

hope + wellth

MAGAZINE

Zarina
Del Mar

**THE BODY THAT
CARRIES THE DREAM**

10 Immune
Boosting
Meals for
the Winter

Reclaiming
Your Body
After Burnout

Practical Guide
for Reframing
Housework as
Movement



*It's Time to Stop Surviving
and Start Thriving*

**Step Into the
Best Version of**

You

Whether you need a daily dose of motivation or a full life transformation, Life Coach, Glenny Rosario offers heart-centered coaching designed to empower you from the inside out.

- ✔ Break through limiting beliefs
- ✔ Manifest the life you actually want
- ✔ Build confidence that lasts

**Your Next Level
is Waiting!**

Learn more and take
your first step today
www.LifeCoachGlenny.com



*Glenny Rosario,
Certified Life Coach*

CONTENTS

Issue 5 | Winter 2026

28
**ZARINA
DEL MAR**
The Body
That Carries
The Dream



10 STILLNESS IS ESSENTIAL
Reclaiming rest in a world
that won't slow down

**12 HOW TO RECLAIM MIND-
BODY BALANCE AFTER
BURNOUT**
Practical steps that
actually work

14 STRESS AND THE BODY
A therapist's guide to
releasing tension and
emotional weight

IN EVERY ISSUE
3 EDITOR'S LETTER
5 CONTRIBUTORS

Cover Photo Credit: Kirill Manaenkova

CONTENTS

Issue 5 | Winter 2026



20

**WELLTHY WOMAN
SPOTLIGHT**

Dr. Wendi Williams

Leading from the body:
Rest, liberation and
reimagining power

18 THE BODY AT EASE
Remembering that everything
doesn't have to be a fight

**24 HOW YOUR MONEY MINDSET
REFLECTS YOUR SELF-CARE**
Understanding the link between
financial and emotional wellness

26 READY FOR A CHANGE?
5 Mindset shifts to help you let go
and move toward your dreams

40 WALKING TOGETHER
How healing conversations
happen when we're in motion

**38 THE POWER OF GROUP
WORKOUTS**
How exercising together builds
connection and joy

42 WALKING FOR HEALING
How moving my body helped me
return to myself

44 METABOLIC HEALTH
The truth, the myths, and why it
matters beyond diet culture

**46 HOW TO REFRAME
HOUSEWORK AS EXERCISE**
A practical guide to everyday
movement

50 BOOK CLUB PICK
A soulful vegan recipe book
for living a healthy plant-
based life

**51 THE SOUNDTRACK TO MY
HEALING**
Music that moves the soul
and the body

54 HER BATTLE BECAME MINE
A daughter's story of breast
cancer risk, fear, and early
detection

71 WELLNESS WE'RE WATCHING
20+ Inspiring Voices for
Whole-Body Living



58

**Celebrity Chef
Serena Poon**

Shares 10+ immune-boosting
winter recipes and her guide
to nourishing the body

EDITOR'S LETTER



Hey Friends,

I know I say this every issue, but this one...this issue is truly one of my favorites. Maybe because it speaks directly to the parts of us that dream big, work hard, carry so much, and still show up with brilliance. Or maybe because it gently reminds us of something we don't say nearly enough: you cannot build the life you want without taking care of the body that will carry you there.

We talk all the time about the businesses we want to build, the companies we want to lead, the families we want to nurture and the communities we want to pour into as if accomplishing them is just a matter of checking the right boxes, reading the right book, or having a good therapy session. But the truth is, what we choose to be intentional about beyond the checklist, in our daily rhythms, in our habits, in how we honor ourselves...matters even more. Because when we're burnt out, run down and depleted, our bodies will start to speak, and if we don't listen, our moods, our choices and even our dreams will start to follow suit. The body always tells the truth.

That's what this issue is all about: learning to listen to our bodies as wise compasses towards our dreams

and goals and to treat our bodies as sacred homes for legacy, joy and possibility instead of machines for productivity. We'll explore what it means to slow down, to listen inward and to treat our wellness as the foundation for our futures. You'll meet women like Zarina Del Mar, Certified Smart Movement Specialist, who listened when her body whispered for change. You'll explore food as grounding along with recipes from celebrity chef, Serena Poon. And, you'll learn how rest is a necessary part of legacy building from experts like Dr. Shanéa Thomas and licensed social worker, Yovanna Madhère.

My hope is that as you move through these pages, you don't simply read this issue; but you feel poured into. You pause, you breathe, and you walk away deeply believing that you are not only worthy of every dream and goal you hold, but you are also worthy and fully capable of caring for the body that carries it all.

Take Care,

Lynnette Price

Editor-in-Chief
Hope+Wellth Magazine



Your Guide to Hope, Wellness & Wealth

PUBLISHER & FOUNDER

Renee Patterson
Lynnette Price

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Lynnette Price

CREATIVE & ART DIRECTOR

Renee Patterson

COPY EDITORS

Renee Patterson
Lynnette Price

CONTRIBUTORS

Erika Brooks, LPC, CSAC
Sammesha Dominquez
Requel Jasmine
Cindy Kumar
Kandace Kyere, MSW, LSW
Dr. Neha Lalani
Lynn Lewis
Yovanna Madhère, LMSW, LGSW
Serena Poon
Glenny Rosario
Dr. Shanéa Thomas, LICSW, CSE
Eva Vega

PROJECT COORDINATORS

Renee Patterson
Lynnette Price

*"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit... Therefore honor God with your bodies."
~1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)*

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

HOPE+WELLTH MEDIA

Indianapolis, Indiana | www.hopewellthmedia.com
HOPE+WELLTH MEDIA IS OWNED BY MOODWELLTH® LLC COPYRIGHT 2026

CONTRIBUTORS



Photo Credit: Kimie James Photography

ERIKA BROOKS, LPC, CSAC

Erika is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Certified Substance Abuse Counselor in the state of Virginia. She has a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University. She has been fortunate enough to have used her professional skills as Crisis clinician for a local community services board, an intensive in-home therapist, and an outpatient therapist. In these roles, she developed a great appreciation for all ages and clinical needs.

