the short term can quietly become the riskiest choice of all – because you end up trading growth for familiarity.

If you're noticing that erosion – the creeping Sunday dread, the shrinking excitement, the loss of energy – that's your signal to re-examine the trade-offs.

## **Four clear signs it's time to consider a pivot**

### **1. The cost is outweighing the benefit.**

When I left the non-profit sector, I made two lists: what the role gave me (status, impact, a strong network) and what it cost me (chronic exhaustion, evenings lost to work, no space for creativity). Seeing it on paper made it impossible to keep pretending the exchange was fair.

### **2. Your body knows before your mind admits it.**

Before stepping back from my startup, I noticed Sunday night dread creeping earlier into the weekend. At first it started in the evening, then in the afternoon, until by Saturday morning I felt the tension. Our bodies often register misalignment before we're ready to name it.

### **3. Your interests and your work are out of sync.**

Early on, my startup's work and my interests matched perfectly. But as we grew, the day-to-day often pulled me into tasks that didn't feel like my zone of genius. That growing gap between what mattered to me and how I was spending my time left me drained – and it became unsustainable.

### **4. You feel a pull toward something else, even if it's not fully formed.**

Long before I became a coach, I was spending my free time helping friends navigate big life choices. Those conversations left me more energized than anything else I was doing. That



Aliaa Remtilla, PhD  
Harvard-trained anthropologist, executive coach and startup founder

pull became impossible to ignore.

## **How to explore without burning the bridge you're on**

A pivot doesn't need to be a leap into the unknown. You can treat it as a series of structured experiments:

- **Shadow or interview people** doing the work you're curious about. Ask about their worst days as well as their best.
- **Build a side project** that lets you test your skills in a new environment. A client of mine explored writing by contributing to a small online publication before leaving her marketing job.
- **Take a short course** or join a professional group in your area of interest. This builds skills and a network before you need them.
- **Create a transition cushion** – financial savings and emotional support – so fear doesn't force you back into a role you've outgrown.

Many people discover their next step not by making a giant leap, but by following the smallest signals – a project that excites them more than expected, a conversation that sparks curiosity, or a skill they find themselves drawn to learn. Pay attention to those signals. They're your safe experiments, and over time they add up to a path that feels both tested and true.

One fear I hear often is, "If I leave, I'll be starting over." The truth? You never

start from scratch. Every role teaches you something transferable – whether it's problem-solving, communication, leadership, or resilience. My research skills from academia made me a sharper strategist in the non-profit world. My non-profit experience made me a more empathetic entrepreneur. My startup work made me a better coach.

A pivot isn't about discarding your past – it's about integrating it into something new.

## **The myth of the "perfect time"**

There is no ideal moment when the risk disappears. Life won't pause for you to change careers. There will always be bills, responsibilities, and reasons to wait. The real question is: *If nothing changes, how will I feel a year from now?*

*"You never start from scratch. Every role teaches you something transferable"*

When I've faced this question, the most powerful clarity came from imagining both scenarios: life if I stayed, and life if I left. One felt heavier, smaller, and more closed off. The other felt expansive, even if uncertain. That was my answer.

If you're wrestling with fear, don't wait for certainty. Wait for the moment when your desire for what's ahead outweighs your comfort with what's behind. That's when you're ready to take your first step – even if it's small.

And remember: the leap doesn't erase what came before. It carries it forward.

## *How do I quiet the negative self-talk that keeps telling me I'm too old, too late, too far behind?*

### Dear Quiet-Seeker,

That voice in your head? The one saying you've missed your chance? That's a part of you – and it's here for a reason.

This part believes it's doing you a favor. It's trying to keep you safe from disappointment, embarrassment, or wasting time. It probably learned this role years ago, when caution felt necessary to protect you. There's a lot to love about this part of you!

The challenge is, while it's trying to protect you, it's also keeping you from things that might bring you alive.

Here's a strategy to work with this part of you, and see if it's ready to work *with* you instead of *against*.

### Step 1: Get curious

Instead of pushing this part away, pause and ask:

- *What am I afraid might happen if I start now?*
- *What am I trying to protect myself from?*

One woman I worked with had spent two decades putting her family first – caring for children and aging parents – while working in a steady but unfulfilling job. In her 40s, when she finally considered pursuing her own dream of starting a consultancy, a voice in her head snapped, "It's too late. You should have done this years ago."

When she got curious about that voice, she realized it wasn't really about age. It was about guilt – the fear that choosing herself now meant she'd wasted the years she gave to others. Naming that fear softened it. She could see that those years weren't wasted; they had given her wisdom, resilience, and relationships she could now build her business on.

### Step 2: Let it know you're listening

Sometimes the harshest inner voices are simply parts of us that feel unheard. Try saying – out loud or in your head:

"I hear you. I know you're worried about time. I appreciate you looking out for me. And I want you to know, we're going to take this one step at a time."

