

hope + wellth

MAGAZINE

**A Guide
to Exit
Hustle Culture**

Expert advice from
Dr. Rebecca Hubbard

**Timeless
Confidence**

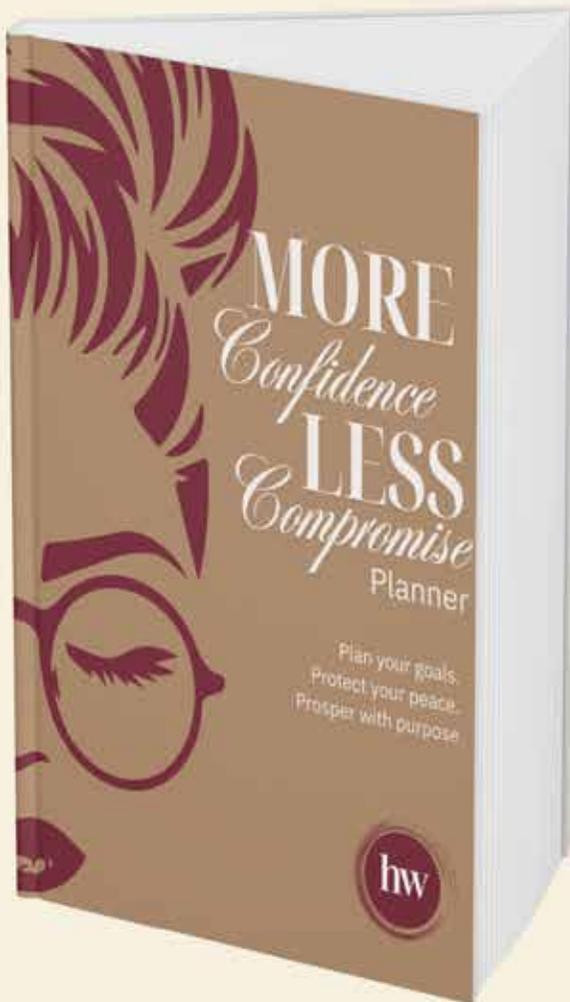
*Celebrating Beauty
at Every Age*

*Strong Femail Friendships
Build Confidence*
Where My Girls At?

**Breaking Barriers On & Off
Screen with Actress**

Nzinga Imani

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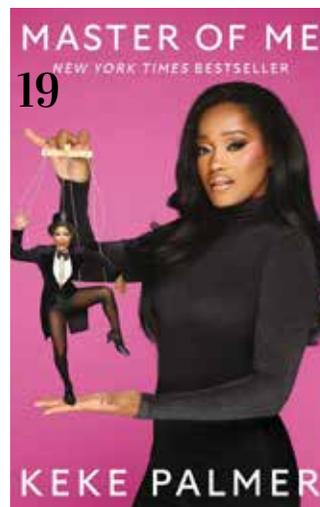
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EDITOR'S LETTER



Greetings Friends!

In my 48 years of life, I've transformed from a hardcore people pleaser—someone who tied her worth to performative efforts, earning praise with phrases like, “She’s so sweet,” “She’s really nice,” or “She’ll do anything for you”—to a recovering people pleaser who learned to say no but carried the weight of guilt. Now, I stand as a recovered people pleaser, where advocating for myself feels natural, caring for myself comes without guilt, and saying no—without explanation—brings what they call “zero f*cks.” So as you can imagine, I am beyond excited about this issue, *More Confidence, Less Compromise*, because at 48, I finally feel more confident than I ever have in my life.

To me, more confidence, less compromise means refusing to settle for less than I deserve. It means saying no to things I don't want to do, regardless of whether someone thinks I'm nice or not. It means saying yes to the things that bring me joy, no matter what anyone else has to say. It's about setting boundaries—with friends, family, my husband, and even my children—and finding the freedom to stand firm in those boundaries. Most importantly, it's about trusting myself enough to handle the outcomes: whether it's disappointment, anger, subtle manipulation, or outright toxicity. Reclaiming this power has been life-changing, and I know it can be for you, too.

As women, we've been taught to compromise not just what we want but who we are to fit into outdated stereotypes of self-sacrificing, ever-juggling shapeshifters whose sole purpose is to make everyone else's lives better. These expectations have led us to shrink ourselves, dim our light, and silence our desires. But no more.

This issue is a celebration of stepping into our power. Inside, Dr. Phyllis Pobee shares strategies for advocating for your health and taking charge of your well-being. Dr. Rebecca Hubbard helps us break free from the toxic hustle culture that glorifies burnout and reclaim balance. Licensed psychotherapist Domenique Harrison offers insights on navigating fear and finding freedom to live authentically. And our cover story features the amazing actress Nzinga Imani, who shares her inspiring journey to self-love and self-acceptance in an industry that often tries to dictate your worth.

My prayer for each of you reading this issue is simple: that you boldly step into your season of more confidence and less compromise. May you advocate for yourself unapologetically, prioritize your joy without hesitation, and embrace the beauty of a life lived on your own terms.

Take Care,

Lynnette Price

Editor-in-Chief

Hope+Wellth Magazine





Your Guide to Hope, Wellness & Wealth

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“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give
you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

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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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From the Creative Director



Dear Readers,

For a long time, I believed that saying yes to everything and everyone made me a good person. I thought that putting others first—even at my own expense—was just part of who I was supposed to be. But I’ve learned that true confidence isn’t about constantly proving my worth to others. It’s about knowing my worth, standing firm in it, and refusing to compromise my needs, values, or joy to make others comfortable. Putting myself first isn’t selfish—it’s necessary. And no, I don’t feel bad about it.

That’s why I’m so excited about this issue of *Hope+Wellth*. Every article in these pages left me feeling energized and inspired, reminding me that I have the power to live life on my terms. I know that once you dive in, you’ll feel it too.

For me, *More Confidence, Less Compromise* means trusting myself enough to say no without guilt and yes to the things that light me up. It means setting boundaries that protect my peace and prioritizing my own growth just as much as I pour into others. One of the articles that speaks to this is Glenny Rosario’s *Finding Balance: Prioritizing Family Without Losing Yourself*. It’s a must-read for anyone struggling to juggle personal needs with the expectations of being everything to everyone. It highlights the importance of setting healthy boundaries, making space for personal growth, and showing up fully—not just for others, but for yourself.

This issue is full of powerful reminders that confidence isn’t something we wait for—it’s something we build through action. Sammesha Dominguez shares a list of inspiring and empowering books that will pour into you long after you’ve finished reading. Erika Brooks explores the power of friendships and how surrounding yourself with the right people can uplift and strengthen your confidence. And, of course, there’s so much more waiting for you inside.

I have no doubt that this is one of those issues you’ll come back to again and again—especially in those moments of self-doubt, when you need a reminder of just how capable and deserving you truly are. My hope for you is that these pages encourage you to take up space unapologetically, trust yourself fully, and embrace the freedom that comes with standing in your power.

And when you’re ready for even more inspiration, *Hope+Wellth* is always here. Keep turning the pages, keep coming back, and most importantly—keep showing up for yourself.

With Confidence,

Renee Patterson

Co-Founder & Creative Director
Hope+Wellth Magazine



Saying No Without Shame

Psychological Tools for Setting Boundaries and Saying No in Relationships, Work and Personal Life

BY CYNTHIA AGYEMAN-ANANE

Learning Boundaries?

Did you know boundaries have power? Most of us grow up never being taught about the power of boundaries—their meaning and how to put them into practice. We move through life allowing others to cross and disrespect our boundaries without giving it a second thought. This is often evident in adult clients who show up in therapy feeling powerless. Powerless because they have been conditioned by society and family during childhood (through spoken and unspoken rules and expectations) to disregard their own boundaries.

Eventually, we enter workplaces and relationships—both with ourselves and others—disregarding our boundaries. When we set and maintain boundaries, we may experience shame, defined as ‘the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we’ve experienced, done, or failed to do, which makes us unworthy of connection’ (*Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown). This kind of internalized shame can have a debilitating impact on her overall functioning but especially our ability to learn, set and maintain boundaries.

Leaving us feeling powerless in relationships and workplaces, Black women often carry the weight of stereotypes, such as the ‘strong Black woman’ trope, which can make it difficult for them to express vulnerability or set limits. This cultural expectation can lead them to overextending themselves to meet others’ needs. Black women will learn overcommitting is necessary, saying “NO” requires explanations even when they feel drained, in order to juggle work, family obligations and social activities.

What we fail to realize is that a lack of setting boundaries has a profound negative impact on our personal lives, relationships and work. Consequently, not learning to set and maintain boundaries can have a lifelong negative impact on our self-esteem and overall emotional functioning.

The work for many adult clients in therapy is to regain their power by becoming “a



Photo from canva.com

healthy person who has expanded boundaries that allow them to openly interact with the surrounding world and other people while maintaining inner independence and individuality.” (*The Art of Living* by Erich Fromm)

What are boundaries?

Nedra Glover Tawwab’s book *Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself* (which, in my opinion, is the premier resource on boundaries) describes boundaries as “expectations and needs that help you feel safe and comfortable in your relationships...[these] help you stay mentally and emotionally well.” Essentially, when we don’t set and maintain boundaries, we can experience shame and guilt, and we may become disloyal to ourselves. Although, as previously mentioned, we feel disloyal and disrespectful, leading to feelings of shame. Conversely, setting boundaries has the opposite effect: it improves your relationship with yourself and others.

Why We Should Learn About Types of Boundaries

Using the term “boundaries” as a blanket statement is a disservice, as there are many different types of boundaries. These include physical, intellectual, sexual, financial, time, emotional, and material boundaries. Familiarizing yourself with the different types of boundaries is essential because it allows you to first connect with your authentic needs and then communicate those needs clearly to others. Talk about being and feeling powerful. However, because of our conditioning, when we learn more about our boundaries, shame manifests in our lives in various ways, including self-criticism, withdrawal, excessive people-pleasing, anger outbursts, and even denial, which disconnects us further from ourselves.

Let’s talk about an example: if you don’t have the time to help a family member or colleague complete a task but do it anyway, you violate your “time boundary.” When you engage in behaviors that don’t align with your values, you disregard your emotional well-



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being. Over time, this leads to feelings of resentment and shame in your relationships at home and at work which further isolates us from ourselves and others.

When we learn about boundaries, we can begin to set them. However, in order to truly feel powerful, we need something to ignite it. Nedra Glover Tawwab shares the following principles of building healthy boundaries. These principles act as your power-source: your compass, guidepost, foundation and value system as you move forward in maintaining boundaries. Without this power-source it's easy to lose your way.

Here are the following principles:

1. Have self-awareness and cognition. It is important to pay attention to how you feel in different situations and how it affects your well-being.
2. Be resilient (the ability to remain true to your boundaries and confident in your values and needs).
3. Learning to set boundaries includes learning how to say “no” in situations where it is necessary. It is an expression of self-preservation and self-respect.
4. Be clear about your understanding of personal space (this will help you know when this space is being violated and how to act accordingly).
5. Build supportive and healthy relationships (be ready to end unhealthy relationships; leave a job, and prioritize yourself and your peace).

How to Set and Maintain Boundaries in Your Relationships, at Work and in Personal Life

Once you feel powerful and affirmed in your principles then you can begin to use the following psychological tools to assist in setting boundaries and saying no in relationships, work and personal life.

The first tool is to develop **effective communication strategies**. Assertive communication is often recommended because it promotes honesty, openness, and straightforwardness in expressing feelings and thoughts. You can assert yourself without causing emotional harm to others. Remember this: Be direct and specific—clearly articulate the specific behavior you are addressing and the desired outcome.

The second tool is **self-respect and respect for others**, as you care about your relationships. Refrain from being judgmental and engaging in verbal aggression. Say “no” in assertive language: clearly state your boundaries with a calm and confident tone. Try this: use phrases like, ‘I appreciate your request, but I cannot take on additional work at this time.’

The third tool is **identifying your own needs**. Be sure to clearly express your needs and desires.

Try this: use “I” statements to express your feelings and needs, such as ‘I feel ___ when ___; I need ___ because ___,’ instead of using blaming accusations.’

A fourth tool is the ability to **listen attentively and understand others**. This allows you to know their needs and for them to know yours. Try this: engage in active listening;

listen to understand, not to respond or react.

A fifth tool is to **reassess regularly**. Evaluate your boundaries to reflect any changes in your personal or professional life. Be open to adjusting them as needed to ensure they continue to serve your well-being.

A sixth tool is **empowering self-advocacy**. Setting boundaries is about reclaiming one’s voice in all your relationships. For Black women, it means asserting your needs and desires, which can lead to greater confidence and a sense of agency in their lives.

The final tool is **be prepared for pushback**. Not everyone may accept your boundaries right away, so be patient and stand your ground if challenged. If you find it challenging to set boundaries, be willing to seek support by talking to a trusted friend or a professional for guidance.

These seven psychology tools are your **power-source keys** meant to be practiced regularly. As you practice them, shame will likely manifest AGAIN through yourself and others being dismissive and pushing back. Working with a trained professional like a therapist is a great way to learn and practice setting and maintaining boundaries.

In the meantime, let this article serve as a resource. Additionally, remember that the practice of setting and maintaining boundaries doesn’t happen in one day; it involves a series of actionable steps that is meant to do the following:

- Prioritize your mental and emotional well-being over shame.
- Respect your relationship with yourself.
- Give high regard to your relationships with others.
- Learn to communicate and express your needs clearly.

Establishing and respecting personal boundaries is vital for maintaining healthy relationships and personal well-being. Remember, as Nedra Glover Tawwab wisely said, ‘The ability to say no to yourself is a gift. If you can resist your urges, change your habits, and say yes to only what you deem truly meaningful, you’ll be practicing healthy self-boundaries.’ And that is a gift worth embracing: the power of your boundaries. 

Proactive Health is a Form of Liberation

How Proactive Health Care is an Act of Self-Confidence and Empowerment

BY DR. PHYLLIS POBEE

As BIPOC women, we are often the backbone of our families and communities, showing up for everyone else but sometimes neglecting to prioritize our own health. This cycle often stems from cultural expectations, societal pressures, and systemic barriers in healthcare. Yet, proactive health care is not only an essential act of self-love—it's a bold declaration of confidence and empowerment. Taking charge of your health sends a clear message: "I am worthy of care, attention, and wellness." It's about embracing your power and choosing to prioritize your health without guilt or compromise.

Proactive health care means taking steps to prevent illness instead of waiting for symptoms to show up. This approach is especially important for BIPOC women, who face higher risks for conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and certain cancers due to a combination of genetic predispositions, environmental factors, and systemic inequities. Being proactive empowers you to shape your health journey, reduce these risks, and live vibrantly. It's not just about preventing disease—it's about thriving.

WHY IT'S ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR BIPOC WOMEN

We're more at risk for silent conditions. Conditions like high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes often develop without obvious symptoms. For example, variations in the APOE gene can increase the risk of heart disease, which disproportionately affects Black and Latina women. Proactive screenings and lifestyle adjustments based on your personal risk factors can make all the difference.

Additionally, many BIPOC women face biases in healthcare settings, from being dismissed or misdiagnosed to not being heard during doctor visits. Learning to advocate for yourself ensures you receive the care you deserve, whether it's requesting



specific tests or choosing a provider who listens.

Finally, your health doesn't just affect you—it impacts your family and future generations. By being proactive, you set an example for loved ones and change the narrative around health in your community.

Understanding these risks is the first step, but action is where true empowerment begins. While systemic barriers exist, we have the power to advocate for ourselves and make informed choices that support our well-being. Taking a proactive approach to health isn't just about reacting to challenges—it's about reclaiming control and setting a new standard for self-care.

Here's how you can start taking charge of your health today:



Schedule Regular Checkups

Don't wait for something to feel wrong. Annual checkups are an opportunity to monitor key markers like blood pressure,



Ask Questions and Demand Answers

Be your own advocate. If something doesn't feel right, speak up and don't hesitate to ask for clarity or a second opinion. Write down your questions ahead of time, and if possible, bring someone you trust to appointments for support.



Learn Your Family Health History

Knowing what conditions run in your family can help you focus on prevention. If heart disease or diabetes is common, discuss genetic testing with your provider to understand your unique risk factors. Knowledge is power.

4

Focus on Preventative Nutrition

What you eat is a cornerstone of health. Focus on whole foods that nourish your body, like leafy greens, berries, and lean proteins. For example, magnesium-rich foods like spinach can help regulate blood sugar and reduce stress, while fiber supports heart health and digestion.

5

Move Your Body with Joy

Exercise doesn't have to mean hitting the gym—it's about finding movement that you enjoy. Dancing, walking, or yoga are fantastic ways to support mental and physical health. Just 30 minutes a day can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

6

Prioritize Mental Health

Your emotional well-being is just as important as your physical health. Therapy, journaling, or even 10 minutes of daily meditation can help manage stress, which is a significant factor in health disparities.

Advocating for your health is not selfish—it's necessary. Start by reframing your mindset and viewing self-care as a strength rather than a luxury. Taking care of yourself equips you to show up fully in every area of your life. Setting boundaries is also key; learn to say no to obligations that drain you and yes to prioritizing your well-being. Lastly, seek out supportive communities—whether it's friends, family, or online groups—that encourage and uplift you on your health journey. Surrounding yourself with people who value your well-being can make all the difference in staying committed to your care.