Erika is the owner of Enlightenment Counseling Services, LLC and co-author in the book collaboration, PEARLS: Wisdom and advice from emerging women leaders.

Email: brookslpc@yahoo.com

Website: erikabrookslpc.com



SAMMESHA DOMINGUEZ

Sammesha Dominguez is a book influencer and content creator behind the social media page *Lit_Vibrations* where she amplifies Black authors, Black stories and encourages readers to read Black books all year round. Follow her on Instagram for updates on the latest book releases, recommendations and book reviews.



REQUEL JASMINE

Requel Jasmine is the author of *Pray Differently*, a devotional and prayer journal that offers both hope and a directive to pray using a scripture-based model for deeper, more intentional prayer. As a Christian leader and facilitator of Interceding Sisters—a weekly prayer group dedicated to empowering women through intercession—she shares wisdom from her own faith journey to help others strengthen theirs.

Through her blog series *The Voyage to Her*, Requel documents her path through womanhood and authorship, inspiring women to embrace their gifts, healing, and faith. Rooted in her Chicagoland upbringing, Requel's work blends themes of faith, healing, and empowerment, reflecting her passion for helping others thrive in purpose and prayer.



CINDY KUMAR

Cindy Kumar is a Fractional CFO and financial strategist dedicated to helping high-earning women entrepreneurs feel safe, powerful, and in control of their wealth. With over 200 clients served, she specializes in cleaning up the back end of a business so money finally reflects the effort behind it. Her work blends strategy, clarity, and nervous-system-safe success — because prosperity, to her, isn't a revenue milestone; it's peace.

Cindy hosts *Her Wealthy Mindset*, a podcast and event series offering honest conversations and community-centered financial empowerment.

Cindy believes women deserve businesses — and lives — that fuel them. You can reach

Email: info@elevatedaccounting.ca

Website: www.elevatedaccounting.ca

Instagram: [@elevatedaccounting](https://www.instagram.com/elevatedaccounting)

Linkedin: [linkedin.com/in/cindy-kumar-72349aa3/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cindy-kumar-72349aa3/)

CONTRIBUTORS



Photo Credit: Tanisha Pinex/Prolific Visuals

KANDACE KYERE, MSW, LSW

Kandace Kyere, MSW, LSW, is a social worker, workshop facilitator, and mental health coach dedicated to supporting the emotional and mental wellbeing of Black teens and young adults navigating predominantly white schools and institutions. She is the founder of Hello Kandace, LLC, a coaching practice centered on mind-body healing, rest, and culturally affirming strategies for emotional wellness. Kandace nurtures her own wellbeing through poetry, yoga, meditation, African dance classes, engaging with Black art, boundary-setting, & healing communities.

Website: hellokandace.com
Instagram: [@hellokandace_llc](https://www.instagram.com/hellokandace_llc)
Facebook: [@hellokandace](https://www.facebook.com/hellokandace)
YouTube: [@hellokandace](https://www.youtube.com/hellokandace)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/kandacekyere](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kandacekyere)



DR. NEHA LALANI

Dr. Lalani is a Triple board-certified endocrinologist with 7 years of clinical experience. She is the CEO and founder of Bluebonnet Diabetes & Endocrinology, where they focus on providing comprehensive, personalized care to each patient.

Website: bluebonnetendocrinology.com
Email: Info@bluebonnetendocrinology.com
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/nehalaalani-b4894b277](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nehalaalani-b4894b277)



Photo Credit: Kimie James Photography

LYNN LEWIS

Lynn Lewis, a Certified Grief Educator, is the Visionary and Chief Empathy Officer for Destined To Thrive Grief Coaching, a speaker and an author. She supports adults who are ready to move forward with living meaningful, impactful and purposeful lives despite having experienced the loss of a loved one.

Website: www.destinedtothrivegriefcoaching.com



Photo Credit: Sandra Madhere Studios

YOVANNA MADHÈRE, LMSW, LGSW

Yovanna Madhère, LMSW, LGSW is not just a therapist. She is a reintegration specialist for women who are ready to come home to themselves. As the founder of YovannaRocks Personal Development Services, LLC and creator of The R.O.C.K.S. Method, she helps women and families turn stress into self-trust, burnout into balance, and survival into purpose. Her approach bridges science and soul, reminding us that healing is not about fixing yourself. It is about remembering who you were before the world told you to perform.

Instagram: [@yovannarocks](https://www.instagram.com/yovannarocks)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/yovannamadhere](https://www.linkedin.com/in/yovannamadhere)

CONTRIBUTORS



SERENA POON

Serena Poon is a celebrity chef, certified nutritionist, and founder of Serena Loves, a holistic wellness brand dedicated to integrative nourishment and longevity. Known for her signature Culinary Alchemy® method, she blends culinary arts, nutritional science, and mindful healing practices to support vibrant health from a whole-person perspective. Serena's work empowers individuals to elevate their daily rituals, optimize their well-being, and approach nourishment with intention and clarity.

Website: serenaloves.com



GLENNY ROSARIO

Glenny Rosario is a Certified Life Coach, author, and host of the Manifesting Mamas podcast. She helps women evolve with confidence, clarity, and self-love through coaching, affirmations, and mindset work. Her signature program, the Healthy Self-Confidence Masterclass, empowers women to embrace change at every age.