Acknowledging the part doesn't mean agreeing with it. It means showing it you're paying attention. That it's seen. And its fears have been heard.

### Step 3: Make space for other voices

When the "too late" part takes over, it can drown out the parts of you that feel excited, curious, or ready. Intentionally look for them:

- The part that's energized by learning something new.
- The part that's tired of playing it safe.
- The part that wants to see what's possible.

One woman I worked with discovered her "Creative Rebel" part. That voice cared less about timelines and more about expression – and it gave her the courage to sign up for a painting class she'd been avoiding for years.

### Step 4: Design a safe experiment

If you try to leap into a huge life change, this cautious part will dig in its heels. Instead, give it proof that change can happen without disaster.

This might mean:

- Taking a short course in your new field.
- Volunteering for a project in your area of interest.
- Offering your skills on a small scale before committing to a full business.

One of my clients dreamed of starting her own wellness practice but was terrified to give up her stable career as an ER nurse. So she tried it as an experiment. Within her first two weeks, she signed two clients. That early proof gave her confidence – and she discovered a model that allowed her to keep nursing, a job she still loves, while also building a sustainable wellness business on the side. By not forcing herself to choose one over the other, she created security and freedom at the same time.

*"You're not behind.  
You're exactly where you  
are because of all you've  
lived through."*

### Step 5: Gather proof from the outside world

Look for examples of people who began later and thrived. The "too late" part thrives on comparison to early starters – so feed it different evidence.

- **Vera Wang** didn't begin her career in fashion until her 40s, after leaving a long tenure at Vogue. She went on to become one of the most celebrated bridal designers in the world ([The Times](#)).
- **Julia Child** was 37 when she started her cooking career by enrolling in Le Cordon Bleu school, and by her 50s she had become a beloved and pioneering television chef ([Amy M Haddad](#)).
- **Colonel Sanders** launched the first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in his 60s, turning it into a global empire ([New York Post](#)).

These stories show that it's not just possible – it's often advantageous to start when you have more experience, perspective, and networks.

### Step 6: Keep the dialogue open

This isn't about silencing the part. It's about making sure it's one voice in the room, not the only one. Over time, when it sees you can take steps without getting hurt, it will ease up.

I've seen this happen often – the "too late" part starts working with you, helping you make thoughtful decisions rather than shutting things down.

The truth is, you're not behind. You're exactly where you are because of all you've lived through. Those years you think of as "lost" are actually filled with data, skills, and resilience you can use now.

The point isn't to catch up. It's to start from here - with all of your parts on board.

## ***I've achieved so many things I once dreamed of, but I still feel unfulfilled. How do I reconnect with a sense of purpose?***

### **Dear Unfulfilled Achiever,**

First - congratulations. You've done what so many people never manage: you turned dreams into reality. That deserves a pause before anything else. Acknowledge it. Let yourself feel proud. This isn't a "you're doing it wrong" moment - it's a "what's next?" moment.

Feeling unfulfilled after achieving your goals is more common than most people admit. It's not because you're ungrateful or broken. It's because the dreams you had were designed by an earlier version of you. You've grown, and your dreams need to grow with you.

Here's a strategy to help you reconnect with a sense of purpose:

#### **Step 1: Audit your wins and why you wanted them**

Write down your biggest achievements. For each one, ask: *Why did I want this at the time?* You might see patterns: proving yourself to others, gaining security, belonging to a certain group.

I had a client who realized that half her proudest milestones were about gaining approval from people whose opinions no longer mattered to her. That clarity freed her to focus on goals that mattered now.

#### **Step 2: Ask what matters now**

Strip away what would impress others, or what your 15-year-old self thought would matter. Ask: *What does my current self crave?* It might be more freedom, creative expression, deeper relationships, or the chance to make an impact in a different way.

One client shifted from running a large team to a solo consultancy because what she wanted most was autonomy - something that wouldn't have excited her earlier in her career.

#### **Step 3: Reconnect with what nourishes you**

Instead of hunting for a "grand purpose," start by noticing what gives you energy and meaning in your daily life. Pay attention to what leaves you feeling nourished - a conversation that lights you up, a book that sparks ideas, time spent with people who bring out your best. These are clues.

One client began to realize her sense of purpose wasn't about a new job title at all - it came from mentoring younger women at her workplace. Another rediscovered joy in tending her garden, and that quiet act of care eventually grew into community work around food security.

Purpose often hides in the ordinary. When you learn to notice what consistently restores you, you begin to build a compass you can trust - one that points you toward what really matters now.

#### **Step 4: Make space for what's new**

If your schedule is packed with obligations that no longer energize you, there's no room for new possibilities. Drop or delegate one thing that's draining you. That space is an invitation for something better to enter.

A former client resigned from a board she'd been on for years. Within months, she'd started a community initiative that excited her in a way the board work never had.

#### **Step 5: Let your purpose evolve**

Purpose isn't fixed. It changes as you do. Instead of searching for "the thing" that will last forever, focus on what feels aligned now. Review and adjust regularly.