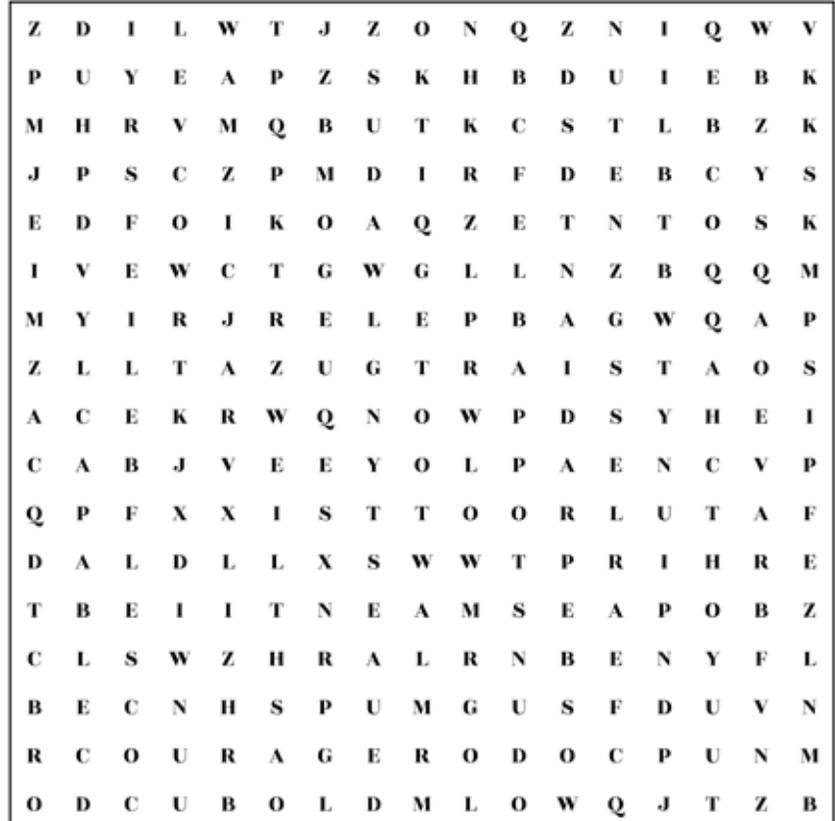
Proactive Health Is a Form of Liberation

For BIPOC women, taking control of our health is more than a personal choice—it's a revolutionary act. It's about breaking generational cycles, challenging systemic barriers, and reclaiming our power. Your health journey is yours to own, and it starts with one step. Whether it's booking that overdue doctor's appointment, moving your body, or simply resting when you need to, every proactive choice is a declaration of your worth.

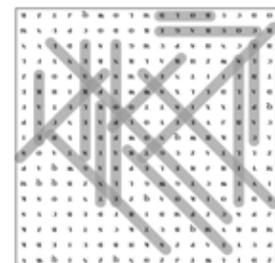
**You are powerful.
You are worthy.
And you deserve to thrive.** 

Be Confident

Word Search



- ASSERTIVE
- EMPOWER
- SECURE
- BOLD
- FEARLESS
- SELF-BELIEF
- BRAVE
- POWER
- STRENGTH
- CAPABLE
- RADIANT
- UNAPOLOGETIC
- COURAGE
- RESILIENT
- UNSTOPPABLE



Self-Love Without Compromise While Navigating Grief

BY LYNN LEWIS

Loss and grief make their way into each of our lives; it's an inevitable part of life. While you have no control over when, where and how grief will show up, you do have a choice about how to respond to it. One response is to practice self-love. With time and effort, self-love can become an integral part of your journey.

Navigating grief is a personal journey often accompanied by a myriad of emotions. The thought of practicing self-love during this time may seem daunting, but it is an essential tool for healing and growth. Before delving into some practical ways to integrate self-love into your grief journey, let's pause to explore the concepts of self-love, loss and grief.

Understanding self-love, loss and grief

Self-love is you making a conscious decision to prioritize your own well-being, unapologetically. It is learning to care for yourself holistically – emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually and financially. Self-love is not selfish nor is it an excuse for immoral behavior. It is a process of discovery and practice, which can profoundly benefit your grief journey. As Merilu Hill stated in her book *Reprogram Your Mind – A Guide to Self-Love*, “self-love instills resilience and power in you when life throws challenges your way.”

Loss is being deprived of something or someone you valued or cared deeply about. It can be the physical absence of someone as the result of death, divorce or separations. Loss can also result from events such as health challenges, career/job changes and shifts in one's identity. Grief is the natural, normal and necessary response or reaction to loss. It is multifaceted and ebbs and flows like the waves of an ocean. It is not linear meaning you will not move through your grief process in a straight line. Grief has no expiration date; it lasts as long as it lasts. Everyone's journey is different, even when grieving for the same person or event and learning to lean into self-love without compromise can be a challenge in and of itself.

Here are some practical ways to embrace self-love during your grief journey:

Believe you are worthy.

To successfully practice self-love, you must first believe that you are worthy of it. If this feels challenging, think about someone you value and how you show love to them because you believe they deserve it. Now, extend that same love to yourself. It's okay to start small. It may feel awkward in the beginning, but with practice it will begin to feel natural.

Grief has no expiration date; it lasts as long as it lasts.

Make rest a priority.

Making rest a priority extends beyond getting more sleep. Have you ever gotten a good night's sleep only to wake up feeling exhausted? As Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith stated in her book *Sacred Rest – Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity*, “sleep is not rest.” Rest encompasses activities that restore you holistically. Seek restorative practices such as breathwork, relaxing your muscles, pause and be present with yourself to name a few.

Honor your journey.

Your journey is yours alone and should not be compared to anyone else's. Comparing yourself to others can diminish your unique experience. Lean in and embrace what it is that will help you move forward on this journey. Focus on what you need and want as you navigate your path without compromising your well-being.

Set healthy boundaries.

Healthy boundaries will help you feel more comfortable and in control of your life and how you manage your grief. The wonderful thing about it is that you get to choose what boundaries you want to set and for which areas of your life. Don't think of boundaries as barriers, rather a way to set clear expectations for yourself and for others.

Find your support.

There may be times when those closest to you do not understand you and your grief journey. It doesn't mean they don't care; they may just not know what to do or say. In such cases, seek out others who can provide the support you desire. Look for support gatherings both in person or online as well as counselors, therapists, spiritual leaders, grief coaches and grief educators. You can find a wealth of options here at grief.com.

Give yourself grace, pivot when needed.

Change is inevitable. Your self-love needs and desires will evolve as you continue to navigate your journey. What works one day may not work for you the next day. Embrace the evolution of the process, be willing to experiment to find what serves you best at any given time and always be gentle with yourself.

Moving forward

Practicing self-love without compromise will help you build the confidence and resilience you need to navigate your grief journey which can be challenging in and of itself. Keep moving forward by believing in your self-worth, making rest a priority, honoring your journey, building a supportive community and embracing change. Remember it's a process – practice by taking one step at a time. 

Photo from canva.com



12 Songs That Will Have You Feeling Yourself

A Curated List of Songs by Female Artists That Inspire Confidence and Empowerment

BY SAMMESH DOMINGUEZ

Sometimes, life comes at you quickly leaving you confused and all over the place. You're searching for the one thing that will give you the feel-good boost you're looking for . . . MUSIC! Breaking barriers with fierce lyrics, saying what they mean and meaning what they say, these female artists and their songs will not only empower and inspire you but will leave you feeling good as hell in the process.

Megan Thee Stallion “Right Now”

After her release of *Megan: Act 2*, the girls have been eating up every word. In her latest song “Right Now” Megan doesn't hesitate to let it be known she's the baddest out right now and nobody can boss her up because she is the blueprint. This song reminds women that their only competition is them and there's nothing wrong with doing it big to celebrate you.

Alessia Cara “Here”

The perfect song for people that find themselves in situations they really don't want to be in and question “Why am I here?” Giving a personal experience of her own, “Here” dives deep into how we tend to change our personalities and make ourselves uncomfortable in the presence of others. Why force yourself to be around people you don't care for and that don't care about you?

Ari Lennox “Pressure”

Ari is without a doubt a girl's girl. “Pressure” was everything we didn't know we needed in a song. It's about not accepting anything from anybody regardless of what place they hold, being sought after, feeling confident and respected and not allowing anyone to come into your life with anything less than what you require. You are pressure so don't be afraid to apply it.

Ella Mai “Power of A Woman”

The popular track “Power of a Woman” explores the nature of a woman giving her all to the person she loves. She's confident and self-assured and can provide exactly what you need to fill you up and remain self-full at the same time.

Franchesca “Inner Me”

Franchesca's lyrical song “Inner Me” is about working on yourself, removing unwanted distractions, doing the inner work, and realizing there is a better version of you waiting to be discovered.

Glorilla “Let Her Cook”

In 2024, Glorilla showed no mercy with her album *GLORIOUS* and hit song “Let Her Cook” making a bold statement that she could care less what anyone thinks because she's on a mission to gain back everything she's lost. “Let Her Cook” is about being independent, unforgiving in your pursuit, and not having to wait for what you want.



Photo by Dushawn Jovic from unsplash.com



Photo by javi_indy from freepik.com

Kash Doll “Love Myself”

Sending a powerful message and doing so unapologetically, “Love Myself” is Kash Doll’s self-love anthem that speaks of loving yourself and giving yourself grace. We all make mistakes and there’s nothing wrong with acknowledging them and knowing that they don’t define the person you are or who you can become in the future.

Mary J Blige “Just Fine”

What’s an empowering playlist without the infamous Mary J. Blige and her amazing song “Just Fine” that expresses the joys of having a good day and accepting whatever comes with having a bad one because in the end you’ll be just fine.

Nicki Minaj “Fly”

If winning in life wasn’t everything, we wouldn’t strive so hard to make it to the top. Nicki Minaj’s song “Fly” is about soaring high, beating the odds set against you, and being prepared for whatever comes your way.

Savannah Cristina “Bad Bitch Energy”

You ever felt like a song was speaking directly to you? “Bad Bitch Energy” jumped right out the gate with a message to stop sleeping on yourself because you’re that girl and you’ve never needed anyone to validate that for you. To be the woman you desire to be you can’t be afraid to tap into your bad bitch energy because nobody can do it for you.

Valntna & ASMR PINK “Inner Vision”

Powerful lyrics that focus on setting intentions and goals that align with the reality you want to create. “Inner Vision” is all about self-empowerment, practicing abundance, and learning to trust yourself.

Victoria Monet “On My Mama”

A song you’ll keep on repeat for months to come. “On My Mama” is Monet’s anthem to live more confidently in the skin you’re in and being proud about where you come from. In the Black community putting something on your mama allows the people around you to know that you’re serious and mean what you’re saying. The positive affirmations spoken throughout are all about being confident and owning it. “I put that on my mama, on my hood, I look fly, I look good,” and nobody can tell me different.

Listen to these songs and more on our Spotify playlist, The Listening Lounge (hopewellthmedia.com/studio-wellth) 

EMPOWERMENT READS

Memoirs and Self-help Books That Will Inspire Women on Their Empowerment Journey

BY SAMMESH DOMINGUEZ

Every woman should allow themselves the opportunity to rest, reset, reflect, and renew any area of their life that serves their purpose. When the load gets heavy, and you feel like you're doing it all, it's okay to give it a rest. If you're still striving to become the best version of yourself but something isn't working, it's okay to reset. When you finally get to where you're going and can say, "Girl I did that", you won't be afraid to reflect on past struggles because you've reawakened as the renewed and empowered woman you were always meant to be.

If you're looking for a blueprint, here is a list of empowering reads by women with relatable experiences that can show you how to control your narrative, find your freedom, trust your gut, give a little attitude, and remember why you're doing it in the first place.

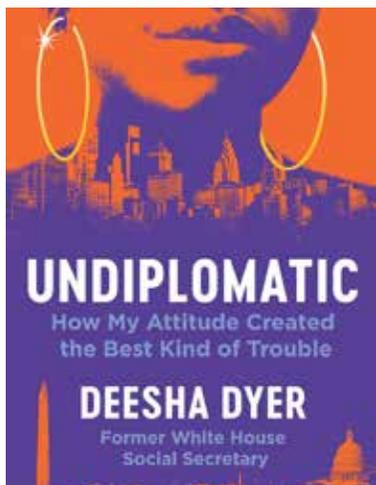


Photo from amazon.com

Undiplomatic: How My Attitude Created the Best Kind of Trouble

by Deesha Dyer

“Our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared.” -Deesha Dyer

Without credentials or connections, Deesha Dyer landed the role of a lifetime as the White House social secretary to former President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. How often is a regular ‘around the way girl’ with no political background given the opportunity to intern at the White House? Battling with imposter syndrome, negative self-talk, and finding her place in the world, Deesha invites us on her unique journey of overcoming self-doubt, learning to appreciate her authentic self, and proving to the world nothing is out of reach for a dreamer.

Master of Me: The Secret to Controlling Your Narrative

by Keke Palmer

“Don’t be afraid to bring all your talents to the table, because the only thing too much is the limitations we place on ourselves.” -Keke Palmer

Award-winning entertainer Keke Palmer blessed the book community with an experience we'll never forget. With raw humor and authenticity, Keke talks about how she learned to be the master of herself and control the narrative of her life so no one or nothing could have power over her. She's honest about her personal struggles and takes ownership of the boundaries she didn't set that influenced her actions and some for those around her. Throughout the book, you'll be presented with affirmations, prompts, and questions to guide you through your own personal challenges. *Master of Me* empowers readers to harness their vulnerability, accept nothing less than what they deserve, understand self-awareness is power, and learn how to become the master of their own life in all aspects.



Photo from amazon.com

Black Girls Breathing: Heal from Trauma, Combat Chronic Stress, and Find Your Freedom

by Jasmine Marie

“It’s never too late for you to choose a new story of who you’ll be and how you’ll show up in the world.” -Jasmine Marie

The power of breathing never felt so good. Jasmine Marie was in her therapeutic bag when she created this guide for Black women. Offering you the power of breathwork and the nature of slowing down and turning inward, *Black Girls Breathing* will help you uncover hidden traumas, bottled up emotions, and discover how stress can impact your mind, body, and health. If you’re looking to reconnect with your body, give yourself permission to rest, or heal from chronic stress, allow this book to be your guiding light to rebuilding a sense of self.

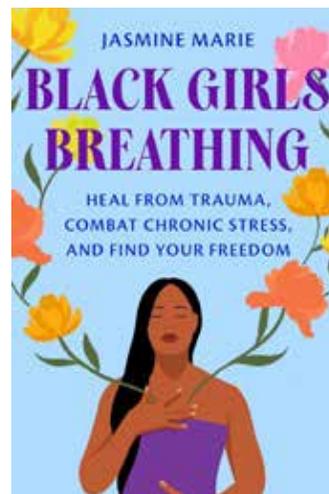


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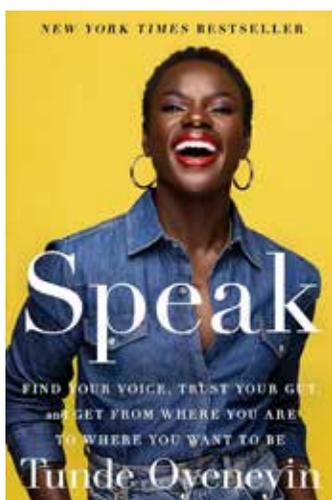


Photo from amazon.com

Speak: Find Your Voice, Trust Your Gut, and Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be

by Tunde Oyeyin

“We have to be in the driver’s seat of our own lives. Whatever it is that makes you want to hide, you have two choices—learn to love it or change it. We can’t let fear steer our course.” -Tunde Oyeyin

Delivering a motivational masterpiece, popular Peleton instructor, Tunde Oyeyin’s self-help memoir will leave you feeling inspired and seen. Broken down into the SPEAK acronym for Surrender, Power, Empathy, Authenticity, and Knowledge, Tunde talks about her personal experiences with body image, failed relationships, building self-confidence, never accepting failure as an option, and learning to transform grief so you can live a life with purpose. *Speak* sends a powerful message letting readers know to never give up on themselves. If you’re not satisfied with your current situation, speak up for what you want otherwise, you’ll never receive what you desire.

Black Chameleon: Memory, Womanhood, and Myth

by Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton

“It is easier to forget what you cannot see. It is harder to sell what is already damaged.” -Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton

Playful but incendiary, this is an engrossing memoir like nothing you’ve ever read before. With the use of Black girl magic and a mythological approach Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton explores themes of womanhood, family, motherhood, growing up Black in America, being the daughter of a preacher, and the harsh realities for Black women. Like Mouton, you may be in search of a story you can connect with or to find someone with a shared experience. Allow *Black Chameleon* to help you find your place in the world and live in your truth. 🌀

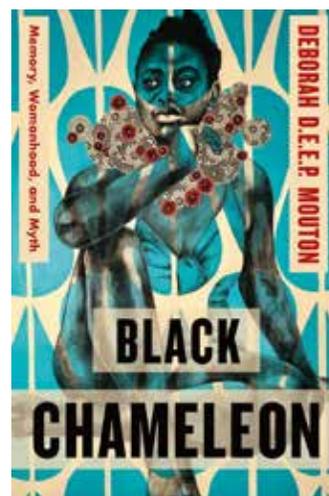


Photo from amazon.com

WHERE MY GIRLS AT?

How Strong Female Friendships Build Confidence

BY ERIKA BROOKS

I am fortunate to say that I have made friendships with many people that have helped me along this journey called life. They have been with me through some good times and some bad times but there are few that are in my “front row” of life. There are three women who are the sisters that were not born to my parents but the ones that are there through the good and the bad, ups and downs, and everything in between. They are the ones who help me celebrate my greatest joys and wipe away my tears during my deepest hurts. We have been friends close to 30 years and I cannot imagine life without them. We respect each other’s differences while celebrating our commonalities.