Instagram: [@lifecoachglenny](https://www.instagram.com/lifecoachglenny)
Website: www.lifecoachglenny.com



Photo Credit: Robin Kenyatta

DR. SHANÉA THOMAS, LICSW, CSE

Dr. Shanéa Thomas, LICSW, CSE, is a TEDx Speaker, award-winning sexuality educator, and proud Howard University alum with over 20 years of clinical social work experience in the D.C. area. Named AASECT's 2024 Sexuality Educator of the Year, she's facilitated 120+ workshops on DEI, grief, mental health, and LGBTQIA+ topics. Through Thomas Consulting and Therapeutic Services, she equips professionals to create empathetic, accountable, and inclusive spaces—what she calls "The Thomas Standard." A Certified Compassionate Bereavement Care Provider, Dr. Thomas continues her clinical practice, using grief and legacy as guiding lenses for healing and transformative systemic change.

Email: drshaneapthomas@gmail.com
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/drshaneathomas/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drshaneathomas/)
Instagram: [@drshaneathomas](https://www.instagram.com/drshaneathomas), [@drkhocolatnoir](https://www.instagram.com/drkhocolatnoir)



EVA VEGA

Eva Vega is a certified personal trainer, yoga and barre instructor, health coach, and wellness leader with 20 years of experience helping others build strength, balance, and confidence through movement. As Senior Program Director at the YMCA of Western North Carolina, she blends functional fitness, mindful practices, and motivational coaching to inspire people to get stronger on the outside — and even stronger on the inside.

Instagram: [@laevavalentinawellness](https://www.instagram.com/laevavalentinawellness)
LinkedIn: [Eva Vega Melendez](https://www.linkedin.com/in/EvaVegaMelendez)

YOUR AD BELONGS HERE

IN FRONT OF WOMEN WHO REFLECT, RECHARGE AND REDEFINE SUCCESS



Contact advertise@hopeandwellth.com to
reserve your space
or visit hopewellthmedia.com/media-kit

MIND

The mind often carries the heaviest load — our stories, our hopes, our fears, and the pressures we rarely name. We invite you into a softer mental landscape, where rest is reclaimed, burnout is gently unraveled, and mindset becomes a place of empowerment rather than exhaustion. Through therapeutic insight and soul-level conversations, these articles explore what it means to release the fight, find ease in the body, rewrite money narratives, and reconnect to dreams that once felt out of reach. You will be guided toward clarity, emotional spaciousness, and the kind of self-awareness that truly changes how we move through the world.



STILLNESS *is* ESSENTIAL

Reclaiming Rest in a World That Won't Slow Down

BY YOVANNA MADHÈRE, LMSW, LGSW

Our bodies are carrying stories our minds have chosen to ignore: tight shoulders whisper of survival mode... a clenched jaw signals unfinished conversations with stress. The racing thoughts that visit at midnight? They're the echoes of a nervous system that never got permission to power down.

Burnout isn't simply mental fatigue. It is the body's SOS. It's what happens when our survival response has been left on "high alert" for months or years. Women, especially, who have been taught to push through pain, perform under pressure, and wear strength as a badge of honor, exhaustion can masquerade as productivity. But beneath the surface, the body is pleading: *Please be still and listen.*

The Physiology of "Push Through"

When the brain perceives constant threat—deadlines, caregiving, social pressure—it triggers the stress response. Adrenaline floods the system, cortisol rises, and muscles tighten to prepare for action. Yikes! That mechanism was never meant to stay on indefinitely. Chronic activation erodes sleep quality, hormone balance, digestion, and emotional regulation.

The irony is that we often interpret these physiological cries for help: fatigue, anxiety, irritability—as a personal weakness. So we double down. Coffee poured in cute cups replaces sleep. Bedside scrolling replaces rest. *"I'm fine"* replaces the truth.

The Body as the First Messenger

As a therapist and coach, I've watched countless clients who are convinced they're failing because they can't "handle it all." Within a few sessions, they realize the opposite is true: their bodies have been heroically compensating for far too long. Burnout isn't failure—it's feedback.

That's where restorative practices come in. I introduce simple nervous system regulation techniques—slow, intentional breaths where the exhale is longer than the inhale, grounding exercises that connect the feet to the floor, and gentle neck stretches to release stored tension. These may sound small, but they send the body one profound message: You are safe now.



The Science of Safety

Physiologically, slowing the breath activates the vagus nerve—the communication highway between body and brain. This stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, our “rest and digest” state, allowing the heart rate to slow and the muscles to unclench. When the body feels safe, the mind can begin to process emotions that were previously too threatening to face.

Stillness becomes the soil where curiosity can grow again. I challenge clients—instead of reacting, start inquiring: What am I feeling? What do I need? These simple questions mark the beginning of healing.

Redefining Strength

We live in a culture that glorifies movement—fast results and full schedules. Rest is framed as indulgence, yet every system in nature depends on cycles of activity and dormancy. Trees do not apologize for winter. The ocean doesn't rush its tides. So, why do we?

True strength is not the capacity to endure endless motion but the wisdom to honor your natural rhythm. The “strong woman” archetype is evolving into something more nuanced—soft power, resilience that breathes. I call it soft strength: the courage to pause, recalibrate, and rise from a place of wholeness rather than burnout.

Stillness as a Spiritual Practice

Stillness is not emptiness. It's a meeting place between your body and your truth. In that quiet, you begin to hear the deeper pulse beneath the noise—the part of you that knows when to leap and when to lie down. Many of my clients describe this shift as a reconnection with their intuition, a return to trusting themselves again.

The spiritual dimension of rest is simple yet radical: when you slow down, you affirm your inherent worth. You are no longer performing for approval or chasing the next win. You are tending to the vessel that carries your purpose.

“When you slow down, you affirm your inherent worth.”