I've had clients who found purpose in mentoring for a few years, then shifted into creative projects, then into activism. Each phase was equally valid and deeply fulfilling in its own season.

#### **Step 6: Use both head and heart in decision-making**

When you evaluate new possibilities, notice how they feel in your body as well as how they look on paper. Fulfillment is rarely a purely intellectual decision. If an idea energizes you, expands you, or feels like relief, pay attention - even if it doesn't tick every logical box.

#### **One final thought**

Purpose isn't about chasing a single mountaintop. It's about building a landscape you want to live in every day. That landscape will change as you do - and that's not a failure, it's a sign of a life fully lived. 

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***"You don't need to fix what's 'wrong.' You just need to update the map so it matches the person you are now."***

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# We're Bringing Sexy Back

*Hot, Whole and Fully You is Sexy at Every Age*

BY ALEXANDRA GARRETT

Sexy is not about youth, smooth skin, or tight dresses. Sexy is about confidence, wholeness, and living fully in the skin you're in - no matter your age.

We've all done it: flipped through old pictures, stared at the glow of your skin, the carefree energy that seemed to radiate from us back then. For a moment, we think: "Was that the last time I was sexy?"

Here's the truth: sexy didn't stay in those photos. She didn't vanish with age. She evolved with you.

Sexy isn't frozen in a moment from the past. It grows - just like you do.

As we age, so do our priorities. Youth may have been about chasing attention, trends, or approval. But now? We're focused on building success - family, marriage, education, good health, stability, and peace of mind.

And yet, the desire to feel sexy doesn't disappear. It changes form. Sexy is no longer about who notices you - it's about how you notice yourself. It's walking into a room with the quiet power of someone who knows exactly who she is.

## Let's Redefine Sexy for Every Age

So, what does sexy mean when it's not tied to youth alone?

**Sexy is confidence.** Owning your decisions and carrying yourself with pride.

**Sexy is presence.** Commanding a room without needing to shout.

**Sexy is joy.** Laughter, energy, and a glow that comes from within.

**Sexy is self-care.** Honoring your body with rest, nourishment, and movement.

**Sexy is boundaries.** Protecting your peace, choosing wisely who gets access to you.

Sexy is not a dress size or wrinkle-free skin. It's the essence of living fully as yourself.

## The Role Of Desire

Let's be real: many of us still want to feel desired - and that's not shallow. It's human. The key is shifting from craving outside validation to cultivating inner desire.

Ask yourself: Do I still desire me? Do I admire my reflection? Do I honor my own beauty?

When the answer is yes, you radiate a light that no one can dim.

That's sexy at every age.

If you're ready to reclaim sexy right now, here are a few practices that I have cultivated to ground myself:

- **Celebrate the woman in the mirror.** See her as powerful, present, and worthy.
- **Update your style.** Wear clothes that reflect your confidence today.
- **Romanticize everyday life.** Light the candle, wear the perfume, work out, or take yourself out.
- **Speak affirmations.** Say: "I am sexy because I am healing/healed. I attract the right people to me because I am me."
- **Embrace pleasure.** In work, relationships, or personal rituals -- joy makes you radiate.

Sexy isn't something you left behind in your twenties. It isn't hidden in old photos. Sexy is right here - in your laugh, your wisdom, your boundaries, your confidence, and joy.

So, the next time you catch yourself saying, "I used to be sexy," stop. Instead, say, "I am sexy today - hot, whole, and fully me"

Because sexy isn't about who you were. It's about embracing the fullness of who you are right now. And that is magnetic! 🌀



Lifestyle Photography by Alexandra Garrett



# FROM CHAOS TO COZY

*Holiday Hosting Tips That Honor Your Peace*

BY TAMMY DAVIS



Is it me, or do the holidays seem to creep up quicker every year? By mid July I walked into a craft store and was greeted not by beach gear or patio décor, but aisles already stocked with Halloween and Thanksgiving trimmings. The strangest part? A tinge of anxiety ran through my body, as if I needed to brace for the inevitable holiday stress that adulthood often brings.

In that moment, I was instantly transported back to “the good ole days” of the 1900s, when the holidays were pure anticipation. Back then, I had little responsibility beyond helping my family with a few small traditions. One of my jobs was to assemble the holiday fruit bowl centerpiece, a festive mix of bananas, oranges, apples, nuts in the shell, and wrapped candies, all nestled inside a pinecone and poinsettia wreath with tall candlesticks on either side. Variations of that centerpiece appeared throughout the house. I also helped mix the cornbread batter, a crucial ingredient for the cornbread dressing that anchored every holiday meal. Of course, also assisting with decorating the Christmas tree.