In a world that often pits women against one another through competition and comparison, the importance of building strong, supportive female friendships is so important. These connections not only enrich our lives but also play a pivotal role in helping women step into their confidence. Here’s why cultivating these relationships is essential and how they can empower women to thrive.

Creating a Safe Space for Authenticity

One of the most profound benefits of strong female friendships is the creation of a safe, judgment-free zone. Within these relationships, women can express their true selves without fear of criticism or rejection. This authenticity fosters self-acceptance, a cornerstone of confidence. When I’m with my friends who see and value the real me, any fear and/or self-doubt begins to diminish.

Encouragement and Empowerment

Supportive female friendships act as a powerful antidote to self-doubt. Over the course of our friendships, my friends have supported me through graduations, dealing with health concerns, depression,

and starting my therapy practice. They continue to push me towards my goals and dreams and when I begin to falter, they remind me why I started on that particular path. Friends who cheer for your achievements and encourage you during challenges provide a consistent reminder of your strengths and capabilities. This encouragement can inspire you to take risks, pursue goals, and step outside your comfort zone.

Sharing Wisdom and Perspective

Every woman carries unique experiences and wisdom that can be invaluable to her friends. These shared insights help broaden perspectives and provide solutions to life’s challenges. Whether it’s career advice, parenting tips, or strategies for self-care, the collective wisdom of female friendships can guide women toward better decisions and increased self-assurance.

Building Resilience Together

Life’s challenges are easier to face with a support system. Through shared struggles, such as navigating careers, relationships, losses, or personal growth, my friendships have helped me to learn resilience. Knowing you’re not alone in your journey fosters a sense of solidarity and strength.

Tips for Cultivating Supportive Female Friendships

While strong female friendships can form naturally, they also require care and intention. Nurturing these connections ensures they remain a source of strength, confidence, and joy. Here are some ways to cultivate and maintain supportive female friendships:

Be Vulnerable: Open up about your struggles and victories. Authenticity attracts genuine connections.

Practice Active Listening: Show interest in your friends’ lives and validate their experiences.

Celebrate Each Other: Acknowledge and celebrate milestones, no matter how small.

Resolve Conflicts Gracefully: Disagreements are natural; addressing them with kindness strengthens bonds.

Make Time: Prioritize your friendships, even amidst busy schedules.

The power of female friendships goes beyond companionship—they are a foundation for confidence, resilience, and personal growth. I am so glad that I have found my tribe of sister friends. They bring more than joy to my life. They are a source of confidence, strength, and empowerment for me. By lifting each other up, sharing wisdom, and navigating life’s challenges together, women can step boldly into their potential. In fostering these connections, we not only enrich our own lives but create a ripple effect of positivity and empowerment for others. So, let’s invest in each other and watch the collective confidence of women soar. ☺



Photo from canva.com

FINDING BALANCE

Prioritizing Family Without Losing Yourself

BY GLENNY ROSARIO



I was a little girl staying at my cousin's house when my aunt came into the room to wake us up. I can still remember the bunk beds: I was on the top one. All she said was, "Get ready, we are going to church."

My fifteen-year-old sister had been hit by a drunk driver and killed instantly. I remember standing at the coffin, confused and afraid, with no explanation from the adults around me. That moment left an imprint on me, though I couldn't understand it at the time. I was only seven years old, and I had already experienced the fragility of life.

Years later, as a single mother for my two boys, Brian and Brendon, I poured my entire life into them. I worked full-time in customer service for over 35 years, structured my days around their needs and managed everything from school drop-offs to dinner, homework and bedtime. I was proud of being their rock, but I was also struggling. I was trapped in a cycle of anxiety, panic attacks and unhealthy coping mechanisms like drinking. My heart was in the right place. I thought I was putting my family first, but I didn't realize that by neglecting my well-being, I was not setting the right example for them.

One day, Brian told me, "Mom, you live in fear, and that's not a good life." That moment was my wake-up call to begin a journey of healing and self-discovery. I learned that to prioritize your family, you must prioritize yourself, too. With their encouragement and support, I turned my life around, and I paid it forward by becoming a Certified Life Coach to help others, too. Here's what I learned:

SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Prioritizing family doesn't mean giving all of yourself all the time. Boundaries allow you to show up fully for your family without burning out.

Learn to say no to things at work or home that drain you or don't align with your priorities.

Set clear expectations with your family about your personal time and work time. You might tell your kids, "I'll spend quality time with you after one hour of work."

Teach your children boundaries by modeling them. When they see you protecting your time, they'll learn to respect theirs, too.

ADDRESS YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

You cannot pour from an empty cup, and your emotional state impacts your family more than you realize. Healing old wounds is one way I made big changes.

For me, my childhood grief turned into lifelong anxiety. Therapy, coaching, and journaling can help you address any unresolved pain or trauma you may have from your past.

Practice mindfulness or meditation daily. Even just five minutes while you are lying in bed can help reset your mind and emotions.

Replace negative self-talk with empowering thoughts and affirmations. Remember, your thoughts create your feelings, which drive your actions. This is the basis of life coaching.

MAKE TIME FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Personal growth isn't selfish; it's actually essential. When you grow, your family benefits from being around a more confident and happier version of yourself -

Invest time in reading, learning or hobbies that inspire you. After years of feeling stuck, reading a new self-help book every month became my lifeline.

Surround yourself with people who lift you up. Seek the kind of mentors, coaches or friends who encourage you and your dreams.

Set goals outside of your family life.

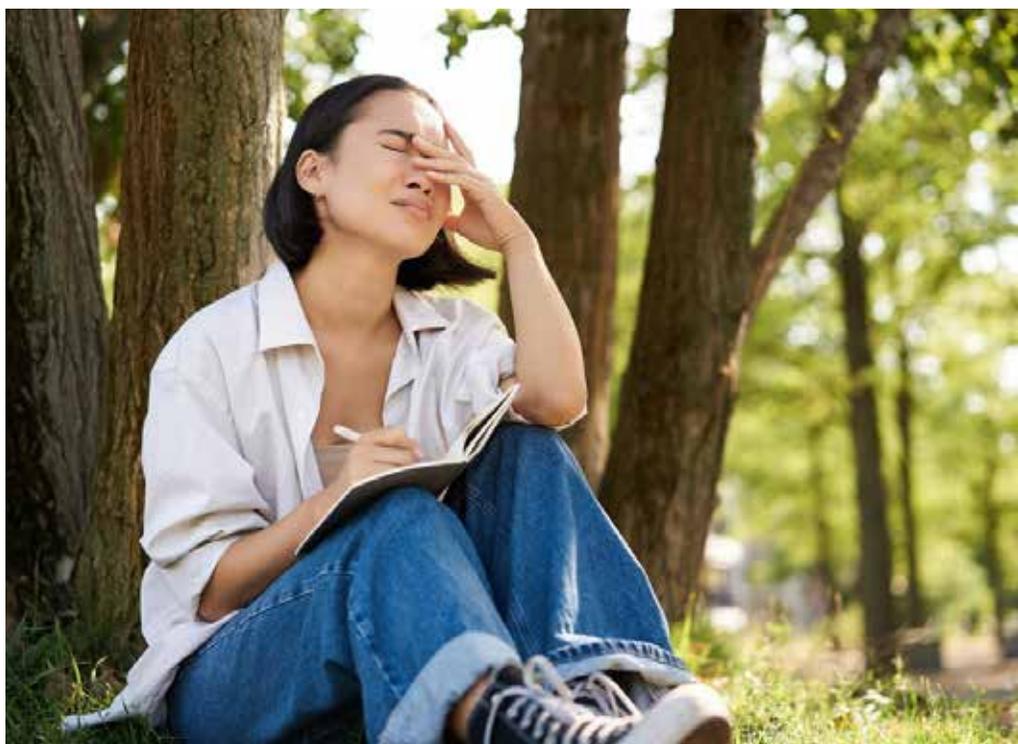


Photo by benzoix from freepik.com

Whether it's fitness, career aspirations or learning a new skill, give yourself permission to dream.

BE FULLY PRESENT

The best way to prioritize your family is to be truly present when you're with them. Quality matters more than quantity, and you'll feel better about taking time just for you.

Set aside intentional family time without distractions. Put the phone down, close your laptop, and give your loved ones your undivided attention.

Practice active listening. When your child or partner speaks, be present, validate their feelings, and connect on a deeper level.

Schedule dedicated family time this week. Even just one hour of focused connection can make a meaningful impact on your loved ones.

BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH ACTION

Fear held me back for years. I was afraid of everything: car accidents, the unknown and failure. Overcoming fear requires taking action, especially when it feels uncomfortable.

Become the watcher of your thoughts and

learn to question your fears. Ask yourself, What's the worst that can happen? Most fears lose power when we face them head-on.

Take small steps toward things that scare you. Each step builds confidence and you are teaching your family to do the same in the process.

Seek support when you need it. I hired a life coach and it changed my life. I also became a life coach myself after realizing the power of positive coaching.

Putting your family first doesn't mean losing yourself. In fact, the best way to serve your family is to prioritize your well-being so you can show up happy and healthy for them. In the process, you will be teaching them to do the same. It's a gift that will last a lifetime. As a single mom who once lived in fear, I know how hard it can be, but I also know it's possible to transform your life—and in doing so, inspire your family to live more fully, too! Remember that when you make taking care of yourself a priority, you give your loved ones the best version of you. Start small, take action today, and trust the process. Your family deserves it, and so do you!

WELLTHY WOMAN SPOTLIGHT

MEET CREATIVE ACTIVIST AND CHANGEMAKER VIRGINIA CUMBERBATCH

BY LYNNETTE PRICE

If I could describe Virginia Cumberbatch in one word, it would be extraordinary. She's that beautiful, accomplished friend who exudes confidence and grace, yet feels so approachable and grounded. You can imagine her as the friend in the corner of the room, not seeking the spotlight, but radiating joy and clapping the loudest as another friend takes the stage. She is, without question, the one cheering you on, reminding you that your success is worth celebrating.

Virginia is the epitome of a Wellthy Woman—a trailblazer in her own right, a creative activist and an example of what living authentically looks like. Coming from a family of changemakers, her life's work is rooted in a legacy of equity, justice and shalom—which she defined as a beautiful concept of peace and wholeness. She's not just walking her own path; she's building bridges and creating spaces for others, especially women of color, to tell their stories, elevate their voices and disrupt systems that perpetuate inequality.

In this interview, Virginia opens up about her journey of self-discovery, the courage it takes to live unapologetically and how she's redefining activism and leadership on her own terms. From her work as co-founder of Rosa Rebellion to her transformative experiences on lululemon's IDEA Global Advisory Board, Virginia is a force for change, weaving creativity and purpose into everything she touches. Read on to be inspired by her wisdom, her candor and her unwavering commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable world while also honoring her right to vacillate between rest and rage.



You're an incredibly eloquent storyteller, so we'd love to hear a story about you. How did Virginia Cumberbatch get started on this journey? What inspired the work you do today and who do you feel you're becoming as you continue to grow and evolve?

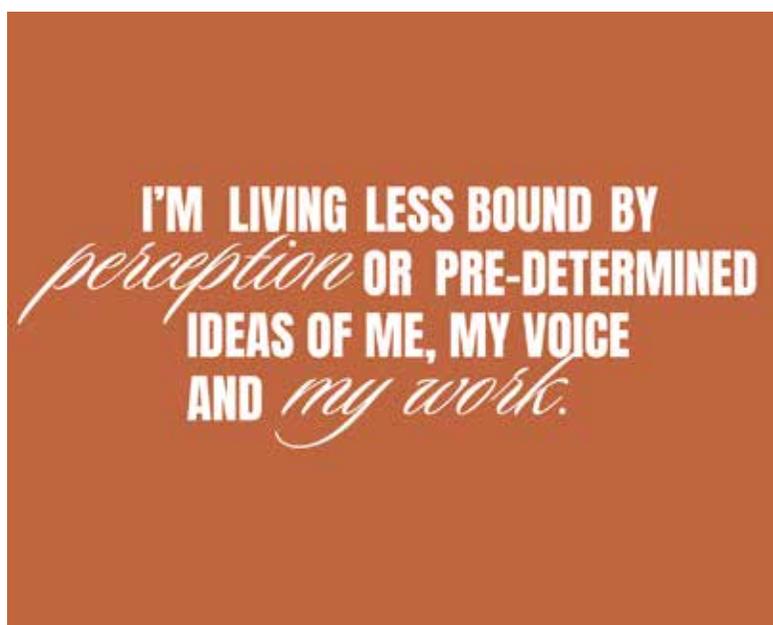
Thank you, that's so kind and generous of you to say. I attribute a lot of who I am and the work I do now to be a continuation of the legacy created by my parents and grandparents. A combination of attorneys, educators/professors, pastors and therapists, the common ethos of each of their life's work has been a commitment to community equity, justice and shalom. A Hebrew word that means peace, wholeness, complete - I feel like my life is a culmination of experiences that has me always asking, what part can I play in bringing shalom to my sphere of influence? What's missing, what needs changing, what needs building, what needs to be disrupted?

I think the last year or so I've been giving myself permission to be more unapologetic and less concerned with following rules, social order or cultural conditioning as a way of both freeing myself, but also an avenue for collective resistance and community liberation.

Our theme for this issue is More Confidence, Less Compromise. How do you define that for yourself, and what are some pivotal moments where you had to lean into your authenticity and confidence to avoid compromising who you are to succeed?

Wow, well without knowing that was the theme for the issue... such an echo of what I shared before. I'm living less bound by perception or pre-determined ideas of me, my voice and my work. There's been a few moments throughout my life that have helped me to be more confident and less compromising. I think earlier on in my leadership roles in Austin, Texas I was invited to sit at tables, on boards and podiums to speak to the need to rectify practices of inequity and systemic oppression. But retrospectively I think unconsciously I was doing so in a way that kept me palatable and accessible. Even the language I would use in my work around racial justice would be "I'm not here to condemn you, I'm here to challenge you." Or "I don't want to indict you, I want to invite you into the work of racial equity." But the truth is, 400 years into a history of genocide, dehumanization, and intentional systemic oppression, my current posture is that of radical resistance, and radical joy.

Moving to New York has been a part of that journey. Making the decision to leave a small pond, where I was a big fish in some ways felt counterintuitive and scary. But more than that, pursuing a space and season of life that would challenge me to be more unapologetic, less risk-averse, and less controlled has helped me become confident around WHO I am, and not just WHAT I do, and the work I produce.



During Vice President Kamala Harris's campaign, we witnessed Black women across the nation band together to fund her historic run. In your opinion, what role do Black women and women of color play in reshaping narratives around systemic injustice in the workplace, entrepreneurship, and cultural wealth? How can we adopt this coalition-building mindset consistently, beyond just political campaigns?

Sigh. Honestly my current vibe is, Black women go sit down. The truth is I think we've already been doing the work, we've already built the coalition, we've already designed a precedent. I am currently oscillating between this posture of resistance, resilience and rage. I think the first two have always been our story in this country. And I am exhausted that it has to be. And with the theme "more confidence, less compromise," I kind of want Black women to sit in our posture of REST and RAGE for a minute. We will collectively resist and disrupt naturally, because it's part of our cultural DNA, but I think it would be worth us taking a beat to give ourselves permission to not just go back to work and duty as usual and let this country know our anger and needs, and spend the time and energy to give it to ourselves and each other, and less energy given to these systems, spaces and institutions that won't reciprocate.

As Co-Founder of Rosa Rebellion, how do you define "creative activism," and how do you see it reshaping the way women of color advocate for justice and change?

I think the most powerful tool for disruption we have as Black women and women of color is our stories. And we know all too well the way in which our stories, our voices are silenced, siloed and severed from the collective American memory. We are watching that play out in real time

with anti-DEI legislation and the erasure of our stories in our education, political and cultural practices. So for us, we've endeavored to create spaces that invest in and elevate the voices of women of color doing the work to create a more equitable future. I think this requires us to be innovative and creative - meaning that change must take place beyond policy and systems, it should happen in our cultural spheres. The thrust of the idea behind Rosa Rebellion centers around the concept of "creative activism," which we define as "using whatever platform you have or whatever sphere of influence you have to integrate your activism into the work that you do on the daily." In that way, the phrase can have a double meaning: The activism itself can be a creative pursuit, like writing, dance, storytelling, or even plant therapy, done with the activist edge of "disrupting normative systems."

What was the most rewarding or transformative moment for you while serving on lululemon's IDEA Global Advisory Board?

Sitting on the inaugural board of lululemon's IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Action) was a beautiful experience. But one, I must be honest, I sort of rolled my eyes at when I was first approached. At the time (this was 2020 right before the pandemic), I struggled to understand how sitting on a board for a brand selling leggings would be valuable to my work and the larger conversation of equity. But it was proof that cultural centers offer such beautiful and creative ways to shift paradigms.

I think my most rewarding moment was learning how to adapt my work and voice for varied cultural and geographic spaces, doing this work in Europe, Asia, Australia, Canada and across the U.S., which has nuanced cultural needs. But my favorite memory is the work we did together, when lululemon came on board to be a partner for our Rebel + Rest programming helping us curate a racial trauma informed wellness retreat for more than 150 BIPOC activists.

**"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained."
~ Audre Lorde**

In your opinion, how does feeling valued in our professions impact our overall well-being? What have you learned about the connection between recognition at work and personal fulfillment?