Rebuilding From Within

Restoration is an active process. It involves learning to read your body's language again. The difference between fatigue and emotional numbing...between restlessness and excitement. It may look like turning off the phone 30 minutes earlier, stretching before bed, or taking three

intentional breaths before a meeting. Over time, these micro-moments become anchors of self-regulation.

In my own practice, I've witnessed women move from chronic exhaustion to embodied ease. Their confidence returns not because they're doing more but because they finally feel safe inside themselves. When the body is rested, creativity flows. Relationships soften. Clarity returns.

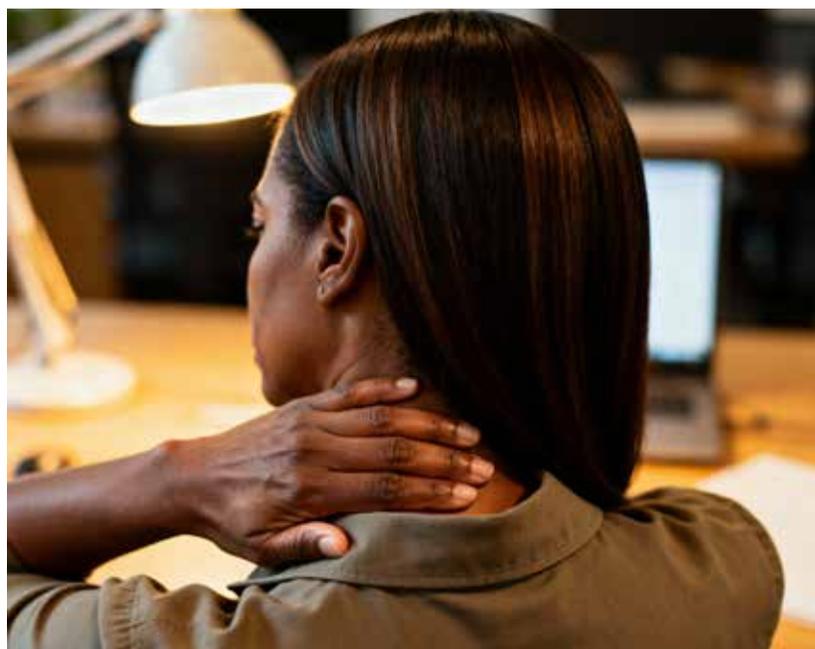
Rest as Rebellion

To rest is to resist a culture that measures worth by output. It's a declaration that your well-being is not negotiable. When you choose to rest, you are rewriting the narrative for the women who watch you—daughters, colleagues, friends—showing them that softness is sustainable power.

The most powerful thing you can do for your dreams is rest the body and mind that carries them.

Because the dream can only expand as far as your nervous system can safely stretch. Stillness doesn't mean you've stopped moving forward; it means you're learning to move from alignment and authenticity. 

“To rest is to resist a culture that measures worth by output.”





How To Reclaim Mind–Body Balance After Burnout

Practical Steps That Actually Work

BY DR. SHANÉA THOMAS, LICSW, CSE

While sitting on your bed, eyes closed, you initiate a heavy sigh as you consider picking up your crochet hook to start a new project, again. Sadly, you understand you simply can't tolerate making more stitches, even if it was just one more time. The morning pause allows you to reflect on the past months, or years, during which you have spent your time committed to an activity, duty, or job. Time can alter our more intimate and committed feelings toward the things we participate in, which were once enjoyable or challenging, yet have now become burdensome and daunting. Upon opening your eyes and placing your head in your hands, you realize the day you were trying to avoid is finally here: burnout has set in.

As a licensed clinical social worker for over 20+ years, I remind those clients I work with that we have all experienced some level of stress or trauma. These experiences have effects on both our mind and body simultaneously, so we consider ways to help overcome these effects and reclaim our power. Whether you are reading this while sitting on the side of your bed or trying to find the energy to get up and start your day, let's discuss how to make space for the coming shift. Next, we will learn about what constitutes burnout and then explore some steps to help you regain a sense of power, enabling you to make more informed decisions that promote alignment for your own wellness and return to a sense of balance.

Burnout and the Body

Burnout is the point at which a person has overreached their mental and physical capacity to complete tasks, maintain a role, or perform their duties effectively, which, before the onset of stress symptoms, was not previously an issue. Much of the research on burnout originates from workplace stress. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2025) and researchers such as Christine Maslach and Michael Leiter (2016) have categorized burnout into three dimensions: Have you ever felt feelings of exhaustion? Do you consciously or subconsciously increase the distance between how much you mentally and physically engage with your job? Lastly, is your work production slowing down? All of these are indicators of burnout. When applying these indications of burnout, we can also observe some overlap in experience when considering burnout in our personal lives, unrelated to work.

Burnout can also occur with things that we enjoy and take pride in, such as hiking, creating social media content,

styling hair, and caregiving. Yet, the monotony, heavy energy, ill-interactions with people, and overuse of resources can also manifest in the same way as burnout in jobs that do not promote wellness and autonomy. When one is overwhelmed with stress, we can often feel off-kilter and usually coupled with the warning signs of “chronic fatigue,

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

increased irritability, lack of motivation, physical symptoms, and isolation” (Varma, 2025). It is very confusing to start feeling a disconnect from something you love and were once committed to. I like to describe the feeling of disconnection within oneself as feeling like the pace at which you think and the ways your body needs to align feel like they are playing at slightly different tones. It is easy to feel off kilter when the stress of any role seems daunting.

To regain balance, what are some ways we can tune our minds and bodies to help alleviate heavy or conflicting feelings? Let’s review some suggested steps for rediscovering a new sense of alignment and explore tools for renewing oneself, enabling you to continue achieving your goals from a more stable place and make the best decisions for yourself possible.