My fondest memory, though, was crowding into my grandparents’ living room with cousins while my grandfather, surrounded by chaos and laughter, called out each of our names and handed us a gift. The joy of hearing your name announced was unmatched, especially after feasting on turkey, cornbread dressing, baked macaroni and cheese, candied yams, fried corn, mixed greens and of course my granddaddy’s infamous three-layer coconut pineapple cake. Truly, it was the most wonderful time of the year.

Fast forward to my own years of marriage and motherhood. I couldn’t wait to weave some of those same traditions into my children’s lives. While I skipped the fruit bowl centerpieces, I worked tirelessly to design menus, schedules, and traditions that mixed old favorites with new fun. Instead of calling names to pass out gifts, we played a dice game that decided who opened the next “mystery package.” Later came the infamous Saran Wrap Ball stuffed with dollar bills, gift cards, sweets, jewelry, and the occasional gag gift. Not only was it faster, but it brought belly laughs and kept everyone on their toes. To this day, it’s still one of our family staples.

These days, I approach the holidays with a little more wisdom and a lot more focus on peace. Gone are the times when I’d spend all day in the kitchen, too exhausted to enjoy the celebration. Now

it’s about working smarter, not harder, planning gatherings that are lighthearted, meaningful, and memorable without draining every ounce of energy. Below are some unique holiday hosting ideas that bring joy without the chaos.

#### DIY FOOD BARS

Traditional turkey and ham can get repetitive. A DIY food bar puts the creativity in your guests’ hands and lightens your workload. Think taco bar, potato bar, or chili bar, each guest builds their own plate “masterpiece.”

**Hostess Tip:** Keep it simple but stylish. Use holiday themed containers and matching chafing dishes. Choose a festive color palette and add fun details like framed guest photos with balloons tied to them. For a potato bar, swap plates for martini glasses to hold loaded mashed potatoes. For a chili bar, offer different varieties: beef, turkey, white chicken, or veggie—with toppings like sour cream, cheese, cornbread muffins, chips, and scallions. Guests will rave about both the food and the presentation.

#### FESTIVE RECIPE EXCHANGE

Instead of preparing everything yourself, invite guests to bring a signature dish and copies of the recipe to share. Not only does it ease your kitchen duties, but everyone leaves with the “gift” of a new recipe to add to their rotation.

**Hostess Tip:** Narrow the exchange to a theme: desserts only, holiday cocktails, or appetizers. Provide each guest with a personalized recipe box or folder to keep their new collection organized.

#### COLOR-CODED CHARCUTERIE BASH

Add a playful twist by assigning each guest a color. Their challenge: build a charcuterie board that sticks to that palette. A “green” board might include broccoli, cucumbers, grapes, guacamole, and matcha cookies. Want to take it up a notch? Try a themed sweets board where all the treats match the color.

**Hostess Tip:** Set up a display table for the color boards and provide place cards with each guest’s name against their chosen color. Encourage guests to dress in their assigned color and present their board to the group. Give out prizes for “Best Board” and “Best Dressed.”

#### ADDITIONAL UNIQUE HOLIDAY PARTY THEMES

- Favorite Christmas Movie Dress-Up Party
- Blind Book Exchange (wrap a book, swap at random)
- Friendsgiving (a casual, gratitude-focused dinner with friends)
- Candle-Making Party (guests leave with handmade gifts)
- Holiday Hat Decorating Party

The holidays don’t have to drain you. With a little creativity and some fresh traditions, you can host celebrations that honor your peace while still filling the room with laughter, connection, and warmth. After all, the real magic of the season is not in perfection, but in presence. 

menu tear out - cut here

# Fuss Free Holiday Menu

## ENTREE

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**Rotisserie Chicken**  
with lemon caper cream sauce

## SIDES

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**Roasted Potatoes**  
parmesan garlic

**Green Beans & Onions**  
sautéed

**Garlic Knot Rolls**  
packaged

## DESSERT

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**Spiced Pear Dump Cake**  
with butter pecan cream sauce

## DRINKS

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**Holiday Sangria**  
alcohol

**Cranberry Apple Spritzer**  
non-alcoholic

menu tear out - cut here

menu tear out - cut here

# Fuss Free Holiday Menu

## ENTREE

### Rotisserie Chicken with Lemon Caper Cream Sauce

Store-bought rotisserie chicken, sliced and cut into portions on a platter. Prepare cream sauce, glaze chicken with sauce, drained capers and fresh parsley for garnish.

## SIDES

### Parmesan Garlic Roasted Potatoes

Quartered red potatoes, sprinkled with olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder and grated parmesan cheese. Toss and place in the oven until tender.

### Sautéed Green Beans & Onions

Packaged fresh green beans from the produce department. Slice one onion. Add oil to a pan on medium-high heat, add green beans and onions, season to taste and serve immediately.

### Packaged Garlic Knot Rolls

Located in the bakery section of the grocery store, already layered with oil & seasoning. Place in the oven until desired color.