Wow, have you been talking to my therapist? Not sure I can offer any sage advice or offer a meaningful contribution here. But this intersection has been something I've been meditating on over the last few months. My early adult-life in Austin from age 22 - 35 was the epitome of big fish, small pond. I was thrust into leadership very early, and my work garnered a lot of attention, visibility and accolades. From magazine covers and NPR interviews to awards. While I believe I was purpose driven and those rewards weren't motivation for me, the validation of being seen as a thought leader was valuable. It offered me a sense of validation, confidence and gusto to be a disruptor. Over the last few years my work pivoted to more behind the scenes working alongside global brands to support their ethos of equity, but that less community facing work meant less external validation or consistent affirmation of my work. I do think that has affected my sense of self and depleted a bit of my radicalness.

And while my work didn't shift much and I came to New York with a deep community, there has been a repositioning of my relationship to attention, visibility and the value of my work. And as a kid raised with the ethos of "community servant and steward" it's hard to acknowledge that I do want that external affirmation. So it's a work in progress. But I do think that this "less" visible season of life has offered me the permission to move from a place of purpose and personal vision, rather than moving from a place of response to what I felt the community needed or people around me want from me. While an adjustment, that has been freeing.

We need people in the world like you who fight so hard to make sure our stories are told and voices are heard, but what you do is definitely not easy. How do you unwind, find balance and take care of Virginia?

My response to this question used to be: sweat. I am a runner and I have to move my body daily to feel good and centered. But I think in these last few years the honest truth is offering myself space for intentional stillness (which is hard for me) and community. I love to host. I love to curate spaces. And it truly offers me joy, but also just energizes me in a way to reinvest for the work I do. Now that I am settled in my little nook of Brooklyn, in 2025 I want to host more - not connected to work or labor, just my people - laughing.

What's a quote that you live by?

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained." - Audre Lorde

If you had a theme song, what would it be and why?

Oooh, this is hard! Not sure I can narrow it down. But I am a RiRi girl through and through. Fellow Bajan girlie. And as a girl who appreciates the art of dressing and clothes, I just appreciate her persona. To bring it full circle, she represents being unapologetic. So, I think she offers me a bit of an alter ego.

With your rich background in racial justice and advocacy, what's one piece of advice you'd give your younger self stepping into this work?

I think in the last few years there has been a conflation around the work of racial justice and the visibility around one's work. Important work, meaningful work has been lost or overlooked because folks don't have 100,000 followers on Instagram, etc. And with that I think it can be hard to feel like your work is meaningful or impactful - but it's so important to realize that you are called to where you are called, and when walking in your purpose, that is the only affirmation you need. 🌿



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.



BREAKING FREE: A Therapist's Journey to Healing, Confidence, and Change

BY ARDENNA
DOWNING

My name is Ardena Downing, I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor.

I am an African American woman who is first generation everything. Most of my life I have worked on “figuring it out,” in order to survive, manage and thrive.

I am a licensed therapist and my motivation for this career path came from being the child of a mother who struggled with mental illness until her untimely death when I was exactly one week away from my 17th birthday. This event, along with other traumatic ones, influenced what I call a “sad spark” within myself. What I mean is, by experiencing unexpected grief, I learned to fearlessly take care of my wants and needs and approach life with a very flexible and daring attitude. In my mind, the worst had already happened, so why not approach life by “jumping in.”

The most recent evidence of this attitude is evidenced by my decision to move to California in January 2024 after having lived in Texas since January 2011, essentially thirteen years. My decision to leave was both personal, political, and professional. I made the difficult decision to leave my comfort zone that was also unhealthy for me in a variety of ways. I was experiencing significant distress in my career as a therapist and for the first time in my life had to consult an attorney regarding some of the laws in the state that could set me up to be sued by private citizens regarding

reproductive rights. I had also experienced a major winter storm and witnessed the state's poor response to this situation along with the mass shooting in Uvalde. As a children's therapist at the time, I had had enough. The cumulation of these experiences amongst others prompted me to move.

Announcing my move to California was not always welcomed by the people around me. I was questioned, and one old friend flat out told me that they didn't think I should leave. But what most people didn't understand was that my own mental and emotional health was taking a toll and I needed a change. One catalyst for this change was having my student loans paid off after being a public servant for over 10 years. I was no longer bound by the requirements of the program and could freely choose my path.

So I left for my overall health and peace of mind. It has been challenging, but worth the effort. I noticed a shift within myself when moving to California professionally. Up until this point, I had always worked as an employee for an organization. Job security was very important to me, including healthcare, PTO, etc. I initially searched for employment and friends were sending me jobs and encouraging me as well. But there was a part of me that didn't want to work for someone else, at least not initially.

I studied hard and fulfilled the requirements needed to be a licensed therapist in California. Once I obtained my license in May of 2024, I applied for jobs. I was interviewed and chosen for different employment opportunities. However, the conditions of employment for some of the companies seemed predatory, unethical and unrealistic. So I declined. Now I'm not sure if I want to go back to that life at all.

I own my own business as a therapist and also engage in contract work. As mentioned before, I am first generation everything. So

being a business owner and learning how to navigate the contractor life in order to survive financially has been at times scary. This type of freedom feels unreal at times because while I have been grateful for my employment history, I was limited in how I could conduct business. I had always felt constricted by the boundaries of the organizations I had worked for.

As a business owner and contractor, I have more flexibility in my schedule which has been a great improvement to my mental, emotional, and physical health overall. I have had the opportunity to be featured on a podcast, write an article for a magazine, and have even participated in an acting class recently with a well known actress for new experiences. I have created a journal for people 40 years and up and am currently developing workshops on mental health topics that integrate art, which has always been a healing medium for me that was lost in my previous professional life. I will be hosting my first workshop in March 2025 and I am so excited to start this series!

Earlier this year I had the life changing opportunity of travelling to South Africa for a professional workshop that explored attachment, sand tray, poetry, and EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing). This was both a life changing experience for me personally and professionally. I was asked to come back next Spring to be a group leader and look forward to returning to continue my professional and personal development. The knowledge gained from my first trip has and will be continued in my ongoing work.

I am pleased with my choices and do not regret leaving my life in Texas. I miss my family and friends, but if I did not leave, I felt that my spirit would have continued to dim. Since I have moved to California, some of my friends in Texas have commented on my “glow” and seeming to appear much

happier. I attribute this to improved weather, new learning experiences and being by the water which has been healing. I was born on the East Coast and so bodies of water, especially the beach, has always been a place of balance for me. I am finally able to have more consistency with places that bring me happiness and joy.

My attempts to redesign my life and turn my pain into peace for myself is an ongoing process. Freedom doesn't always feel free because of the unexpected transitions and changes that come along with it. My life would not be on the trajectory it is now if I had stayed put. I am finally prioritizing what is best for myself, and this journey has been worth it a thousand times over.



Confidence Isn't About Being Unshakable: It's About Knowing That Even When You're Shaken, You Will Rise

BY DR. KIKI RAMSEY

Living a life of confidence without compromising who you are means embracing the fullness of your authentic self and unapologetically stepping into your power. For me, it's about aligning my life and decisions with my core values, my purpose, and the vision I hold for myself—not the expectations others place on me. It's about understanding that confidence doesn't come from being perfect; it comes from being real.

Confidence starts with knowing yourself. I've learned that the key to truly living authentically is spending time reflecting on my beliefs, my strengths, and even my vulnerabilities. When I embrace the parts of me that make me unique, I'm able to show up fully in the world. For example, I'm a Black woman, a mother, a wife, and a CEO who has faced her share of challenges, but I've also discovered my passion for helping other women thrive. That passion fuels my confidence because I know I'm walking in my purpose.

Living confidently also means setting boundaries that protect your peace. In the past, I struggled with saying "no" because I wanted to be everything to everyone. But I realized

that every "yes" I give to something misaligned with my purpose is a "no" to myself. Confidence is standing firm in those boundaries, knowing that I don't have to overextend myself to prove my worth.

It's also about taking up space unapologetically. Society often sends messages, especially to women of color, that we should shrink ourselves to make others comfortable. But I've learned that my voice, my presence and my contributions matter. Confidence is about showing up, even when it feels uncomfortable, and reminding myself—and others—that I belong in every room I step into.

Lastly, living confidently without compromising who you are means being resilient in the face of criticism and doubt. I've faced moments where others questioned my capabilities or underestimated my potential, but I refused to let their limitations define me. Instead, I used those moments as opportunities to reaffirm my belief in myself and keep moving forward.

Confidence isn't about being unshakable; it's about knowing that even when you're shaken, you will rise. It's about being rooted in your values, grounded in your purpose, and committed to your truth. And when you live from that place, you not only empower yourself—you inspire others to do the same.



Breaking the Mold: Redefining Confidence as a BIPOC Woman

BY SHEENA YAP CHAN

To me, living a life of confidence without compromise means unapologetically embracing my identity, values and vision, no matter the circumstances. As a BIPOC woman, I've learned that confidence is not about perfection but about showing up authentically, even when the world tells you to shrink. It's about knowing that my worth isn't determined by external validation but by the courage I show in staying true to myself.

In my career, I've faced the expectation to conform, to fit into a mold that often didn't align with who I am. But I've

realized that confidence is about rewriting that narrative. It's about stepping into leadership spaces as my full self—a proud Asian woman—and showing others that authenticity is a strength, not a weakness.

In relationships, living confidently means establishing boundaries that honor my needs and refusing to settle for less than what I deserve. It's about building connections where I can thrive as myself, rather than shrinking to make others comfortable. Whether it's in friendships, partnerships or family dynamics, confidence allows me to lead with love and respect, both for myself and others.

At home, confidence means allowing space for imperfection. It's about being present, learning, and growing without the pressure to meet impossible standards. It's embracing the beauty of my own journey, no matter how messy it might be.

Confidence without compromise isn't always easy—it requires courage and constant self-reflection. But it's a reminder that I have the right to take up space, share my story and advocate for myself and others. It's about living in alignment with my purpose and inspiring others to do the same.

As BIPOC women, we often carry the weight of societal expectations that tell us to be less, ask for less or accept less. I've learned that true confidence is the strength to reject those limitations and embrace the fullness of who we are. It's standing firm in our power and showing the world that we will no longer compromise our dreams, our worth or our voices. 

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

Food as Empowerment

The Connection Between Nutrition & Confidence

BY TAMMY DAVIS

Have you ever been “hangry”? That all-too-familiar mix of hunger and frustration that makes you feel like a completely different person? It’s what happens when your body craves nourishment and your emotions spiral as a result. It reminds me of the classic Snickers commercials that say, “You’re not you when you’re hungry.” If I’m honest, I’ve felt this way more times than I’d like to admit.

Being hangry is just one example of how food—or the lack of it—can profoundly affect our mood, mindset, and overall well-being. During the pandemic, when many of us were stuck at home, I experienced this connection firsthand. Like so many others, I turned to food for comfort and out of sheer boredom.

My typical day started with an indulgent breakfast: fried chicken and waffles, scrambled eggs with cheese, fried potatoes with onions and peppers, baked apples, buttery biscuits, and a large cup of sugary coffee. That meal alone was enough to send me back to bed for a nap! By the time I woke up, I’d be hunting for my next meal—usually something equally rich and unhealthy.

It didn’t take long for the consequences to catch up with me. Within two weeks, I had gained 7 pounds, and my self-confidence had taken a serious hit. I felt sluggish, unmotivated, and trapped in a cycle of overindulgence. I knew something had to change, so I joined a virtual gym and started learning about clean eating. It was a game-changer.

Maya Angelou once said, “When you know better, you do better.” That phrase resonated deeply with me as I began educating myself on how to “eat to live” instead of “living to eat.” I discovered the importance of reading food labels, measuring portions, and eating smaller, balanced meals throughout the day. By swapping sugary, processed foods for lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables, I started to notice incredible changes—not just in my body but also in my energy levels and outlook on life.

Making small, consistent changes had a powerful ripple effect. I began working out 3–5 days a week, eating in a caloric deficit, and prioritizing rest. Over time, these habits led to a 15-pound weight loss and, even more importantly, a huge boost in confidence. But the most rewarding part wasn’t the number on the scale—it was the sense of accomplishment that came from setting a goal and achieving it.

The experience reinforced a simple but powerful truth: knowledge is empowerment. Learning how to fuel my body properly gave me the tools to not only improve my physical health but also nurture my mental and emotional well-being. When we treat food as fuel and nourishment, it has the power to transform not just our bodies but our entire lives.

Want to know where to start? Check out this delicious recipe.





Photo by Tammy Davis

Tuscan Chicken Zucchini Roll-Ups

Yields: 12 roll-ups / 4 servings

- 2 zucchini (sliced lengthwise)
- 1/2 rotisserie chicken (cooked & chopped)
- 1/2 package light cream cheese (softened)
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 bunch fresh parsley (rinsed, dried, chopped)
- 1 cup fresh spinach (julienne sliced)
- 2 tablespoon sun-dried tomatoes
- 4 ounce can tomato sauce
- 4 ounce can petite diced tomatoes (undrained)
- 1 packet Equal sweetener
- 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese (grated)
- 3 tablespoon basil pesto
- 3 teaspoon granulated garlic powder
- 3 teaspoon onion powder
- 3 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon lemon pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 350oF.
2. In a saucepan, on medium-low heat, add tomato sauce, petite diced tomatoes, 2 teaspoons of granulated garlic powder, 2 teaspoons of onion powder, 2 teaspoons of Italian seasoning and 1 Equal packet. Stir, lower heat and let simmer.
3. Using a mandolin slicer, slice zucchini lengthwise. Overlap 2 at a time and set aside in a pan.
4. Chop the rotisserie chicken and set aside half of it.
5. Julienne cut fresh spinach into strips and set aside.
6. In a medium bowl, combine light cream cheese, Greek yogurt, 2 tablespoons of basil pesto, grated parmesan cheese, 1 teaspoon of garlic powder, 1 teaspoon of onion powder, 1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning and 1 teaspoon of lemon pepper and mix well.
7. Add in chopped chicken, spinach, sun-dried tomatoes, and 1/2 of the fresh parsley.
8. Mix all ingredients well.
9. Add 3 ounces of tomato sauce (reserving some for garnish) to a 9x13 pan.
10. Add 1 tablespoon of the chicken mixture to sliced zucchini. Roll up and place seam down. Repeat the process until the pan is full.
11. Brush roll-ups with remaining pesto. Add remaining tomato sauce down the center of roll-ups. Cover with foil and place in the oven for 25-30 minutes until tender.

Garnish with remaining parsley and shaved parmesan cheese.

Serve immediately.

How I Turned My *Home* Into My *Sanctuary* Without Spending a Fortune

BY BRITTANY MCCOY

When I used to think of the word “sanctuary,” I imagined lavish spaces with designer furniture, plush throws, and endless Pinterest-worthy corners. The kind of homes you see in glossy magazines or on perfectly curated Instagram feeds. But as I found myself yearning for a calm, restorative space of my own, I realized that a sanctuary doesn’t have to come with a high price tag. It’s about creating a space that reflects who you are and brings you peace—on a budget you can afford. Here’s how I transformed my home into my personal sanctuary without breaking the bank.

DEFINE YOUR VISION

Before you start redecorating or rearranging, it’s important to define your vision for your home. What kind of space makes you feel at ease? What colors, textures, and styles speak to you? To help narrow this down, I turned to Pinterest as a source of inspiration. By creating boards for different rooms in my home, I was able to pin ideas that resonated with me and notice patterns in my preferences.

For instance, I found myself drawn to Scandinavian interiors with their clean lines, neutral palettes, and cozy touches. Others might gravitate towards the rich tones and organic shapes of mid-century modern design. Whatever your style, having a clear vision makes it easier to create a cohesive and calming space. And the best part? Browsing Pinterest is completely free!

Once I had a sense of my style, I used this as a guide when shopping or repurposing items. This ensured that every piece I incorporated felt intentional and aligned with my aesthetic, saving me time and money in the long run.

START WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

The first step in my journey was to take inventory of what I already owned. I spent a Saturday going room by room, assessing my furniture, décor, and even sentimental items that were tucked away in closets. You’d be surprised how much beauty and functionality you can rediscover in the things you already have. For instance, I repurposed an old canvas from my previous apartment that no longer fit with the new vision and created my own artwork to hang up in my space. I also upcycled old side tables to give a fresh new look in my master bedroom.

By giving new life to existing items, I saved money while adding personal touches that made my home feel uniquely mine.

LESS IS MORE: DECLUTTER FOR SERENITY

Creating a sanctuary isn’t just about adding; it’s also about subtracting. I’ve always been one to hold onto things for sentimental reasons, but I realized that clutter was preventing me from feeling calm and grounded in my space.

I donated clothes I hadn’t worn in years and even let go of hand-me-down furniture that felt more like a burden than a blessing. I embraced a minimalist lifestyle, transforming my home into a calming and serene environment where every item serves a purpose. The less I had, the more open and inviting my home began to feel.

CREATE A BUDGET AND OUTLINE PRIORITIES

Transforming your home into a sanctuary is easier when you have a clear budget and set priorities. Before diving into purchases, I outlined what was most important for my lifestyle. For me, working from home



Photos by Brittany McCoy



meant that my home office needed to be camera-ready for Zoom meetings as soon as possible. This meant allocating more of my budget to items like a good desk, a comfortable chair, and lighting that made me look professional on screen.