Steps to reclaim your body after burnout

When rebuilding after experiencing burnout, we do not see the world in the same way. This means we navigate things from a more informed lens, based on the interactions we have had with other people and environments, or the outcomes of the decisions we have made. If you are someone who loves to create social media content, and you feel like the material you are creating is falling flat with your audience, choosing to step away from your art might mean, to you, that you are losing a piece of your identity that people are more familiar with. Walking away from a beloved hobby or job can feel like wasting the skills we have built over time through our commitment.

The Point of No Return

How do we navigate the complex feelings of guilt that arise when we realize we need to let something go because it is negatively impacting us? How can we do the work in our mind and body to return to the state of ourselves before the burnout?

You don’t. Well, really, you can’t. This is where I also encourage

people to go through a period of grief around the experience that caused the burnout. The point of recovering from burnout is not to heal just “enough” so you can return to the thing that was stressing you out in the first place. When seeking to recover from burnout, the aim should be a shift away from the burnout stimuli and investing in what can be not only

sustainable but also keep you well. This also applies to the things we engage in that are not always ‘bad’ or ‘harmful,’ but have still taken away from our

ability to show up as whole people. We are not permitting ourselves to retreat to a “life before”, as we are not moving over our pain, but through it.

New Rhythms Require New Dances

As grieving is a lifelong experience, there will be a moment when trying to bring balance back between your mind and body, you will notice a change in the pace at which your life is moving compared to before the burnout. Whatever the activity, moment, job, or experience that is causing burnout, it typically consumes a significant amount of time or space, drawing on your mental, physical, and spiritual energy. No longer participating in something is a change of pace and consistency that you’ve had in your life. These experiences, which have produced happy times, friends, lifelong colleagues, a social media following, and the new joy they brought, seem like a distant memory. As all transitions can be emotional, at the very least, be sure to be honest with yourself and acknowledge the changes you are going through. Feel free to note the transitions through celebration, or a good afternoon cry. Be brave and mark the next step in your life with a recognition of change. The experience of grieving is a whole mind and body experience, and giving space to tears of all kinds is important.

Turn Up the Volume

Lastly, it’s time for you to step into the DJ booth, as we can now create a complementary sound by adjusting our own dials. As one routine ends and new free time begins, it is time to realize that you do have the power to establish another fulfilling experience after a burnout moment. With what we have or the building of new connections, we still can create care structures that are tailored to our needs and the new lives we are creating for ourselves.

A systematic approach I can suggest for building this new structure is to create a new ritual in place of your previous burnout activity and establish a system to evaluate its effectiveness. I advise people not only to find new routines to help establish the body’s equilibrium and ease their nervous system, but also to check in with themselves periodically to see if their routines are still working or if they need to adjust them. If you are accustomed to walking the stairs at your job, consider finding a hiking trail to ride or walk on. If you genuinely enjoy painting but want to find another activity to keep your hands busy, have you ever considered building with LEGO®? The level of consistency of the stressor was causing an experience to sour, even if it was something you enjoyed. Yet no matter the nature, new starts and new seasons require new routines. Check in with yourself every few months or so to see if it still has the same effect. If not, it’s time to move on. This helps build the mind and body’s “muscle” for transitioning, enabling you to gain confidence in your ability to navigate complex emotions. The goal in healing is not going back to how things were, but to strategize what we need and look ahead to the new beings we are becoming. 🌱



Christina Maslach and Michael Leiter (2016). “Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry”. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4911781/>

Dr. Sue Varma, February 3, 2025, “Preventing Burnout: A Guide to Protecting Your Well-Being”. American Psychiatric Association. <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/preventing-burnout-protecting-your-well-being>

World Health Organization, 2025, Burn-out an “occupational phenomenon”, <https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/frequently-asked-questions/burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon>



STRESS AND THE BODY

*A Therapist's Guide to Releasing
Tension and Emotional Weight*

BY ERIKA BROOKS, LPC, CSAC

Stress has a way of weaving itself into the fabric of our daily lives—quietly at first, then insistently, then overwhelmingly. As a therapist who has spent more than 20 years helping individuals navigate emotional and mental health challenges, I've seen firsthand how stress doesn't just live in the mind; it lives in the body. It sits in the shoulders. It knots the stomach. It quickens the heartbeat. It steals rest. It disrupts clarity. And if we do not learn how to release it, stress begins to shape not only how we feel, but how we function.

The body remembers what we try to push through. It keeps a record of the responsibilities, the losses, the expectations, and the emotional load we carry. Many people don't realize they are living in a constant state of tension until something forces them to slow down—a headache, a panic attack, emotional exhaustion, or a moment of breaking down in tears over something minor. The truth is: the body often speaks long before we are ready to listen.

This article serves as a general guide to help you understand how stress impacts the body and how you can begin releasing what you've been holding—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

How Stress Shows Up in the Body

When stress becomes chronic, the body shifts into survival mode. The sympathetic nervous system becomes overactive, releasing hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. These chemicals are meant for short-term danger, but many people experience them every day, all day.

Some of the most common physical signs include:

- **Tightness in the neck, shoulders, and jaw**
- **Stomach issues**, including nausea or digestive discomfort
- **Fatigue despite adequate rest**
- **Racing heart or shallow breathing**
- **Persistent headaches or migraines**
- **Increased muscle tension and body aches**
- **Sleep disturbances**, such as trouble falling or staying asleep

For many high-achieving women, caregivers, and helping professionals—including therapists themselves—this level of stress

becomes “normal.” But your body always knows the truth. It sends early signals that something needs attention, and when we ignore those signals, they grow louder.

The Emotional Weight You Carry

Stress is not only physical; it is emotional. Many people carry emotional loads they don't realize are shaping their health:

- The pressure to be strong for everyone else
- The expectation to perform at work and at home
- The grief of unprocessed losses
- The guilt that often accompanies rest
- The fear of disappointing others
- The belief that asking for help is a sign of weakness

These emotional burdens manifest physically. The body becomes the container for what the heart has not yet unpacked.