## DESSERT

### Spiced Pear Dump Cake w/ Butter Pecan Cream Sauce

Drain canned sliced pears, add to sauce pan, add butter, vanilla, brown sugar, nutmeg, & cinnamon until slightly thickened. Add pears and juice to the bottom of a 9x13 baking pan. Pour the entire box of vanilla cake mix, dry onto pears. Cut up two sticks of butter on top of the cake mixture. Place in the oven until golden brown. Warm one pint of butter pecan ice cream in the microwave until melted and a creamy consistency. Scoop dump cake into dessert bowl and drizzle melted ice cream or "butter pecan cream sauce" over cake.

## DRINKS

### Holiday Sangria (alcohol)

Add one bottle of Red Sangria Wine into a carafe or pitcher. Add frozen mixed berries, canned, undrained pineapple tidbits, undrained canned peach slices. Add Malibu Coconut Rum. Stir and refrigerate until ready to serve.

### Cranberry Apple Spritzer (non-alcoholic)

Add 1/2 container of cranberry apple juice into a carafe or pitcher, place in the refrigerator to chill. Just before serving, fill the container with ginger ale. Garnish each drink with mint sprig and sugared cranberries.

# Fall Escapes That Fuel Your Mind, Body & Soul

BY ARIEL TRAVIS

You've made it through three quarters of the year and a trip might be just what you need to break out of routine, and shift out of autopilot. Take the time to reflect on all your accomplishments and the lessons learned so far. Invest in your well-being and happiness by pouring into yourself; because yes, you deserve it. This season, consider taking a trip to a destination that leaves you no choice but to unplug, recharge, and return home with the energy to finish the year strong.



Photo Jose and Carlos Photography

*Here are five handpicked destinations designed to help you do just that, accompanied by recommended experiences to fill your cup.*





Photo by Jae Espinoza | pexels.com



## 1 Sedona, Arizona

*Mountains, Mindfulness, and Magic*

For my nature lovers, Arizona offers the perfect way to reset outdoors. There's something about wide open skies and towering red rocks that brings an instant feeling of clarity. Sedona is known for its serene energy and striking desert landscapes. Consider staying in Uptown Sedona for walkability and charm or commit to the full outdoor experience with glamping under the stars. The Red Rocks offer multiple hiking trails with a variety of difficulty levels. For an easy to moderate hike consider the popular Fast Canyon Trail for scenic views.

If you're feeling bold, book a [Pink Jeep Tour](#) and explore the backroads in a hot pink off-road vehicle. After all, who says healing can't be fun? You can wind things down with a tranquil hot air balloon ride or channel your inner cowgirl with [horseback riding](#) through the mountains.

## 2 Lisbon, Portugal

*History, Rhythm, and Soulful Strolls*

If you're craving a European escape, Lisbon is calling. Portugal's capital is bursting with color, charm, and stories layered into every tile-covered street. To explore Lisbon like a local, dive into one of the many immersive offerings on Airbnb Experiences. A standout to add to your itinerary is the top-rated [Tuk Tuk tour](#), which winds through the city's historic neighborhoods. Led by passionate Portuguese guides, this ride offers a heartfelt, humorous glimpse into Lisbon's soul. For a deeper understanding of the city's layered identity, consider booking a curated cultural tour that highlights the African influence woven throughout Lisbon's history.

To see the city from a different angle, book a [boat ride](#) near Praça do Comércio for dreamy views from the water. Finish your trip with a day trip to Sintra-Cascais Natural Park, just outside of Lisbon. Before you go, treat yourself to Portugal's beloved custard tart pastel de nata, and savor every bite.



Photo by Nextvoyage | pexels.com

## 3 Bali, Indonesia

*Slow Beauty, Sacred Spaces, and Self-Discovery* ▶

For those craving a meditative and immersive journey, Bali continues to top my list. From lush rice terraces and waterfalls to beaches and volcanoes, the island offers the kind of beauty that stays with you. If possible, plan for seven days or more so you can explore multiple cities throughout the island. For deep restoration, start in Ubud, a wellness haven known for yoga retreats, spiritual energy, and local artistry. Treat yourself to a stay at a villa or wellness center where you can tune out unnecessary noise, and tune into what your mind and body needs.

While in Ubud, don't miss some of its most iconic experiences. Wander through the Sacred Monkey Forest, home to over 600 playful residents. Stroll the tranquil Tegalalang Rice Terraces for a dose of natural beauty. And be captivated by the Kecak Fire Dance at Pura Dalem Taman Kaja, a powerful performance brought to life by locals. For more guidance before your trip, grab a copy of [The Black in Bali Travel Guide](#) or [The Solo Girl's Travel Guide](#) for tips to help you navigate the island with confidence and intention.



Your Guide to Hope, Wellness & Wealth



Photo by Atlantic Ambience | pexels.com

## 4 Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

*Black Joy, Beach Walks, and Cultural Roots*

Martha's Vineyard has been a long-standing getaway for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) travelers, with a strong sense of community and pride. For a deeper connection to its history take a guided walk along the African American Heritage Trail, which highlights important sites and stories across the island. Then, unplug by one of the nineteen peaceful beaches, or visit the Aquinnah Cliffs for a moment that feels sacred. Catch the sunset from the Aquinnah Lighthouse and let it remind you how beautiful it is to just be in the present moment.