To stick to my budget, I created a list of essential items and estimated costs for each. This helped me avoid impulse purchases and focus on the areas that mattered most. For example, to achieve the built-in bookshelf look for my office, I chose affordable furniture from Ikea and spruced it up with accessories I already had, like framed art and a potted plant.

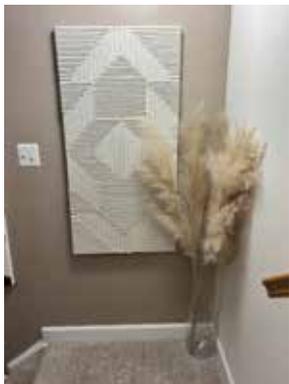
Whether your priority is a cozy living room, a serene bedroom, or an efficient workspace, outlining your needs first ensures that your money goes where it will have the most impact.

FIND DESIGNER DUPES FOR LESS

As a fashion designer, I've always been aware of the power of a good dupe. Just like in fashion, where you can find high-quality pieces that mimic designer styles, the same holds true for home décor. Pinterest became my go-to tool for finding inspiration and uncovering similar items at a fraction of the cost. Once I identified pieces I loved—like a mid-century modern chair or a sculptural yet artistic console table—I searched for affordable versions online and in stores or just made it myself!

Discount retailers like Ross, Marshalls, and TJ Maxx became treasure troves for finding stylish and budget-friendly décor items. I've snagged stunning vases, throw pillows, and wall art that look high-end but didn't break the bank.

The thrill of finding a dupe extends beyond savings—it's about achieving the look you want without compromise. By being resourceful and exploring these options, I was able to infuse my home with designer-inspired charm without spending a fortune.



PERSONALIZE WITH ART AND PHOTOS

One of the most meaningful ways I turned my home into a sanctuary was by surrounding myself with items that held sentimental value.

I created a gallery wall using black-and-white photos of key events that occurred during my journey as a fashion designer and inexpensive frames I picked up at Home Goods. The wall became a focal point in my home, reminding me of happy moments every time I passed by.



For art, I got creative. I downloaded free printable artwork online and framed it, and I even tried my hand at painting abstract designs on canvases from Hobby Lobby. DIY art projects were not only budget-friendly but also gave me a sense of accomplishment and ownership over my space. I can proudly say that every canvas art piece in my home I created!

CREATE AMBIANCE WITH LIGHTING

Lighting is one of the easiest and most affordable ways to change the mood of a room. I swapped out harsh, overhead bulbs for soft, warm-toned ones and invested in a few inexpensive LED corner wall lights and candles.

Rechargeable wall sconces and gallery wall lights became a game-changer, providing a cozy glow every evening without the need to keep buying new batteries or spend money on an electrician. I also added dimmers to some of my existing fixtures, which made my rooms feel instantly more inviting and intimate.

ADD TEXTURE AND LAYERS

A sanctuary is all about comfort, and nothing says comfort like soft textures and layered fabrics. I didn't go out and buy expensive throws or pillows; instead, I used what I already had. I mixed and matched blankets from different rooms and experimented with layering rugs.

For my bedroom, I wanted a luxurious feel, so I simply swapped my duvet cover for a crisp white one and added a chunky knit throw I found at Target. In the living room, I layered old sweater-like throw pillows with velvet ones to create a cozier vibe. These small changes made a huge impact without requiring a big investment.

REARRANGE AND REIMAGINE

One of the most impactful changes I made didn't cost a dime: rearranging my furniture. I played around with different layouts to make my rooms feel more open and functional. For example, I pulled my living room sofa away from the wall and added a small side table I already owned, creating a cozy reading nook.

I swapped my dressers between my bedrooms and covered one with peel & stick wall paper to maximize functionality and create a matching furniture set without the price tag. Small tweaks like these can completely transform a space, making it feel fresh and new without spending a penny.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Finally, I learned that creating a sanctuary isn't something that happens overnight. It's a process that evolves as you discover what makes you feel most at peace. Instead of rushing to buy everything at once, I focused on making small, meaningful changes over time. This approach not only saved me money but also ensured that every addition felt intentional and reflective of my personality.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Turning my home into a sanctuary on a budget taught me that luxury isn't about the price tag. It's about how a space makes you feel. By focusing on what I already had, adding personal touches, and embracing creativity, I was able to create a home that feels like a true retreat. And the best part? It's not just a sanctuary for me but a welcoming space for anyone who steps through the door.

If you've been dreaming of a sanctuary of your own, start small, get creative, and remember: peace and comfort don't have to come with a hefty price tag. 



Photo by GAWDSVISION

Breaking Barriers On Screen and Off

*Journey to Self-Love,
Self-Acceptance and Success*

a conversation with actress and model

**NZINGA
IMANI**

I love Tyler Perry's shows and one of my favorites is *Zatima*. If you haven't had a chance to watch it yet, it's on BET+ and it's about a couple named Zac and Fatima, who navigate their careers, relationship, friendships, trauma and the world together. Fatima's best friend is a beautiful, stylish and curvy woman named Angela, who is confident, funny and unapologetically herself. She defies the on screen stereotype that beauty and confidence is wrapped up in a size two and her answers to my questions made me really want to be friends with the person who plays Angela on the show and not just her character.

Nzinga Imani is the powerhouse behind Angela, and trust me, she's every bit as inspiring as the character she brings to life. As an actress, plus-sized model, fashion designer, makeup artist, and hairstylist, Nzinga is a woman of many talents, but what truly stands out is her unwavering confidence and commitment to self-love. Her journey hasn't just been about breaking barriers in industries that weren't always inclusive—it's been about rewriting the rules entirely. Through her work, she empowers women to embrace their authenticity unapologetically, proving that beauty, success, and confidence come in every shape and size. After interviewing her, I can confidently say that Nzinga Imani isn't just someone you'll admire on screen—she's someone you'll root for in real life.



Photo by GAWDSVISION

Tell us more about you? We know that you're an actress who plays Angela on Tyler Perry's *Zatima*, a beautiful plus-sized model, a fashion designer, makeup artist and hair stylist, but take us back to the beginning. Who is Nzinga Imani, the woman, how'd she get started in her career and how do you stay true to who you are while navigating it?

Growing up, I was the girl who loved performing, whether that meant singing, acting, or painting. I've always been drawn to the arts, but my journey to where I am now hasn't been a straight line—it's been full of discovery, perseverance, and self-love.

My career started with a deep love for music, which led me to study voice and to performing on stage. That experience opened the door to acting, where I truly found my footing. My modeling journey began as an extension of my belief in body positivity and self-confidence. I wanted to show that beauty comes in all shapes and sizes, and it's okay to embrace exactly who you are. From there, my passion for fashion, makeup, and hairstyling grew into creative outlets where I could empower others to feel their best.

Staying true to who I am has been a constant practice of grounding myself in my values. I prioritize authenticity, self-care, and the support of my family and loved ones, who remind me of my "why." In a fast-paced industry, it's easy to get caught up in expectations, but I keep my focus on being a role model for others who need to see someone like them thriving unapologetically. That commitment to representing my truth motivates me every day.

Your confidence is truly inspiring, especially to so many plus-sized women who may not feel as self-assured. Where does your confidence come from, and how do you empower other women

to embrace their authentic selves unapologetically?

My confidence comes from a deep journey of self-love and self-acceptance. I've had moments of self-doubt and insecurities like anyone else, but I've learned to embrace every part of who I am, flaws and all. My faith plays a big role in reminding me that I was created intentionally and that my worth isn't determined by anyone else's standards. Surrounding myself with positive, supportive people also helps me stay grounded and uplifted.

Representation matters so much. When women see someone like them on screen, on runways, or leading in creative spaces, it reminds them that they can do it too. Confidence isn't about perfection; it's about owning who you are—and that's something we all deserve.

I love film and television because I think healing comes through storytelling. What character have you played that you feel like you've learned the most from and maybe even applied what you learned to your own life?

Angela in Tyler Perry's *Zatima* is such a dynamic character—she's strong, loyal, and unafraid to speak her mind, but she also has moments of vulnerability. I find we share many similarities. What I've learned most from her is the importance of boundaries and self-respect, unfortunately I've learned that more from her mistakes in the show rather than her setting a good example. Either way it's been a gift to step into her shoes and tell a story that resonates with so many people.

Angela, your character on *Zatima*, is bold, sexy, and desirable. How has stepping into her shoes influenced your sense of self, and in what ways do you think Angela reflects Nzinga Imani?

Angela's style, boldness, and ability to own every space she steps into are so aligned with my online persona that I honestly feel like she was designed with me in mind. She's a fierce friend, a supportive partner, and someone who values herself deeply—and that's who I strive to be in my own life. She reminds me to embrace my sensuality and reminds me of the power in it. She's a celebration of everything that makes being a confident, curvy, successful, and stylish woman so powerful, and I feel honored to bring her to life.

Can you tell me five things you use or do in order to take care of your physical, mental and emotional health?

Absolutely! Taking care of my physical, mental, and emotional health is a top priority, especially in an industry that can be so demanding. Here are five things I do:

1. Daily Affirmations and Prayer

I start my day with prayer and positive affirmations to set the tone for my mindset. It's my way of grounding myself, expressing gratitude, and reminding myself of my worth and purpose.

Photo by GAWDSVISION



2. Movement I Enjoy

Whether it's taking a dance class or taking a walk, I make time for movement that feels good. Fitness is not about punishing my body but celebrating what I can do with it.

3. Journaling

Writing helps me clear my mind and process my emotions. I use journaling as a way to check in with myself, release stress, and stay connected to my goals.

4. Skincare and Self-Care Rituals

Taking care of my skin and indulging in little self-care moments like long baths or spa days is a way I show myself love. It's not just about looking good; it's about feeling good in my own skin and taking the time to pamper myself.

5. Quality Time with Loved Ones

Spending time with my family, close friends, and people who pour into me. Their love and support reminds me that I don't have to carry everything on my own.

These practices help me stay balanced and allow me to show up as my best self in all areas of my life.

Tell us about your fashion line; what inspired it and what is your hope for it?

My fashion line is all about celebrating confidence, individuality, and inclusivity. I was inspired to create it because I know firsthand how hard it can be for plus-sized women to find clothing that's not only stylish but also fits beautifully and makes them feel amazing. I wanted to design pieces that empower women to embrace their bodies and express themselves unapologetically. It's not just about creating clothes; it's about creating a movement that redefines beauty standards and promotes self-love.

My hope for the line is that it becomes a go-to for women who want to feel seen, celebrated, and confident. I want every woman who wears my designs to feel like they're stepping into their power. Fashion is such a personal form of self-expression, and I hope my line helps women tell their own stories in style.

Representation matters so much, especially in media and fashion. What does it mean to you to be a plus-sized Black woman breaking barriers in industries that haven't always been inclusive?

Being a plus-sized Black woman breaking barriers in media and fashion means everything to me. Representation is powerful because it allows people to see themselves reflected in ways that affirm their beauty, their worth, and their dreams.

For so long, the media and fashion industries have had narrow definitions of beauty, leaving out women who look like me. But I've learned that when you show up as your authentic self, unapologetically, you give others permission to do the same. My presence in these spaces is a declaration that we belong, that our voices and stories matter, and that there is no one way to be beautiful, successful, or powerful.

It's also a responsibility that I take seriously. I want to continue breaking down doors, challenging stereotypes, and proving that diversity isn't just important—it's necessary. By showing up as a curvy, confident, Black woman, I hope to inspire others to pursue their passions, embrace their uniqueness, and demand the representation they deserve.

What role does spirituality or personal philosophy play in keeping you grounded? Do you have any rituals or practices that help you stay centered in the face of challenges?

Spirituality plays a huge role in keeping me grounded. My faith is my foundation—it reminds me of my purpose, keeps me aligned with my values, and gives me the strength to face challenges with grace. Knowing that I'm part of something bigger than myself helps me navigate the ups and downs of life without losing sight of who I am or what I stand for. I find that I feel most connected to the creator when in water so I make it a point to pray whenever I find myself in water especially in the ocean.

Lastly, I prioritize gratitude. No matter what's going on, I try to find something to be thankful for—it shifts my perspective and keeps me rooted in positivity. This reminds me that every experience—good or bad—is part of my journey.

Photo by GAWDSVISION



REPRESENTATION IS POWERFUL
BECAUSE IT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO SEE
THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN WAYS
THAT AFFIRM THEIR BEAUTY, THEIR
WORTH, AND THEIR DREAMS.

If you could raid the wardrobe of any fictional character or celebrity, who would it be and why? And what's one fashion item you can't live without?

If I could raid anyone's wardrobe, it would be Regine from *Living Single* and Fran from *The Nanny*. Their styles were sexy yet classy, and sophisticated—always bold and unforgettable.

The one fashion item I can't live without is a great purse—it's the perfect accessory to complete any look not to mention it holds all the tools to make a great look such as: lotion, lip gloss or lipstick, and a great place to hide bulky keys that would undoubtedly ruin an elegant look.

Imagine you're hosting a dinner party and can invite three people, living or from history. Who's coming, what's on the menu, and what's the vibe of the evening?

If I could host a dinner party, I would invite Oprah Winfrey, Josephine Baker, and Maya Angelou. These women have all broken barriers, used their voices to inspire, and left legacies that continue to impact generations. The conversations around that table would be rich with wisdom, creativity, and empowerment. I'd love to hear about their journeys, the challenges they overcame, and their advice for staying true to oneself while creating meaningful change.

The menu would be a mix of soul food and island-inspired dishes to represent my roots—think honey-glazed salmon, jerk chicken, collard greens, mac and cheese, and plantain. For dessert, rum cake would seal the deal.

The vibe would be warm, intimate, and celebratory, with soft lighting, fresh flowers, and some jazz playing in the background. It'd be a night of storytelling, laughter, and connection.

In the spirit of our theme for this issue, *More Confidence, Less Compromise*, what does that mean to you and why is it important for Black women and women of color?

This resonates deeply with me because as Black women we often time out ourselves on the back burner while trying to help others. Less compromise means refusing to shrink in spaces where we deserve to thrive. It's about claiming our space unapologetically, setting boundaries, and rejecting the idea that we must conform to make others comfortable. This mantra is crucial for Black women and women of color because the world often tries to dictate our value, but when we embrace our confidence and stop compromising, we shift the narrative. 

Endorphins and Empowerment Fortune

How Exercise Can Fuel Both Your Confidence and Well-Being

BY LYNN MAXWELL

“Hey, [insert your name here], can you have this on my desk by noon?” “Honey, is it possible to grab this while you’re out?” “Mommy, my project is due tomorrow; can you help?” The constant demands of daily life – from the moment you wake up to the moment you (hopefully) drift off to sleep – can feel like an endless cycle. It’s easy to get caught on the hamster wheel of prioritizing everyone else’s needs before your own. This is often ingrained in us: it’s what we’re “supposed” to do as women, wives, and mothers.

But what about your own mental, physical, and emotional health? How many times have you promised yourself you’d go to the gym, only to find yourself too exhausted or overwhelmed to even consider it? Is it fair to constantly put everyone else’s needs before your own? This constant cycle of putting others first can take a significant toll on your well-being. However, prioritizing self-care, including physical activity, can be a powerful antidote. Exercise isn’t just about burning calories; it’s a potent tool for boosting self-confidence and improving overall mental health.

The ‘runner’s high,’ that euphoric feeling that can occur after an intense workout, is a powerful testament to the mind-body connection. This exhilarating state is triggered by the release of endorphins, natural mood-boosting chemicals in the brain. Beyond this immediate sense of euphoria, regular physical activity provides a steady stream of benefits that significantly boost self-esteem.

We often get caught up in the daily grind, neglecting our own needs and allowing self-care to slip. Our hair might become an afterthought, our makeup routine may dwindle, and our bodies might feel out of sync. However, incorporating physical activity into your routine can dramatically shift this narrative. Here’s how:

Stress Reduction

Stress is a natural response to challenges and threats—often referred to as your fight-or-flight response. Unfortunately, your body doesn’t always distinguish between the two, leading it to tense up and store additional fat as fuel for “later.” Stress can cause headaches, lack of sleep, and, in some cases, body pain. Left unchecked, it may bring on chronic illnesses, physical and mental disconnections, and other symptoms like dizziness, jaw clenching, chest pain, fatigue, and a compromised immune system.



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Physical fitness aids in reducing cortisol, the hormone responsible for responding to stress, maintaining blood pressure, and regulating inflammation. Elevated cortisol levels can lead to weight gain, muscle weakness, and severe fatigue (Santos-Longhurst, 2025). Exercise promotes mental clarity, improved sleep, and a relaxed state of mind when it's time to wind down for the evening.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), engaging in regular exercise reduces perceived stress and improves overall emotional resilience. Incorporating even moderate physical activity, such as walking or yoga, can have immediate and long-term benefits.



Body Image

Let's delve deeper into how physical fitness can transform your relationship with your body. As you consistently engage in thoughtful workout regimens, you begin to cultivate a greater sense of self-acceptance and appreciation. Instead of focusing solely on appearance, you start to value what your body can do and how it feels as it becomes stronger and more capable. These changes often challenge negative self-talk and image concerns, replacing them with confidence and pride. When milestones are achieved—whether it's running a mile, lifting heavier weights, or simply feeling more energized—take time to celebrate. These moments are evidence of your progress and proof that you're prioritizing your health.