As a therapist, I often tell my clients: *“Your body is not betraying you—it's communicating with you.”*

When we tune in, we gain access to an incredible source of self-knowledge and healing.

Why Traditional “Stress Management” Isn't Enough

Most stress-management advice focuses on productivity, relaxation, or time-management skills. Those strategies have their place, but they don't address the deeper truth: **Stress lives in the nervous system, not the calendar.**

Releasing stress isn't about doing more—it's about learning how to be present with your body, shift your internal state, and create safety again. People need more than coping skills; they need practices that help them discharge, process, and integrate what they're carrying.



How To Begin Releasing Stress from the Body

Here are therapeutic, accessible, and trauma-informed strategies that help the body let go of what it has been holding.

1. Grounding Through Breath

Breathwork sends direct messages to the nervous system. Slow, intentional breathing signals safety and calms the stress response.

Try this:

Place one hand on your chest and one on your abdomen. Inhale for four seconds, hold for two, exhale for six. Repeat for one minute.

This longer exhale switches the body out of “fight or flight” and into “rest and restore.”

2. Body Scanning for Awareness

A body scan helps you identify where you're holding tension you no longer notice.

Try this:

Starting at your feet, mentally scan upward. Notice tightness, heaviness, or discomfort without judgment.

Ask yourself: *What might this part of my body be trying to say?*

3. Movement That Releases, Not Performs

Exercise does not have to be intense to be effective. Gentle movement helps release stored stress and resets the body.

Examples include:

- Stretching
- Walking
- Yoga
- Dancing in your living room

The goal is reconnection—not calorie burning.



- Wrap yourself in a soft blanket
 - Play soothing music
- These sensory cues anchor the body in the present moment.

7. Rest That Restores

Rest is not a luxury—it is a biological requirement. There are multiple forms of rest (physical, mental, emotional, creative, social, and spiritual). Ask yourself which kind of rest your body is asking for. Then honor it without guilt.

8. Support as a Healing Tool

We were never meant to manage life's stressors alone. Seeking therapy, joining a support group, or leaning on trusted relationships creates space for emotional processing that the body desperately needs.

Healing happens in community.

The Power of Letting Go

Releasing stress is an ongoing practice, not a one-time fix. Every day, your body gives you information about what it needs. When you listen, you reclaim power. You reclaim clarity. You reclaim yourself.

You deserve a life where your body feels like a home—not a holding place for everything you've been carrying.

And you can start that journey today, with just one small act of listening. 

4. Naming What's Heavy

Unspoken emotions show up as physical symptoms. Naming them loosens their hold.

Try this journal prompt:

What is one emotion I've been carrying in my body this week? Where do I feel it? What does it need from me?

Putting language to your experience reduces internal pressure.

5. Boundaries That Protect Your Peace

Stress often grows in environments where boundaries are thin. Your body will always reflect what your schedule, relationships, and responsibilities demand of you.

Ask yourself:

- Where am I saying "yes" from obligation rather than alignment?
- What conversations or decisions have I been avoiding?
- What can I delegate, delay, or decline?

Boundaries are a form of physical health care.

6. Sensory Regulation

Using the senses can quickly calm the nervous system.

Try this:

- Drink something warm
- Use a calming scent





NOIRE ESSENTIALS

MORE THAN A CANDLE, IT'S A WELLNESS RITUAL

Crafted with intention, Noire Essentials candles and room sprays fill your space with restorative aromas—elevating your mood, enhancing relaxation rituals, and bringing a sense of calm to your home.



Discover your signature scent today!

Explore our collection at <https://noireessentials.net>

 noire_essentials

THE BODY AT EASE

Remembering That Everything Doesn't Have to be a Fight

BY KANDACE KYERE, MSW/LSW



"And I said to my body, softly, 'I want to be your friend.' It took a long breath and replied, 'I've been waiting my whole life for this.'" — Nayyirah Waheed

A few years ago, a friend and I were talking about how, as people who live in Black bodies, we often struggle to accept that not everything has to be a fight. So much of what it has historically meant to be Black and female—both across generations and across the globe—has been to fight. Fight for our freedom. Fight to be seen, fight to be heard, fight to achieve, fight to be worthy, and fight to be equal.

This constant fight can be exhausting and can activate an ongoing stress response in our bodies. This is especially true when navigating predominantly white institutions, as explored in the research study *White People Stress Me Out All the Time: Black Students define racial trauma*.

What is your relationship to fighting, and how has it impacted your body, mind, and emotions?

Dr. Resmaa Menakem, therapist and author of *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to*

Mending Our Hearts and Bodies (2017), further confirms how perpetual fight-mode takes a toll on the Black body. In his book, he offers a robust selection of body-centered practices that can help you to recenter yourself. Menakem reminds readers:

"White-body supremacy doesn't live just in our thinking brains. It lives and breathes in our bodies. Our deepest emotions involve the activation of a single bodily structure: our soul nerve (or vagus nerve). This nerve is connected to our lizard brain, which is concerned solely with survival and protection. Our lizard brain only has four basic commands: rest, fight, flee, or freeze" (p. 25).

After the conversation with my friend, we both realized that many years of conditioning had caused us to overlook moments when we could have stepped back. Moments when we could have softened, trusted that something more Divine was at work, and allowed ourselves to rest.

Did you know that your body is always communicating with you? And until you learn to listen to it, you will override its warning signals every time.

Tricia Hersey—artist, poet, theologian, community organizer, and founder of The Nap Ministry—reminds us in her book *Rest Is Resistance* (2022) that:

"You are the expert of your body. Your body knows more than we give it space to share. Our body is its own technology. Reimagining rest is about more than naps. It's an ethos of slowing down, connecting, and reimagining" (p. 84). She goes on to define rest as "anything that slows you down enough to connect with your body and mind" (p. 21).