If you're lucky, your visit may align with one of the island's many seasonal festivals. One that may be of interest is the African American Film Festival, igniting creativity and artistic excellence as a storytelling platform. An additional list of festivals and bucket list attractions can be found through the [Martha's Vineyard Chambers of Commerce](#). Before you leave, treat yourself to a luxury skincare boutique that offers a holistic personalized experience; consider Botanical Beauty & Co. Word to the wise: when you look good, you feel good.

Photo from Martha Vineyard's African American Heritage Trail



Photo from Planet of Hotels

## 5 **Montreal, Canada** Art, Architecture, and Cozy City Vibes

If you're open to cooler weather and cultural gems, Montreal is the perfect fall reset. The second largest city in Canada offers historic sites, a rich culinary scene and iconic landmarks. Begin your trip with a walking tour through Old Montreal where cobblestone streets, charming French-style cafés, and 17th-century architecture await. Keep an eye out for the breathtaking Notre-Dame Basilica, a gothic architectural masterpiece. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes, as this historic part of town is best explored on foot.

After indulging in the expansive Canadian and international art collections at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, head over to Jean Talon Market for a delicious taste of local flavor. Tucked away in Little Italy, this open-air market is one of the largest in North America. Here, you'll find everything from fresh produce to handmade treats, perfect for sampling or taking home as souvenirs. It's a great spot to grab a bite to eat before spending a peaceful afternoon at the Botanical Garden or exploring Mount Royal park.

Did you know that Montreal has an [underground city](#)?! The Ville Souterraine has 20 miles of pedestrian walkways entwined throughout tunnels, and is home to over 1600 stores. For those who love a little retail therapy, this spot is your haven. Wrap up your trip with a boat tour along the Saint Lawrence River, and maybe even catch a Broadway-style performance at Place des Arts before heading home.

Whether you're a budgetista or enjoy the finer things in life, each of these destinations can be tailored to your travel style. The most important thing? Make space for you. Break up the routine, refill your spirit, and allow rest to be something you no longer postpone.

You've earned it. Bon voyage! 

# BE YOUR OWN BAE

*The Reign of Big Auntie Energy*

BY CHERYL OVERTON

**S**he knows things. She walks like she's survived something (because she has). Her opinions have receipts, her standards are high and her wardrobe has range. She's been there (a literal traveler) and done that (yes, even the stupid stuff). Which is why there's a purpose behind her decisions these days. She doesn't feel the need to explain herself. She's moisturized, magnetic, and deeply unbothered.

That's Auntie. She carries Big Auntie Energy. The original BAE.





Editorial credit: DFree / Shutterstock.com



Editorial credit: Featureflash Photo Agency / Shutterstock.com

### **Auntie Energy: A Territory, Not a Trend.**

“Auntie” has evolved into a badge of honor. Still, some challenge whether it sidelines or desexualizes mature, complex women who don’t fit a neat category. They’re not wrong. Too often, society asks women to dim their power just as they’re coming into it. But here’s my take:

*Auntie is a mindset. It’s loving yourself before everyone else. And Big Auntie Energy is the crown.*

### **My Arrival in Auntie-dom**

Before launching my communications agency or creating GRWN™, I was the go-to. The first-born daughter. The group chat’s stylist, advisor, and truth-teller. But, over the years, Auntie-dom has sharpened my instincts, softened my judgment, and elevated my discernment. It’s given me the fortitude to say “I don’t” when “I do” was expected. It’s given me the commitment to lose 110 pounds and keep 100 of them off for five-plus years. It’s given me the confidence to say “no.” Period. It’s given me the confidence to relocate and become the new girl in town at a big age. Without Big Auntie Energy, none of it would have been possible.

And I’ve brought that lens to the brand campaigns I’ve helped shape throughout my 25+ year career. From Dove and the American Heart Association to Hologic, Aunt Jackie’s Curls & Coils and NIVEA, my mission has always been to ensure that women —

especially GRWN Black women — are represented in their full complexity: smart, purposeful, sensual, stylish and sovereign.

### **So, What Is Big Auntie Energy?**

It’s less about age and more about agency. In pop culture, it looks like:

- Tracee Ellis Ross, ethereal and unbothered dining solo in feathered Schiaparelli.
- Niecy Nash-Betts, loving out loud and speaking her truth with a wink.
- Angela Bassett, walking like she’s got nothing to prove but still proving everything.
- Sheryl Lee Ralph, turning award stages into affirmations.
- Beyoncé, claiming the Auntie title in sequins and full Renaissance power.