A Symphony of Health

As a wellness coach, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect: Are you where you want to be physically, mentally or

emotionally? Remember, fitness is only one part of the equation. You cannot out-train a bad diet. Achieving your goals requires a harmonious balance—much like an orchestra. In fitness, the “sections” are diet, exercise, mental well-being, and hydration. Neglecting any one of these can throw the whole system out of tune. While early morning workouts can be challenging, imagine how you'll feel walking out of the gym as the “7 a.m.-ers” are walking in. By starting your day this way, you're more likely to make healthier choices throughout the day and avoid the 6 p.m. gym crowd. This consistency, paired with a tailored meal plan aligned with your goals, will give you the energy and confidence to conquer your day.

Although self-care may seem like a luxury, it's truly a necessity. By making empowered health decisions without guilt or societal pressure, you're not only taking control of your body but also your mind and spirit. Remember: small, consistent steps lead to monumental progress. Prioritize yourself, celebrate your victories, and own your journey. 

American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/>

Santos-Longhurst, A. (2024, September 23). *High cortisol levels: Symptoms, causes, and more*. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/high-cortisol-symptoms>

Timeless Confidence

Celebrate Your Beauty at Every Age

BY RLYNDA

Aging is a natural part of life that we all experience, yet it often comes with societal pressures and unrealistic standards of beauty. However, there's an undeniable beauty in embracing the journey of aging gracefully. It's not just about maintaining a youthful appearance; it's about respecting our skin and understanding its changing needs. As women over 40, we face unique challenges, including hormonal changes that can lead to fine lines, uneven skin tone, and dryness. A solid skincare routine can be an empowering ally in this process, boosting our confidence and helping us to celebrate the wisdom and beauty that comes with age.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A SKINCARE ROUTINE

A well-thought-out skincare routine is essential as we age. It allows us to cater to our skin's specific needs while providing the nourishment it requires. Aging gracefully means acknowledging that our bodies will change, and rather than resisting these changes, we can choose to work with them. By understanding our skin's evolving needs, we can develop a regimen that enhances our natural beauty and promotes healthy skin.

SKIN CARE TIPS FOR WOMEN OVER 40

Hydration is Key

Keeping your skin hydrated is crucial to combat dryness. Look for products that lock in moisture and maintain your skin's elasticity.

Sun Protection

Protecting your skin from harmful UV rays is essential, regardless of age. Incorporating sunscreen into your daily routine is a must.

Targeted Treatments

Fine lines and uneven skin tone can be addressed with specific serums and treatments designed for mature skin.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY SKINCARE SUGGESTIONS

Lower Budget

I recommend the Eucerin Q10 Anti-Wrinkle Skin Care Set for those on a tighter budget. This set includes a day and night facial cream for just \$23.98 on Amazon, along with their Hydrating Cleansing Gel for \$12.99. These products effectively help to nourish and hydrate the skin without breaking the bank.



Mid-Range Products



If you're looking for something in the mid-range, consider La Roche-Posay's Anti-Aging Skin Care Routine. This three-step routine includes:

1. Toleriane Hydrating Gentle Cleanser
2. Hyalu B5 Anti-Aging Serum
3. Anthelios AOX Serum with Sunscreen

These high-quality products are perfect for addressing the needs of mature skin and can be found at www.laroche-posay.us.

Luxury Splurges

For those willing to invest a little more, my go-to is SkinCeuticals. Their advanced skincare, backed by science, offers exceptional results. I recommend:

1. CE Ferulic Serum (Step 1)
2. Hyaluronic Acid Intensifier (Step 2)
3. Triple Lipid Restore 2:4:2 (Step 3)



This combination is designed to promote healthy, radiant skin and can be found at www.skinceuticals.com.

Aging gracefully is a beautiful journey that invites us to respect our bodies and the changes they undergo. By establishing a solid skincare routine tailored to our unique needs, we can enhance our confidence and embrace the aging process with open arms. Remember, every wrinkle tells a story, and each line is a testament to a life lived fully. Let's celebrate our beauty at every stage, knowing that taking care of our skin is not just a luxury but a necessity. Enjoy these tips and start your journey toward healthier skin today!

MAKEUP FOR MATURE SKIN: EMBRACING NATURAL BEAUTY

As we age, our skin undergoes various changes that can affect how makeup looks and feels. However, with the right approach, makeup can enhance our natural beauty rather than mask it. The foundation of a great makeup look for mature skin is a well-prepared canvas—hydrated skin that radiates health and vitality. The goal is to create a natural, lightweight makeup look that allows your true beauty to shine through, rather than transforming you into someone you're not.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION

Before reaching for your makeup products, it's crucial to start with a solid skincare routine. Hydrated skin is essential for achieving a flawless makeup application. Make sure to cleanse, tone, and moisturize your skin, focusing on products that provide deep hydration. Using a hydrating primer can also create a smooth base for your foundation, ensuring that your makeup glides on effortlessly.

KEY PRODUCTS FOR A FLAWLESS LOOK OVER 40

When it comes to makeup for mature skin, your choice of products will depend on your personal style and the occasion. Whether you're aiming for a "no makeup" makeup look or a more polished appearance, here are some essentials:

1. **Lightweight Foundation or Tinted Moisturizer:** Start with a lightweight foundation or tinted moisturizer to even out your skin tone. These products provide a natural finish and allow your skin to breathe, giving you that effortless look.
2. **Concealer:** Use a creamy concealer to target dark spots or the under-eye area. This will help brighten your complexion and diminish the appearance of dark circles. Remember to blend well for a seamless finish.
3. **Setting Powder:** To set your liquid products, lightly dust a translucent powder over your face. This step is crucial, especially for areas prone to creasing. A great tip is to apply powder after your liquid products to lock in the moisture while keeping your makeup intact.
4. **Blush:** A cream blush can add a youthful glow to your cheeks. If you prefer powder, opt for a lightweight formula that blends easily. This step adds a pop of color and liveliness to your complexion.
5. **Highlighter:** Strategically apply highlighter to the high points of your face—such as the cheekbones, brow bones, and the bridge of your nose—to bring light and dimension to your look. This creates a radiant effect without being overpowering.
6. **Mascara:** Finish your eye look with a coat of mascara to enhance your lashes. This simple step can open up your eyes and make you look more awake.
7. **Lips:** For a polished finish, choose a nude lipstick. Line your lips with a pencil that is a couple of shades darker than your natural lip color to define your lips and create a fuller appearance.

EMBRACING AGING WITH STYLE

Remember, aging is a beautiful journey, and we can navigate it gracefully and in style. Makeup is a tool that can help us feel confident and express our individuality, regardless of age.

If you're interested in more tips or personalized guidance, consider booking a one-on-one masterclass. I would love the opportunity to help you enhance your beauty. Please visit me at www.makeupbyrylnda.com to schedule your appointment and learn how to look and feel your best. Embrace your beauty at every age—we're all unique, and that's something to celebrate! 

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. 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.



Question

My family (extended family) is so toxic and the more I go to therapy and start healing, the harder they are to be around. How do I go about declining family invitations without causing more conflict and toxicity?

Answer

First, I'd like to applaud you for taking the time to work on yourself in therapy; it is a courageous thing to do! Sometimes a potential consequence of therapy is insight into unhealthy and negative family dynamics. This can create a great sense of discomfort. Discomfort gives us the opportunity to make changes, which aren't always easy decisions.

So, to what degree do you want to decline the invitations? Do you want to completely separate yourself from family or engage in a compromise with yourself where you attend maybe some functions and not others, and/or give yourself a firm time limit on being around them? Perhaps you declining over time may be a doable transition.

If you are wanting to decline the invitations completely, it will be helpful to understand that family may be upset, confused and/or hurt by your choice. Your absence may influence these feelings, but by communicating your choices ahead of any upcoming event, you give yourself and family the opportunity to process the decision instead of being faced with a surprise.

You can choose to provide an explanation such as "I have been doing some self reflection and have discovered that attending family gatherings reminds me of certain things that I'm trying to work through. It is a challenge for me, and I've decided to take a step away." This response doesn't accuse anyone, but gives a hint of responsibility towards self with an explanation.

Another communication approach that may help is what I call the hamburger method. Imagine a top and bottom bun with a piece of meat in between. The top bun represents communicating the things you appreciate about your family. For instance, despite their toxicity you may love your family, have some good memories, etc. The meat represents communicating the parts of the relationship that isn't working, including example(s) if needed. The bottom bun represents communicating a solution, compromise, and/or potential resolution. For instance, one may say "I appreciate the invitation and love y'all. Also I've had some uncomfortable experiences, for instance when _____ happened, I felt _____. This is difficult for me but I've made the choice to step back from gatherings. I still want to have communication, how can we make this work? I hope you are able to understand."

While you may clearly, respectfully and calmly express your choice, your family's interpretation of the decision can still influence some conflict. We have control over how we communicate and choose to respond; we don't have control over how others perceive and react to what is being said.

What may help with communication is determining with whom and how you want to inform. In some families multiple people are present, sometimes there is only one person who serves as a messenger to others. Is there a person whom you feel somewhat comfortable around that you can convey the message to? Perhaps in person with them, and on the phone with others?

Also consider this: If your family does respond in a toxic and conflicting way, are you prepared to continue to set boundaries for your own wellbeing? Sometimes when dealing with family conflict we may "fold" to keep the peace.

When setting boundaries with others it is important to refrain from engaging in long explanations of your choice. When we do this, it can make the conversation more complicated. Keeping it short can help alleviate some anxiety about effectively speaking your mind. Multiple short conversations may be more tolerable as well. Processing your thoughts and feelings after these conversations with your therapist and a trusted friend can be helpful.

If you are still in therapy, I would suggest engaging in role play to prepare for your conversation(s). Role play can provide an opportunity for you to take on the position of yourself and family to further develop some insight into how to respond. It can also give an opportunity to help you develop some empathy for yourself and them, which may positively impact a natural and compassionate way to communicate with family effectively.

I would suggest continuing to process the changes in your connections to family relationships in therapy because as issues arise with you setting boundaries, you are going to need ongoing support. There can be some feelings of grief associated with these decisions. Even when we are making a healthy choice for ourselves, it doesn't mean it will "feel" right. Please be kind to yourself as you go through this process. Remember, you are capable of making healthy uncomfortable choices to reflect the life you want to live.



Ardenna Downing
Licensed Professional Counselor
Callery Counseling PLLC

Question

I haven't seen my father since I was 8. I'm 42 and think it might be the reason I'm still single. I don't trust that people are going to stay in my life so I don't get too close. What can I do about this because I don't want to be this way?

Answer

This question indicates some insight and self reflection on the connection between childhood experiences and relational attachment with others. This is a great starting place for healing! Experiencing abandonment at such a young age can have profound and long term impact on relationships. Negative early life experiences can shape our beliefs and perceptions of ourselves, others and the world at large. These experiences can naturally contribute to feelings like fear and anxiety, which may influence behaviors like disconnecting from others in order to protect ourselves.

Based upon this early life experience, it makes sense that it's a challenge for you to trust people. It seems like you are recognizing that the way you have adapted to this early life experience is contributing to ongoing issues for you.

Are there any thoughts and beliefs about self that may indicate a lack of worthiness of deserving closeness? Are you struggling with a sense of self, for instance, believing maybe you aren't worthy of love and connection to others? Also, it's important to take a moment to reflect on your thoughts and feelings about being single. Do you view this as an opportunity to reflect on and improve yourself in order to be a healthy partner, or are you judging yourself because of the single status? Self judgement can exacerbate unpleasant feelings. These types of beliefs and feelings can further influence behaviors that contribute to disconnection.

There are several steps you can take regarding concerns. For one, gaining knowledge about healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relational dynamics. When you understand what's healthy, it gives you a reference point of what to work towards, what to avoid, and what to process within yourself and in relationships.

One great resource is the book *Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find and Keep Love* by Amir Levine and Rachel Heller. This book explores different attachment styles, how they develop, and what we can do about them. One gem from the book is the notion that in order to thrive, we need a secure based attachment.

Secure attachment looks and feels like consistency, safety, open communication, vulnerability, healthy boundaries, etc. Evaluate the relationships around you now. Do they demonstrate secure characteristics and dynamics? If so, notice how you respond when you experience connection to them. Ask yourself, how have you maintained these relationships?

Be curious about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when you have the urge to disconnect from others. Under what circumstances does this tend to happen? Sometimes unhelpful thoughts and behaviors arise when we are stressed, triggered and uncomfortable. Our feelings are signals as well; noticing them, taking a step back, and soothing ourselves before responding to them can be key. Sometimes it's checking in and asking yourself this question: "Am I responding out of fear and anxiety, or a clear and calm head space?" When you reflect on the answer to this question, you can better plan to respond. You can take it a step further and reframe your negative thoughts when they come. For instance, if a thought such as "I can't do this," arises, take a step back, breathe and reframe to "This is hard, and I am capable."

Plan and practice responses for when you anticipate an upcoming moment of connecting with someone. We can prepare by thinking about what to do in each circumstance. If you discover that you tend to disconnect when another person is engaging more with you, how can you respond instead? For example, you can communicate to someone your needs right now such as patience, and small steps. Communicating upfront with a person can provide you insight into how they respond to boundaries and genuine interest in getting to know you. Taking small steps that challenge discomfort is helpful!

All of these suggestions can be overwhelming to do on your own. I recommend also engaging in therapy to process life experiences and experience additional insight and support. Last but not least, be kind to yourself as you go about this journey. You have lived with this life experience for 42 years. If you give yourself grace and kindness as you heal when challenges and missteps occur, you may be less likely to give up on your efforts. You got this! 



Helping the BIPOC Community Live Well Without Shame



www.bipocwellnesscollective.com

THE WEIGHT OF AUTHENTICITY

Navigating Fear and Finding Freedom as a BIPOC Woman

BY DR. DOMENIQUE HARRISON, MPH, LMFT, LPCC

Overcoming fear and stepping into our most authentic selves will always come at a cost, but the beauty lies in the long-term gains. We all have a story of overcoming fear and seeing something come to fruition with intention, courage, and consistency. However, staying motivated, energized, and encouraged to be our authentic selves—especially as BIPOC women—where the risk of being whole, and our worth and value are consistently questioned—is overwhelming.

BIPOC women, whether in our professional or personal relationships, are asked to live the most incongruent lives. We are praised for an act of strength in one area of our life and decimated for small moments of vulnerability and humanness in another. Receiving conflicting messages confuses us and limits our perceived communal, relational, and self-acceptance.

And sadly, these discordant messages have been with us all our lives, beginning in childhood. The messages received from maternal guardians were about remaining in our feminine energy - clean, vibrant, petite, proper, pretty, put-together - to obtain the ultimate prize of being chosen by a man: prioritizing cis-hetero-monogamous partnership over all things. Simultaneously, we were then rigidly taught to remain in our masculine energy and hold full and singular responsibility for our safety, finances, employment, housing, and future because “men cannot be depended on.”

Our teachers, school administrators, coaches, and other adults external to our household taught us that our worth was based on the external—what we know, what we do well, and how resilient we are. The pressure to know everything, do everything well, and be everything for everyone has driven us toward people-pleasing, perfectionism, and all-or-nothing thinking that keeps us stuck in the most limiting narratives.

Then, we graduate from college and graduate school and become professional women who are promised less and egregiously requested for more. We are asked to prove our intellect, leadership, character, and power while being told to be smaller, show docility, tone down our voices, step aside, and be team players. So it makes you wonder: How can we fully express ourselves when the demands placed upon us conflict?

That said, being authentic comes with its share of pressure, challenges, and conflict for BIPOC women. It requires the courage to be disliked and the stress of being misunderstood. However, overcoming the fear, confusion, and disorientation of being ourselves in professional, personal, and communal relationships is one of the most rewarding, self-actualizing, and freeing things we can ever do for ourselves and the people around us.

So what does it mean to live authentically, and how does it free us in our relationships?

Authenticity is defined as the state of being genuine to ourselves and others; when we step into authenticity, we bring forth all the parts of ourselves without judgment and with self-compassion. When we live authentically, we allow for the internal—thoughts, beliefs, and values—and external—actions and words—to be aligned and congruent. When we live authentically, we are active in our challenge of cognitive dissonance and incongruence. When we live authentically, affirming ourselves first, we experience less anxiety. If living authentically provides us with so much present and future good, why wouldn't we embrace it?



Photo from freepik.com

Did someone say, Fear...

The fear of being seen, judged, disregarded, invalidated, denied, denigrated, and experiencing inequity, prejudice, and injustice impacts BIPOC women more harshly than most. And sadly that fear is two-fold—holding both truth and falseness.

When in-the-moment fear surfaces, our brain and body respond by leading us toward a path of first consciousness: fight, flight, freeze, and appease or—with a breath and a pause—toward another path of second consciousness: flexibility, nuance, and curiosity. Fear also coalesces around our future. Future fear is deceptive and disheartening. It is self-sabotaging and substantiated by assumptions connected to past experiences.

Coincidentally, future fear is also about needing to self-protect and control the uncontrollable—other people and other people’s emotionality.

That said, fear can be debilitating and exhausting. However, when we—

- (1) Embrace authenticity with and through fear,
- (2) Use strategies and resources to minimize fear’s intensity, and
- (3) Remind ourselves that we have done hard things before;

Being our most authentic selves with our communities can be the most empowering and healthy action we ever do.