I began intentionally building a relationship with my body by cultivating somatic intelligence through mindfulness, meditation, working with a somatic coach, and



learning practical ways to slow down and commune with my body throughout the day.

I remember being in a work environment where I felt called to speak up during a large staff meeting. Later that week, my eye began twitching, and I could sense new layers of stress rising in my body (on top of an already demanding job). Through reflection and processing with my somatic coach, I realized I was overextending myself by speaking up in that particular work environment.

Now, I practice asking myself a few guiding questions so I can be more intentional about what—and who—gets my energy:

- Does this need to be said?
- Does this need to be said **right now?**
- Does this need to be said **by me?**
- How many times has this **already been said?**
- Is the person or institution I'm speaking to **able or willing to hear me?**

I don't practice this perfectly, but as Tricia Hersey teaches, these questions are a form of rest. They help me slow

down and check in with my mental and emotional capacity before responding and getting more deeply involved with a particular person, place, or institution.

Being emotionally well was never meant to be separated from fighting for justice, as Prentis Hemphill reminds us in their book *What It Takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World* (2024).

Hemphill, an embodiment facilitator, political organizer, and therapist, writes:

"Our emotional selves are not inconsequential to liberation; they are foundational. It's true that there are real limitations to what healing we can do internally and relationally without also changing the pressure that we each face every day. Still, the limits don't mean that we neglect healing altogether, or that we pretend it isn't worthwhile. When we heal our trauma, our lives deepen as we widen our capacity to experience more, to perceive more, and to connect more" (p. 43).

Essentially, Hemphill is saying that it is equally important to fight for the things that sustain our humanity and wholeness as much as we fight to advocate for systemic and structural change.

Once I began realizing that *not everything is worth fighting for*, I began to reflect on what *is* worth fighting for—regardless of what is happening in the world. Here are a few things I came up with:

- Fight to have a loving, compassionate, and healthy relationship with yourself.
- Fight to know, understand, and treat your thoughts and feelings with kindness.
- Fight for your right to slow down and be human instead of operating like a machine.
- Fight to learn and relearn your cultural and ancestral history—which has been hidden or mis-taught for centuries.
- Fight for the courage to change your mind, to say "no thank you," or "this doesn't work for me anymore."
- Fight to practice clear, kind, direct, and nonviolent communication.
- Fight to learn and model emotional regulation strategies within your family and your community.
- Fight to know when you've said enough, done enough, or when it's time to walk away or pass the torch to someone else.
- Fight to ask for help in the areas where you feel the most shame or fear.
- Fight to slow down, be present, and be okay with not knowing what the future holds.
- Fight to feel, so you can heal and can expand your capacity to give

and receive love—because that's what we're all longing for anyway.

You live in a good body and your body is working hard for you each day. Knowing when to step back and care for yourself is essential. When you are at rest, you can trust that creative, communal, and spiritual forces beyond you are still at work. It doesn't have to be all on you. And if it feels like it is, perhaps something in your life may need careful restructuring overtime. 🕒

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." — Audre Lorde



Hargons, C. N., Malone, N., Montique, C., Dogan, J., Stuck, J., Meiller, C., Sanchez, A., Sullivan, Q.-A., Bohmer, C., Curvey, R., Stevens-Watkins, D., Woods Jr., I., & Tyler, K. (2021). "White people stress me out all the time": Black students define racial trauma. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 28*(1), 49–57. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000351>
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8776568/>

Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Central Recovery Press. <https://www.resmaa.com/>

Hersey, T. (2022). *Rest is resistance: A manifesto*. Little, Brown Spark. Hachette Book Group. <https://thenapministry.com/>

Hemphill, P. (2024). *What it takes to heal: How transforming ourselves can change the world*. Random House, Penguin Random House, LLC. <https://prentishemphill.com/>

"Tending to our wellness is essential
for courageous leadership."
~ Dr. Wendi Williams



Photo Credit for Wellthy Woman Spotlight:
Sylvia Lee Photography and
Ashleigh Bing Photography

LEADING FROM THE BODY: *Dr. Wendi Williams* ON REST, LIBERATION AND REIMAGINING POWER

Leadership is often framed as endurance, output and constant motion, especially for Black and Brown women who have been pushed to carry more than their share for generations. But as Dr. Wendi Williams, President-elect of the American Psychological Association, reminds us in this candid conversation, a different way is not only possible, it is necessary.

In this interview, Dr. Williams speaks openly about what liberated leadership feels like in the body, why recovery is a form of resistance, and how wellness becomes a catalyst for courage. She reflects on the generational pressures placed on Black women, the cultural seduction of the hustle, and the transformative power of saying “no” as a pathway to both wellness and influence.

You write and speak about liberation in leadership. What does liberated leadership look like and what does it feel like in the body?

Liberated leadership is the act of creating space and opportunity for individual and collective growth and abundance through being your authentic self and inviting others to do

the same. In the body it feels like release, especially for those who are told that who they are or how they behave authentically is not “normal” or is a deficit in comparison to other ways of being. Liberated leadership invites each of us to put down false ideals of who we are supposed to be to access the brilliance of who we actually are and the gifts that flow from there.

Many women, especially Black women, are taught to push through exhaustion. What does recovery look like as a form of leadership?

It is vital that everyone reject the pervasive messages and expectations to perform until and often through exhaustion. Black women, given our historical labor experience globally and especially in the U.S., have had to actively resist this drive. This is due to being part of systems that exploit the masses as workers, but also because even our peers can view our labor as something that should lighten their own burden.