She’s you, the woman who’s survived heartbreak, perimenopause, recessions, 45, and self-doubt yet still has a contagious laugh. Auntie Energy ghosts energy vampires mid-sentence and pours into herself the same love she gives to others.

Her beauty isn’t performative. It’s the kind that comes from sleeping well because she no longer loses rest over anyone who doesn’t deserve her. Her body? It’s a record of every season she’s lived through and she wears it like a trophy.



Editorial credit: lev radin / Shutterstock.com

*This Fall...Be Your Own BAE*

Fall for your body, the one that's carried you across every season.  
 Fall for your voice, the one that speaks without shaking.  
 Fall into your future, the one you're building on your own terms.

*Big Auntie Energy isn't the end of anything. It's the elevation of everything.*

*Aunties know what they like. And they're done apologizing for it.*

**The Shift Is Cultural and Commercial**

Beyond 'phenomenal woman-ing' and self-recognition, Auntie Energy is a verified marketing movement:

- TikTok's #AuntieEnergy hashtag has topped 50M+ views, celebrating grown woman joy and authority.
- AARP notes that women 50+ control over 70% of discretionary income in the U.S. They're spending it on fashion, wellness, and pleasure.
- Pinterest's 2023 trend report showed spikes in "midlife glow-up," "grown woman fashion," and "soft glam for 50+."
- Deloitte x SeeHer's 2024 study found women over 40 are underrepresented in media, especially Black women, but when we show up, we drive loyalty, cultural conversation, and sales.

Just in case folks get confused: We're the moment AND the market.

**3 Ways to Tap Into Your Big Auntie Energy**

Whether you're 35 or 65, here's how to claim your own BAE:

**1. LEAD WITH LEGACY**

Clout fades but character sustains. Auntie's add value, authentically and organically. We've earned it through a portfolio of experiences and connections. Big Auntie Energy doesn't chase virality. The "likes" that matter are authentically your own.

**2. LET STYLE BE YOUR SELF-EXPRESSION**

Let your personal style be your truth. For me, fashion isn't about trends. What I wear in love, in transition, in learning and in contentment create memories I draw upon and repurpose. Whether it's caftans or baggy denim, wear the thing that conveys what's in your spirit versus someone else's expectations.

**3. YOUR WISDOM IS THE ULTIMATE FLEX**

You've earned every wrinkle and every win. You can spot BS across a crowded room. Remember: if someone's lucky enough to be chosen by you, they better act accordingly.

**Auntie-dom Is a Shared Sisterhood Around the Globe**

There are unifying qualities that unite "Aunties" around the world: resilience, insight, and presence.

In Asian cultures, it's a title of community reverence. In Latin families, she's the glue and the guide. In Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Russia), the term for aunt (like "ciocia" in Polish) shares a spirit of seasoned wisdom, personal power, and self-definition.

This phase of life should not be marginalized because it's monumental.

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# Style, Reinvented

*Dressing for Who You Are Now, Not Who You Were*

BY ALEXANDRA GARRETT

**F**ashion is one of the most powerful forms of self-expression. The way we dress tells a story about where we've been, who we are, and who we are becoming. But here's the truth: that story doesn't stay the same forever.

As we grow older, our priorities shift, our lifestyles change, and our bodies evolve. Yet, so many of us still find ourselves chasing the style of our past or trying to keep up with the youth-driven trends splashed across social media. With every scroll, we're told to buy the latest makeup drop, chase the next "it" look, or squeeze ourselves into silhouettes that no longer serve us.

It's exhausting. And honestly, it's unnecessary.

Dressing for who you are now - not who you were five, ten, or twenty years ago, and not who the world tells you to be - is one of the best acts of love you can give yourself. Style isn't about catching up. It isn't about trying to look younger. In fact, it's about

embracing the power of who you are today.

When you lean into your current self with confidence, you'll find that your fashion choices become easier, more authentic, and far more enjoyable. Below, I'll share five ways to reinvent your style so it reflects the real you - right now.

## **Dress for Your Lifestyle**

The clothes you wear should work for your life, not against it. Maybe in your twenties you could run around in heels all day, or maybe you once thrived in an office wardrobe full of blazers and pencil skirts.

Side Note: No lies. I could barely walk in heels.

But now? Maybe your lifestyle calls for comfort with polish - shoes you can walk in, fabrics that move with you, and pieces that fit seamlessly into your daily rhythm.



Ask yourself: What do I spend most of my time doing? If you're running errands, managing a household, or working from home, you don't need to build your wardrobe around pieces that only work for nights out or boardroom meetings. Instead, create a foundation of clothing that matches the rhythm of your life - casual yet chic pants, elevated basics versatile dresses, or even sneakers that still make you feel and look put together.

When you dress for your real lifestyle, you're no longer squeezing yourself into an image of someone you used to be. You're honoring the woman you are today.

### Style Your Body Shape

Let's be real: bodies change, weight fluctuates, curves shift, and the figure you had in your younger years may not be the one you're dressing now. And that's okay. Style is not about squeezing yourself into your old jeans or mourning the body you once had. It's about celebrating the one you have now.