First, we don’t have to start big to be our authentic selves with fear. For example, visualize your journey towards authenticity in your relationships as a step ladder. We all have to take that first step to traverse the ladder. While it may feel scary as we look up and see what is to come, each rung provides a moment to situate yourself, settle, and feel what’s happening within us. Each rung signifies a minor but healthy risk

toward authenticity; it involves sharing a piece of yourself and being open to vulnerability, allowing you to receive it in return and set an example for others. Being authentic on a small scale could also look like permitting yourself to respond, “I don’t know,” to a question you’ve been asked in conversation with a friend,



Photo drobotdeanpic from freepik.com

colleague, or family member. This example is something I wrestle with often with my BIPOC women clients, who, in both their personal and professional spaces, are expected to have all the answers and facts. When you relinquish the need to “be right” or “have an answer,” you re-establish your humanity and sever the superwoman story.

Second, when you use specific strategies and resources in intimidating authenticity moments, you see fear’s intensity lessen. Some of my go-to resources with clients are body-based exercises that help reduce anxiety, self-compassion exercises that remind us of our worth, and boundary-setting actions that allow us to value our “no,” our space, and our needs. Some of my favorite body-based resources include the Balance meditation app and Open meditation app, *The Vagus Nerve Deck: 75 Exercises to Reset Your Nervous System* by Melissa Romano, and a walk in nature. So, consider trying meditation, practicing 1-2 of the 75 exercises from *The Vagus Nerve Deck*, and stepping outside to smile at the sun. When considering self-compassion, identify your favorite image, affirming phrase, or gesture to remind yourself of your worth. Lastly, for

boundary setting, I recommend reading *Set Boundaries, Find Peace* by Nedra Glover Tawwab, and *Setting Boundaries that Stick* by Juliane Taylor Shore and putting their boundary-based wisdom and suggestions into practice.

Third, remember that you have done hard things before. Whether you just had a tough conversation yesterday or years prior, you can access past experiences that show you moving through, recovering, and surviving complex situations. And if you’ve done it before, you can do it again. If you have difficulty remembering a moment of courageous authenticity, make it a journaling practice to write or record the stories of your most authentic moments with friends, partners, and colleagues. Then, make it a habit to write down or record these moments in the present as they happen. Reading and listening to our previous moments of strength in vulnerability will always be sustaining and validating.

To close, stepping into our authentic selves can feel risky, but those healthy risks create opportunities for BIPOC women to transform their lives for the better. When we show up authentically, we interact in ways that reflect integrity, strength, and groundedness—ways we can truly be proud of. As you move toward authenticity, take small, intentional steps, lean on deliberate tools, and remind yourself of the hard things you’ve already overcome. Trust that your intentionality will reveal its beauty. 

Redefining Success and Happiness

A Therapist's Tale on How Letting Go of Societal Expectations Can Lead to More Authentic Joy

BY ERIKA BROOKS



In a world dominated by constant comparison and rigid definitions of success, it's easy to feel trapped. Wealth, status, and productivity are often heralded as the ultimate benchmarks, while happiness is marketed as a shiny product tied to material possessions and unattainable perfection. Yet, for many, these pursuits leave an unmistakable void. As a therapist, I've walked alongside individuals who've faced this paradox, and I've lived it myself. This is a story about unraveling societal expectations and discovering a more authentic path to joy.

THE BURDEN OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

Societal norms have long dictated what success and happiness should look like. Success is often equated with long hours at work, earning promotions, owning a home, or achieving accolades. Happiness has become defined as the images seen on social media - a perfectly staged family portrait. Yet, these ideals can be misleading, leaving many feeling inadequate, disconnected, or unfulfilled.

The disconnection happens when we're pressured to fit into molds that don't align with our true selves. The relentless chase for external validation creates an inner void, as we prioritize what we "should" want over what genuinely brings us joy. Recognizing this gap is the first step toward change.

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BREAKING FREE: THE JOURNEY TO LETTING GO

Recognizing the disconnect between societal expectations and personal fulfillment is just the beginning. The real transformation happens when we actively choose to redefine success and happiness on our own terms. This shift doesn't happen overnight—it requires intentional reflection, unlearning deeply ingrained beliefs, and embracing a mindset that prioritizes authenticity over external validation.

For me, this journey started with an honest evaluation of my values and the realization that I had been chasing an idea of success that wasn't truly mine. Letting go of these expectations required conscious effort, but it led to a deeper sense of fulfillment. Here's what helped me—and what can help you—navigate this path:

Reflection and Self-Awareness:

Taking time to pause, journal, or engage in therapy can uncover what truly matters to you. Ask yourself: What brings me joy? What energizes me? What do I cherish most? These questions can help bridge the gap between societal pressures and your authentic desires.

Reframing Perspectives:

Shifting from external validation to intrinsic worth is a game-changer. Instead of asking, "What will people think?" start asking, "Does this align with who I am and what I value?" This simple shift allows you to make decisions rooted in self-trust rather than fear of judgment.

Setting Boundaries:

Part of letting go means protecting your energy and well-being. Saying no to obligations that don't align with your values is an act of self-respect, not selfishness. The more you honor your own needs, the easier it becomes to create a life that feels genuinely fulfilling.

DISCOVERING AUTHENTIC JOY

As we release the weight of societal expectations, we open ourselves up to a more fulfilling way of living—one rooted in authenticity and self-trust. Authentic joy is deeply personal and cannot be defined by one-size-fits-all standards. It's about living in alignment with your values, cultivating meaningful relationships, and pursuing passions without fear of judgment.

Here are some ways to nurture authentic joy:

Mindfulness and Gratitude Practices

These practices ground you in the present and help you appreciate what truly matters. Simple acts like savoring a cup of tea or expressing gratitude to a loved one can shift your perspective.

Embracing Imperfection and Vulnerability

Letting go of the need to appear perfect frees you to be yourself. Vulnerability fosters deeper connections and a sense of belonging.

Pursuing Passions

Whether it's painting, gardening, or traveling, engage in activities that bring you joy for their own sake, not for external validation.

To anyone feeling trapped by societal definitions of success and happiness, I encourage you to pause and reflect. What truly matters to you? Start small: journal, meditate, or speak with a therapist. Also, connect with your tribe, those who keep you authentically you. Remember, the path to authentic joy begins when you stop chasing what you think you should want and start listening to what your heart truly desires.

In letting go, you create space for a more fulfilling, meaningful, and joyful life. And in doing so, you redefine success on your own terms. 



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Healing From Past Compromise

Reclaiming Confidence And Stepping Into Your Power

BY SHEENA YAP CHAN

REFLECT ON THE COMPROMISES YOU'VE MADE

As BIPOC women, many of us have grown up in environments where compromise was a survival skill. We've often had to navigate spaces that weren't designed for us—whether in our workplaces, communities, or even within cultural norms—by diminishing parts of ourselves to fit in, avoid conflict, or gain acceptance. These compromises can take a toll on our mental health and confidence, leaving us feeling disconnected from our authentic selves.

But healing is possible. Reclaiming our confidence and learning to live authentically is not just about refusing to compromise in the future; it's about understanding why we felt the need to compromise in the first place, forgiving ourselves, and building a life aligned with our values. In my book, *The Tao of Self Confidence*, I share stories of women who have taken this journey—women who have transformed their lives by embracing their true selves and stepping into their power.

Healing from compromise is an act of self-love, and it requires intentionality, patience, and the courage to honor your authentic self. Here are some ways to begin that journey:

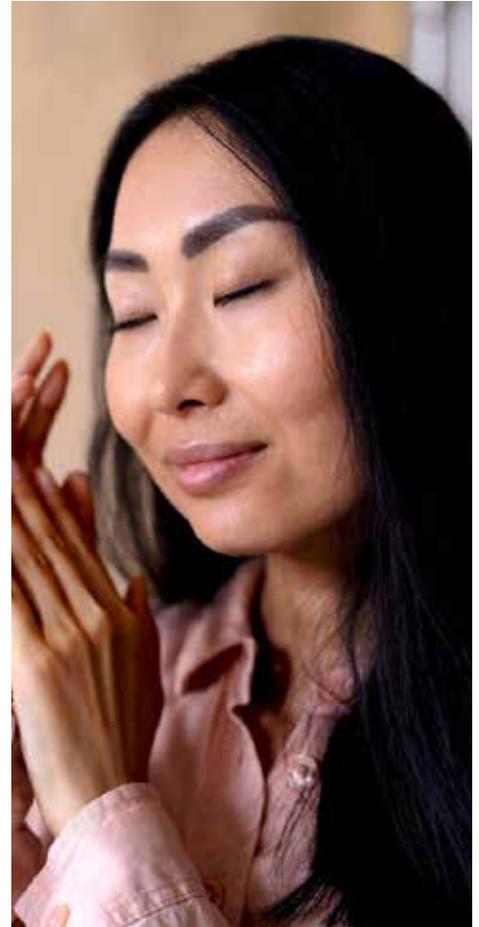
The first step to healing is acknowledging the compromises you've made in the past. This isn't about blaming yourself or others—it's about creating awareness. Take time to reflect on the moments when you felt the need to compromise your values.

You might ask yourself:

- What were the circumstances that led to this compromise?
- How did it make me feel in the moment and afterward?
- What did I learn about myself from that experience?

For example, I once worked in a corporate environment where I felt pressured to downplay my cultural identity to fit in. I stopped sharing parts of my background, avoided bringing ethnic food to work, and even adjusted the way I spoke to seem more “professional.” While this helped me avoid unwanted attention, it also made me feel like a stranger to myself. Reflecting on this allowed me to see how much I had given up to fit into a space that didn't truly value me.

Acknowledging these compromises is powerful because it allows us to let go of the shame or guilt we might carry and start focusing on how to honor ourselves moving forward.



REFLECT ON YOUR VALUES

Compromise often happens when we're unclear about our values or when external pressures override our internal compass. Reconnecting with your values is a crucial step in reclaiming your confidence.

Take some time to identify the core principles that matter most to you. These could include:

- Integrity
- Authenticity
- Creativity
- Family
- Cultural identity
- Independence

Write them down, reflect on why they matter, and consider how your decisions align—or don't align—with them. When you're clear about your values, it becomes easier to make decisions that support your authentic self. For me, embracing my cultural identity became a priority, and I made a conscious decision to let it shine in every aspect of my life.

PRACTICE SETTING BOUNDARIES

One of the hardest parts of healing is learning to say “no.” As BIPOC women, we're often conditioned to prioritize others' needs over our own, which can lead to overextending ourselves and making compromises that drain us emotionally and mentally.

Setting boundaries is not selfish—it's an act of self-respect. Start small by saying “no” to things that don't align with your values or bring unnecessary stress. For example, if a work task requires you to compromise your principles, try proposing an alternative solution that feels more authentic to you.

Remember, every time you say “no” to something that doesn't serve you, you're saying “yes” to yourself.

BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Healing doesn't happen in isolation. Surround yourself with people who uplift you, honor your authenticity, and celebrate your unique strengths. Seek out spaces where you feel seen, whether it's through mentorship, cultural organizations, or online communities.

When I started my podcast, *The Tao of Self Confidence*, I wanted to create a space where women, especially Asian women, could share their stories and inspire others. Hearing these stories helped me realize I wasn't alone in my struggles, and it gave me the courage to embrace my own authenticity.

Your community can be a source of strength, reminding you that you're not alone and that your voice matters.

CELEBRATE YOUR GROWTH

Healing is a journey, not a destination. It's important to recognize and celebrate every step you take toward living authentically. Whether it's asserting yourself in a meeting, reconnecting with a cultural tradition, or simply feeling more comfortable in your own skin, every small win is worth acknowledging.

For example, I started celebrating my growth by journaling about moments when I honored my values. Over time, these small reflections helped me see just how far I had come in reclaiming my confidence.

Celebrating your growth reinforces your progress and reminds you that you're capable of living a life that reflects who you truly are.

TURN YOUR PAIN INTO POWER

Many of the compromises we've made come with lessons about resilience, strength, and adaptability. Instead of dwelling on the past, use those lessons to empower yourself and others. Share your story, mentor someone who's navigating similar challenges, or advocate for systemic change in spaces that require it.

For example, if you've experienced workplace environments that made you feel invisible, consider how you can advocate for more inclusive practices or mentor someone who's just starting their career. Turning your pain into power not only helps you heal but also creates a ripple effect of empowerment for others.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Healing from compromise is a deeply personal journey, but it's one that can lead to profound transformation. By reflecting on the past, reconnecting with your values, and taking intentional steps to honor your authenticity, you can reclaim your confidence and create a life that feels true to who you are.

As BIPOC women, our voices, values, and stories matter. Let's celebrate our resilience, embrace our authenticity, and move forward with more confidence and less compromise. Together, we can inspire others to do the same and create a world where no one feels the need to shrink themselves to fit in.

Remember: You are enough, just as you are. And the world needs the unique perspective only you can bring. 

Genuine Life

Embracing My Cultural Identity with Integrity

BY MARIA RHEBA ESTANTE

As a Filipino-American woman navigating the complexities of modern life, life has taught me that true confidence emerges not from conforming to others' expectations, but from deeply embracing the self – including one's cultural heritage, values, and lived experiences. Over the years I've collected intention practices in my personal toolkit for living in the now while staying close to ancestral wisdom.

Central to my journey has been the power of culturally informed narrative therapy. This approach has helped me reframe my story not as one of straddling two worlds, but as someone uniquely positioned to draw strength from both. Through therapy, I've learned to recognize how my cultural background shapes my perspective and to value these insights as assets rather than obstacles.

Maintaining strong connections with my heritage has been crucial. I actively network with AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) professional organizations and social clubs, where I enjoy camaraderie among others who share similar experiences. These spaces allow me to collaborate professionally while celebrating our shared cultural identity. I've found that success doesn't require abandoning my cultural values – instead,



"Life has taught me that true confidence emerges not from conforming to others' expectations, but from deeply embracing the self – including one's cultural heritage, values, and lived experiences."

these values often bring fresh perspectives to professional situations.

To stay connected with my Filipino roots, I make it a priority to follow news from the Philippines and enjoy Filipino movies and TV shows on streaming platforms. This keeps me informed about current events and cultural trends in my ancestral homeland, helping me feel connected to the broader Filipino community. During Filipino American History Month, I follow events about cultural celebrations that remind me of our community's contributions beyond the Philippines such as Filipino martial arts and deserts like Halo Halo.

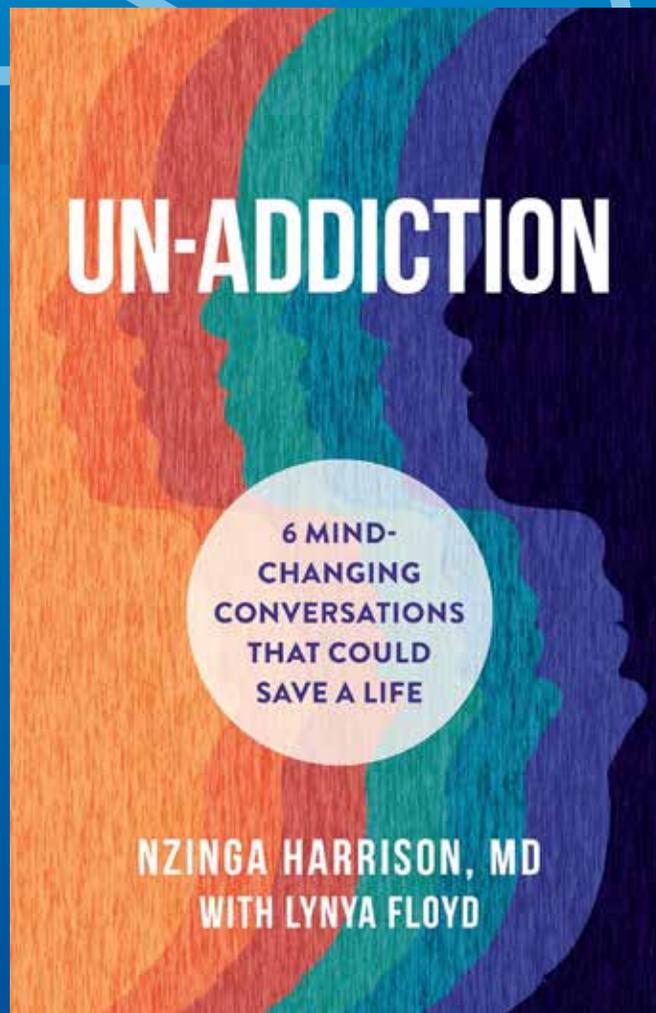
Cuisine is another powerful way to maintain my cultural connection. Learning to cook

traditional Filipino dishes using family recipes passed down through generations is a daily form of personal cultural connection. Preparing dishes like sinigang or adobo is not just making a meal – it's preserving the culinary heritage and creating a tangible link to my ancestors.

I also draw inspiration from Filipino cultural trends in pop culture such as fashion and beauty. Reading international editions of fashion magazines helps me stay current with "brown beauty" strategies that celebrate and enhance our natural features rather than trying to conform to Western standards. This has been especially empowering in developing my personal style that honors both my heritage and contemporary influences.

Through these practices, I've found that true confidence comes from authentically integrating all aspects of my identity. It's about creating a life where my cultural heritage isn't just acknowledged but celebrated as a source of strength and wisdom. 

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Are You Standing in Your Power or Settling for Less?

Are you confidently owning your worth, or are you making too many compromises in business and life? Take this quick quiz to find out where you stand and get personalized insights to help you build unshakable confidence while staying true to your values.

Instructions: For each question, choose the answer that best describes you. Tally your points and check where you stand at the end of the quiz.

When making a big decision, how do you approach it?

- a) I trust my intuition and weigh my options carefully.
- b) I ask for input but often second-guess myself.
- c) I avoid making decisions for as long as possible.

How do you handle criticism or rejection?

- a) I take feedback as an opportunity to grow and improve.
- b) It stings, but I try to shake it off and keep going.
- c) I take it personally and start doubting myself.

In negotiations (pricing, contracts, boundaries), how do you usually respond?

- a) I confidently ask for what I'm worth and stand firm.
- b) I try to negotiate, but I sometimes settle for less than I deserve.
- c) I struggle to speak up and often accept whatever is offered.

When it comes to self-care and personal time, you...

- a) Prioritize it—it's essential for my well-being and success.
- b) Fit it in when I can, but work often comes first.
- c) Rarely make time for myself—I have too much to do.

How do you react when someone crosses your boundaries?

- a) I address it directly and reinforce my boundaries.
- b) I let it slide sometimes, especially if I want to avoid conflict.
- c) I struggle to say no and often end up feeling resentful.

What drives your decision-making in business or life?

- a) My values, goals, and long-term vision.
- b) a mix of what I want and what others expect of me.
- c) Fear of disappointing people or making the wrong choice.

More Confidence, Less Compromise

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How do you feel about saying “no”?

- a) Empowered—it helps me protect my time and energy.
- b) a little guilty, but I try to set boundaries when needed.
- c) Uncomfortable—I often say yes even when I don’t want to.

When an opportunity arises that excites you, but feels outside your comfort zone, you...

- a) Go for it—I believe in myself and my ability to figure it out.
- b) Hesitate and overthink, but eventually push through.
- c) Doubt myself and often talk myself out of it.

How do you navigate relationships (business or personal) that no longer align with you?

- a) I let go of what no longer serves me, even when it’s hard.
- b) I struggle to walk away, but I know when something isn’t working.
- c) I hold on, even when it’s unhealthy or draining.

When you think about the life and business you truly want, what’s your biggest challenge?

- a) Staying consistent and trusting the process.
- b) Balancing my own needs with external expectations.
- c) Believing that I’m capable and worthy of success on my terms.

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RESULTS

Mostly A’s – Confident & Uncompromising!

You’re standing in your power, setting boundaries, and making decisions that align with your values. Keep trusting yourself, prioritizing what matters, and leading with confidence—you’re creating success on your terms!

Mostly B’s – On the Edge of confidence!

You’re making progress but still struggle with occasional compromises. Consider where you can strengthen your boundaries, trust yourself more, and say no to what no longer serves you. Small shifts will help you step into full confidence.

Mostly C’s – Compromising Too Much!

You might be putting others’ needs ahead of your own, avoiding tough decisions, or settling for less than you deserve. It’s time to own your worth, set stronger boundaries, and stop second-guessing yourself. Your confidence grows every time you choose yourself! ☺



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Breaking Free:

A Guide for BIPOC Women to Exit Hustle Culture

BY DR. REBECCA HUBBARD



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THREE AREAS OF SELF-REFLECTION TO UNLEARN THE GRIND

Hustle culture teaches a specific path to success: constant grind, endless pursuit of more, hyper-focus on outcomes, and ideas that we must work ourselves into exhaustion to be valued and feel successful. Hustle culture is a collection of expectations of overwork, productivity, effort, and success which are informed by exploitative capitalism, patriarchal hierarchies, ableism, and white supremacy. For many BIPOC women, these messages about overworking are not just a

personal struggle, but a societal expectation intensified by historical inequities, systemic barriers, and cultural pressures (McCurn, 2020). In a world where you are taught that your worth is tied to your productivity, stepping away from the hustle is an act of rebellion. That rebellion is not only against the messaging and systems around us that got us here but also against the way those systems infiltrate your personal beliefs and how you see yourself.

You can break free from the toxic cycle of hustle culture, reclaim your time, and prioritize your well-being. That is not to say that the oppressive systems that got us here should stay as they are. They need to change. But if you neglect your efforts in undoing the indoctrination within yourself, you run the risk of carrying hustle culture with you to the next step, replicating the pressure even when you have the freedom not to.

There are three important areas to address, in no particular order. All three work hand in hand and inform and support each other. Start with the area that feels most accessible and then move to the next one.

RE-EXAMINING THE ORIGINS OF OUR GOALS

Hustle culture presents us with very enticing, well-marketed goals that are targeted specifically towards People of Color as worth striving for. Several industries offer the idea that material wealth and excess are the solution to societal inequity. Money indeed comes with power, but it does not equalize an unjust system. Hustle culture promotes the noble goal of creating “generational wealth” at the expense of our health, and quality time with family and loved ones. Sacrificing all of

this time for generational wealth is a trap. Hustle culture will always create conditions where more money is required to keep up with the pace of these systems.

By reflecting on how your goals have been informed by these systems, you have an opportunity to find alternative paths. For example, if creating generational wealth is a goal for you, consider defining your legacy holistically, not only in a financial way. This self-awareness about what has informed your goals is important in breaking free from hustle culture’s grip.

*Don't rest so you can do more;
rest because you are human.*

Reflection Questions:

1. Reflect on your top two major long-term goals. How does capitalism benefit from these goals?
2. Our goals are often only about outcomes. Envision *how* you want to achieve that goal without overworking or self-depletion.

REDEFINING SELF-CARE

In an industry increasingly obsessed with wellness, it's easy to confuse self-care with the latest trend or material product. True self-care goes deeper than bubble baths and pricey facials, although there is nothing wrong with those self-care choices. To break free from hustle culture, understand that self-care isn't about boosting productivity, it's about honoring your humanity. Don't rest so you can do more; rest because you are human. Self-care preserves your dignity, ensuring you don't lose sight of your worth in the pursuit of constant output. This distinction is not just a matter of semantics, it's crucial. When you rest to increase productivity, you risk entering a cycle of burnout, taking breaks or vacations only to return to environments that deplete you. I'm sure you're familiar with this quote from Eleanor Brown, "When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel." True self-care creates that overflow.

Self-care is best understood as a holistic practice that nurtures every aspect of who you are. It's not so much about the specific tasks you engage in, but how you approach them. Self-care is not a luxury, though it can feel both luxurious and magical when you recognize that the tools of self-care you use are just that, tools. The real magic lies in you. When you release hustle culture's hold on your self-care, you realize there's no one-size-fits-all set of practices to follow religiously. The key is that self-care is personal, authentic, and practical, designed to support your transformation. It should be flexible, fit with your cultural background and values, and adapt to your growth and needs. The only truly consistent element of self-care is self-reflection. It's through this reflection that you can adjust your practices to best serve your evolution.

In the midst of hustle culture, when you're constantly busy, you can slowly nudge your way to freedom with self-care practices that are simple and perhaps not glamorous or Instagram-worthy. Don't be afraid to get a little scrappy with your self-care. Practice yoga in your pajamas, take deep breaths in the car or find small, effortless moments to nurture yourself. The point is not perfection but making space for care in a way that feels natural and accessible.

Reflection Questions:

1. How is your current approach to self-care informed by hustle culture?
2. How does it feel for you when you are in the "overflow state?"

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

One of the most insidious aspects of hustle culture is how it drives so many women to take on new challenges without first building the capacity to sustain them. Whether you're leaving a corporate job to start a business or striving for a better work-life balance, it is easy to repeat old patterns when you haven't allowed yourself the time or space to expand your ability to handle change. Hustle culture has probably eroded your patience with yourself, making you believe that progress must always come at a relentless pace (Kumar, 2024). In reality, that pace is often unsustainable and inhumane. It's time to slow down and give yourself the grace to grow at a healthier, more sustainable rate.

If you've identified something you want to change in your life, take the time to fortify yourself, prioritize self-care, and create space for wellness before making any shifts. While the patience required for this approach might feel challenging, it's worth it. Hustle culture has conditioned us to believe that growth, progress, and success must always come through struggle. They don't. When you invest in replenishing yourself and holistically nurturing your well-being, any change you pursue will not only be more sustainable but also more authentic, rooted in self-assurance rather than fear or desperation.

Reflection Questions:

1. Check in with your capacity regularly. Where are you stretched thin, and in what areas do you have some room?
2. Examine your relationship with patience. How can you cultivate patience in your everyday life?

While the undoing of this indoctrination can take years, stay encouraged. Each part of the process is a step towards freedom; for you and all of us.

It's time to reclaim your power and redefine what it means to live a fulfilling life, free from the oppressive cycles of hustle culture. Your journey with wellness is intimately connected with the journey of others. Your self-care is a puzzle piece in our collective liberation. 

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A Journey to Authentic Leadership

BY LISA RIGOLI



As a first-generation Jamaican American growing up in a non-diverse community, I often struggled with my identity and my confidence. I constantly asked myself: Who am I to step into a space with confidence and not compromise who I am at the core?

As a young child growing up in a Jamaican household, I wanted to embrace my roots. But the world around me often sent a different message. I felt the pressure to conform and guess what, I did. When I entered the corporate world, this tension followed me. I adjusted my behaviors in ways that felt like compromising myself.

What changed for me was finding BIPOC women who modeled authenticity. They showed me how to embrace assertiveness and which parts of my identity to bring into professional settings unapologetically.

For instance, I was raised by my Jamaican mother to respect my elders. This often meant avoiding challenging their opinions, refraining from raising my voice in public, and not expressing vulnerability. While these lessons instilled respect, they also made it difficult for me to assert myself in professional settings, especially around leaders with higher titles. I was always mindful of navigating these spaces with respect, but it was a Black female mentor who showed me how to fully embrace my assertiveness without compromising that respect.

She once told me, “Once you’ve earned a seat at the table, use it. It’s not about being the loudest voice, it’s about making your points count.” Her advice resonated deeply. During a pivotal meeting where I was

being groomed for a higher role, I watched her navigate a challenging moment with remarkable composure. After being interrupted multiple times, she calmly but firmly said, “Please allow me to finish my thought.” She reclaimed the room without raising her voice or showing frustration. Later, she addressed the person privately about their behavior, ensuring accountability without escalating tension.

She taught me that taking my seat means owning my voice with intention, handling disrespect with composure, and ensuring every contribution I make has weight. Seeing her navigate spaces where confidence didn’t come at the cost of authenticity inspired me to do the same.

I also realized that my upbringing, while challenging at times, was a source of strength. From a young age, I witnessed resilience firsthand through my mother, who worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. Whenever life knocked her down, she got back up, determined to keep moving forward. Her example taught me that nothing worthwhile comes easy and instilled in me the importance of perseverance.

This lesson became a cornerstone of my journey, both in the corporate world and now as an entrepreneur. When challenges arise and they inevitably do, I’m reminded of my mother’s unwavering strength. She showed me that resilience isn’t just about enduring hard times but about staying true to yourself and pushing forward, even when the path feels impossible.

“Taking my seat means owning my voice with intention, handling disrespect with composure, and ensuring every contribution I make has weight.”

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What does

More Confidence, Less Compromise

mean to you?



More confidence, less compromise for me means that I am being courageous and taking the risk of fully advocating, supporting, and empowering myself without second guessing and negotiating with my perceived inabilities and self doubt. When we choose to distance ourselves from compromising with unhelpful beliefs, thought patterns, etc., we are choosing to live more confidently in who we are now and what our futures can be. Confidence must give an aura of security and strength in who you are; compromising leaves room for questioning yourself. ~ **Ardena Downing**

Living a life of confidence without compromise involves doing our healing work, which includes discussing the hard “stuff” that can become limiting beliefs, narratives, and barriers to our personal growth and development. Additionally, living a confident life without compromise truly comes from believing in your capacity to be and do anything you want in this life. It’s about embracing the old adage that the world is our oyster and truly savoring every single experience and opportunity that comes our way. ~ **Cynthia Agyeman-Anane**



Living a life of confidence without compromise, means to implement determinism, perseverance and purpose. It’s knowing what you want, creating a master plan and not allowing anything or anyone to stop you from achieving your goals. ~ **Tammy Davis**

The phrase “more confidence, less compromise” to me suggests that when you have a strong sense of self-confidence and self-worth, you are less likely to settle for less than what you truly deserve. Confidence empowers you to take action toward your goals without doubting your ability to succeed, while self-worth reinforces the belief that you are deserving of success, happiness, and fulfillment. ~ **Glenny Rosario**



For me, “More Confidence, Less Compromise” means stepping into spaces unapologetically, knowing that I am enough as I am—no adjustments required. As a Black woman, I know how often we’re asked to shrink ourselves to fit into spaces that weren’t designed for us. Confidence means reclaiming that space, being authentic, and pursuing goals without sacrificing my values, health, or mental peace.

In my work as a physician, this philosophy is at the heart of how I approach weight loss for BIPOC women. We’re constantly told that weight loss requires extreme deprivation, endless cardio, or sacrificing joy. But I teach women that weight loss doesn’t have to feel like suffering. By tapping into their unique genetic design, they can lose weight without starvation, guilt, or compromise. Confidence comes from knowing that transformation doesn’t have to be a battle—it can be a breakthrough. ~ **Dr. Phyllis Pobee**



Living a life of confidence without compromise entails aligning my core beliefs and values with my actions. This means embracing truth, necessity, and kindness, while also upholding integrity and showing respect for myself and others, no matter where I am. It invokes the sense of belonging to a community, where understanding those around me promotes interdependence, accountability, and mutual respect. Furthermore, it calls for exploring flexibility and curiosity, as well as accepting unresolved questions and challenging my urge to always be right when it risks the healthy relationships I’m nurturing. Ultimately, it’s about expressing my thoughts and allowing others to understand my perspective, manage their reactions, and grow together with me.
~ **Domenique Harrison, MPH, LMFT, LPCC**

For me, “more confidence, less compromise” means owning who I am, a first-generation Jamaican American, while honoring the experiences that shaped me and the women who paved the way for me to lead with authenticity and courage. ~ **Lisa Rigoli**



For me personally, living a life of confidence without compromise means I’m doing what I want, when I want, and how I want regardless of what anyone else thinks. I shouldn’t have to change or conform to someone else’s expectations to feel valued or accepted. I’ll never settle for anything that doesn’t serve me or aligns with me living in my truth. I’m always going to show up for myself whether there’s ten people in the room to support or simply just me. ~ **Sammesha Dominguez**

5 Tips

On How To Avoid Compromising Style Due To Budget

BY ALEXANDRA GARRETT

When it comes to style, I learned that just because you don't have the budget to buy trending pieces, you still have the ability to "make it work" with what you have or can afford. Here are five tips I learned to avoid compromising style on a budget:

1 MINDSET

Understand that you won't always get what you want, and that's okay. When you fixate on having the latest pieces and don't obtain them, you may spiral into emotions that are neither pleasant nor beneficial to your confidence. Use one of my affirmations for shopping: "I may not always get what I want, but I will always have what I need to look my best."

2 SHOP THE SALES

You can always incorporate trending pieces into your wardrobe when they go on sale. They may be "out of style" by the time you purchase them but wouldn't you rather have more money in the bank while still wearing something you truly wanted?

3 SAVE YOUR MONEY

Saving money may not be easy for everyone - I know I struggle with this from time to time - but when you know a brand is about to drop something new, set aside your money for it. Try the "No Buy Challenge" for a week or two, focusing on not spending money to buy the item you want from that brand. Soon, you'll realize that not only will you have enough money to buy

your desired item, but you'll have gained new healthy habits in your relationship with money.

4 SHOP THRIFT STORES

One thing I know for sure about thrift stores is that you will always find one-of-a-kind pieces at a low price. In addition, you'll find items that can be customized to suit your personal style and lifestyle. You may not find exactly what you're looking for, but you'll likely discover something that closely resembles your vision.

5 SHOP YOUR CLOSET

"I have nothing to wear!" But you do! It's in your closet. I love to shop my closet and mix pieces I never thought would match. Let your imagination run wild in your closet, and you can create 5-10 new looks with just a few items. By adding some accessories and a new nail polish color, you can curate a very stylish wardrobe for free!

No matter what you decide, your personal style is good enough. However, there's nothing wrong with changing your mindset and rethinking how you shop to avoid compromising your style. 



Introducing The Wellthy 25

Hope+Wellth Magazine is proud to present **The Wellthy 25**, a list celebrating **25 extraordinary BIPOC women** who are redefining success by balancing **purpose, prosperity, and peace**. These women are not just building businesses and legacies; they are prioritizing **wellness, self-care, and impact** in everything they do.

From **entrepreneurs and executives** to **healers, creators, and changemakers**, The Wellthy 25 honors those who have learned the art of prioritizing both wellness and wealth—proving that success isn't just about the bottom line, but about **wholeness and overall well-being**.

Who Makes The Wellthy 25?

We are looking for **BIPOC women** who exemplify:

Purpose – Using their business, platform, or leadership to create meaningful change in their community, industry, or the world.

Prosperity – Building financial success and economic empowerment while uplifting others.

Peace – Prioritizing wellness, balance, and personal well-being in a way that inspires others.

Nominate a Wellthy Woman

Do you know a BIPOC woman who embodies The Wellthy 25 values? We invite you to submit a nomination!

Nomination Criteria:

- Must be a **BIPOC woman** excelling in entrepreneurship, leadership, wellness, or impact-driven work.
- Must demonstrate a strong **commitment to both business success and personal well-being**.
- Must be making a **positive impact** in their industry or community.
- Open to women across industries including **health, wellness, beauty, finance, tech, social impact, and more**.

How to Nominate:

Submit Your Nomination at hopewellthmedia.com/wellthy-25

Deadline: May 31, 2025

Winners Announced in July 2025 Issue of Hope+Wellth Magazine

We can't wait to spotlight the incredible women who are shaping a **new definition of success**—one that honors **both ambition and alignment**.

Know someone who deserves to be on **The Wellthy 25** list?

Nominate them today!





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