Instead of forcing yourself into cuts that don't work anymore, start asking: What fits me best right now? Explore silhouettes that highlight your strengths - a wrap dress that defines your waist, wide-leg trousers that balance proportions, or tops that celebrate your neckline or shoulders. Dressing your body as it is today is an act of acceptance. It's a way of saying:

*I am worthy of style.  
exactly as I am.*

### Dress for Your Age Bracket (With your Own Twist)

Here's where I want to be clear: dressing for your age doesn't mean losing your edge or defaulting to "boring" clothes. What it does mean is embracing the confidence, wisdom, and presence that come with where you are in life.

There are looks that feel playful at 20 but may not feel as aligned at 38 or 50. That doesn't mean you can't be bold or sexy - it just means you get to redefine what that looks like on your terms. Maybe instead of mini skirts, you rock a sleek midi. Maybe instead of chasing fast fashion trends - which is hurting the Earth - you invest in a killer blazer that makes you feel unstoppable.

This isn't about rules. It's about choosing clothing that aligns with the woman you are right now - powerful, seasoned, and unapologetically yourself.

### Take Inspiration From Youth, But Don't Copy It (Unless That's What You Love To Do)

Scrolling through fashion content online, you'll notice that younger generations set a lot of trends. And sometimes, their choices spark great ideas. There's nothing wrong with drawing inspiration from what you see, but inspiration doesn't mean imitation.

Take a detail, not the whole look. If Gen Z is obsessed with oversized jackets, maybe you play with proportion through

a structured longline coat that still feels refined. If glossy lips and bold eye makeup are back, adapt them to your features with products and shades that flatter you.

The key is to let youth inspire you, but don't let it dictate you. Your style should look like you, not a version of yourself trying to stay caught up with someone else's timeline.

### Say a Style Affirmation

This one might sound different but trust me, it's powerful. I developed this practice myself, and it's changed the way I approach fashion. Before I put on an outfit, I say an affirmation out loud that grounds me in my style and self image.

It can be as simple as:

- *This skirt makes me feel like I own the world.*
- *I am not behind. I am exactly where I need to be in my style.*
- *My clothes reflect my confidence and joy.*

Affirmations shift the energy from trying to prove yourself through clothing to expressing yourself through clothing, and that's where true style begins.

### Own your style now, please!

At the end of the day, fashion is not about looking younger, chasing trends, or competing with the highlight reels of social media. Fashion is about feeling good in your skin, honoring your present moment, and letting your clothes reflect the power you already carry.

There's no need to reinvent yourself in comparison to youth. There's no need to hold onto the wardrobe of your past. You don't need to "catch up" because you're not behind. You're evolving.

So the next time you're tempted to say, "I used to look good in that" or "I wish I could get my body into that again" stop! Instead, say: "I look good right now. I have every right to show off this version of me!"

Because style isn't about who you were. It's about who you are.

And who are you today?

That's more than enough! 

***"I look good right now. I have every right to show off this version of me!"***

# GIFT GUIDE

Fall is the season of cozy gatherings, crisp mornings, and thinking about the perfect gift for your family and friends during the holidays. This year, our team has pulled together 25 thoughtful finds that caught our eye; from stylish home accents to beauty must-haves and little luxuries worth sharing. While we haven't tried every single one, they're gifts we'd be excited to give (and get!).

But we didn't stop there. We also set aside three standout items that we've personally tested and truly recommend. These are our editor-approved favorites; the kind of gifts we know will delight anyone on your list. So whether you're shopping early for the holidays or treating yourself to a seasonal upgrade, consider this your guide to holiday gifting.

## CHÉRIBÉ HAIRCARE PRODUCTS

*Hair Care That Truly Delivers*

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<https://cheribe.com/>

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**LIVE ON THE BUTTER SIDE SELF CARE JOURNAL BUNDLE**

*Self-Care That Sticks*

Self-care doesn't always mean spa days; it's often the simple, daily rituals that make the biggest impact. That's why we love the Live on the Butter Side Self-Care Journal and Notepad. Thoughtfully designed to encourage reflection, mindfulness, and intentional living, it's the perfect companion for anyone looking to slow down and recenter. After using it ourselves, we can confidently say it turns small moments into meaningful routines. A thoughtful gift that feels as good to give as it does to use.

<https://livingbuttery.etsy.com/>

EDITOR'S  
SPOTLIGHT

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<https://a.co/d/2xaMGJq>



- ▲ **Incense Holder**  
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- ▲ **Vintage Portable Turntable**  
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- ▲ **Neck Fan**  
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- ▶ **Kodak Full Color Instant Print Camera**  
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► **Luxury Bathtub Tray**  
<https://a.co/d/fjiEmgJ>



▲ **Candle Warmer Lamp**  
<https://a.co/d/h8tDnZh>



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