Consequently, it becomes even more challenging *not* to internalize this view of oneself. Therefore, recovery, engaging in life-affirming, replenishing practices, especially for Black women, is an act of defiance. It models for others that they,

too, can engage with their life, work, and pleasure balance differently. This modeling is leadership. When in leadership roles, naming and even requiring your staff and teams to take the time to fully embody their humanity and recover is also leadership.

In what ways does tending to our wellness allow us to lead more courageously?

Tending to our wellness is essential for courageous leadership. When we are well, we possess the increased energy and capacity needed to imagine greater possibilities—not just in terms of inspiring ideas, but also in the stamina, ferocity, and determination we can bring to the table. By engaging the world from a full cup rather than a depleted one, we unlock the full expanse of our talents and capabilities. This is the true wealth found in wellness, or as you all perfectly name it, Wellth.

How can women leaders, especially Black and Brown women, practice refusal, “saying no,” in a way that preserves wellness and builds power?

“No” is such a liberating word. It is a key that unlocks possibility because it literally untethers us from people, situations, and things that no longer serve our calling or purpose. It also calls us back to ourselves,



and care for the physical human body of me carrying my spirit.

My work and life purpose is to support others in resisting the tendency to separate themselves from their humanity in order to engage the hustle and grind cultures that they've been seduced into believing is the cost of leadership and that our ancestors resisted. For us to understand and honor our accountability to their legacy and sacrifice *not* to do to ourselves what their captors did to them. This is the resistance in our rest. This is the dream our bodies are carrying and it is the dream of our ancestors.

How do you take care of the body (emotional, mental and spiritual) that carries your own leadership and vision?

The most critical aspect of this is maintaining clear psycho-spiritual boundaries, shielding myself from people, places, and things that could cause harm, regardless of their intent. Since the impact is felt no matter what was meant, their intention is of little interest to me. Therefore, I do not invite toxicity into my life, and when confronted with it, I immediately and unapologetically remove it or myself from the situation.

I make time for play and laughter. I ensure I am surrounded by good people and engage in activities that bring me joy, typically time with family and friends, or enjoying a good book or other form of entertainment. I make it my personal mission to enjoy my life every single day.

I also prioritize good nutrition that is enjoyable to eat and hydration.

Finally, I love to be physically active as a form of exercise and to reconnect with nature and my body. Currently I do so through hiking at least weekly (weather and schedule permitting) and run-walking a minimum of three times a week. I also incorporate weightlifting from time to time.

How can we begin to reconnect with our bodies after years of emotional disconnection or burnout?

We simply must slow down, and if we can bear it, stop. We become accustomed, even addicted, to constant movement and the hustle and bustle. While it's happening, it gives us the feeling that we *can* and *must* engage to be in the mix, to be relevant. Added to that is the feeling, particularly among the 300,000+ Black women who have lost their jobs between February and April of 2025, that they may not be able to afford to stop; that they must keep going and stay engaged to provide for themselves and their families.

Therefore, when we talk about how to reconnect, it is with these realities in mind, conscious of the fact that our bodies have limits. We must eat, sleep/rest, stay hydrated, and find joy in our lives as a foundation for deepening our relationship with ourselves and reconnecting to the

and by releasing us from what is no longer ours to engage, it conserves our most important resources—time, energy, and attention—making them available for us to direct toward what we want to cultivate and create. As leaders, we are responsible for caring for and providing guidance to others through our oversight, just as we are through providing vision. When we refuse wasteful engagement and distraction, we become available for the bigger, better, and next—a future-focused agenda. And this, for Black women, is a leadership legacy, as our time historically, especially in the US, has meant contributing to systems and structures that harm in order to elicit a democracy in action that can match the word, and building for futures that we may not see.

The theme of this issue is “the body that carries the dream.” It’s all about honoring the vessel that makes it all possible, your body. It’s a celebration of movement, nourishment, emotional restoration and unapologetic self-care. We explore how to move with joy, eat with intention and rest without guilt, so you can sustain the vision you’re building. This issue is a guide to strengthening the foundation that carries your ambition, creativity and your legacy. What does the phrase, “the body that carries the dream” mean to you personally and professionally?

The phrase “the body carries the dream” means a lot to me, both personally and professionally. There is so much alignment between my life and professional practice because I realized that the harms and successes I experienced were in direct relation to the degree to which I honored or abandoned my mind-body-spirit. I am very clear, now, to never forsake myself and live a practice of devotion



parts of ourselves that emotional disconnection and burnout have alienated us from over the years.

What small daily practices do you recommend for Black and Brown women who are carrying heavy emotional and professional loads?

I recommend we take time, even briefly (3-5 minutes daily) but more if possible, to engage with life that cannot be digitized or mediated through technology. For me, that is walking outside, breathing in fresh air, if possible, possibly touching a tree, plant, or flower, perhaps engaging a pet, and/or spending some time with a friend or loved one.

What's one thing you've learned about yourself through your own healing or rest journey?

I am enough, and nothing is more important than prioritizing the personal business of my own well-being. We each must begin with ourselves first to be truly good for others.

What gives you hope about the next generation of Black and Brown women leaders?

I have great hope and anticipation for the next generation of Black and Brown women leaders. Over the last 20 years, we have worked diligently to uplift the narratives of diverse women leaders and share their stories. Now, we have the opportunity to translate those stories into practical, applicable strategies to inform their future vision for leadership.

We have emphasized the importance of self-regard and care—a practice that can be extended to others but must not come at their expense. This feels like a crucial framework for advancing the next generation of leaders, both globally and for Black and Brown leaders specifically.

"We each must begin with ourselves first to be truly good for others."

Morning mantra or midnight motivation?

Midnight Motivation: All is done, all is well.

If rest were a destination, where would you book your one-way ticket?

On the downward slope of a rainbow.

One wellness ritual you refuse to skip no matter how busy life gets.

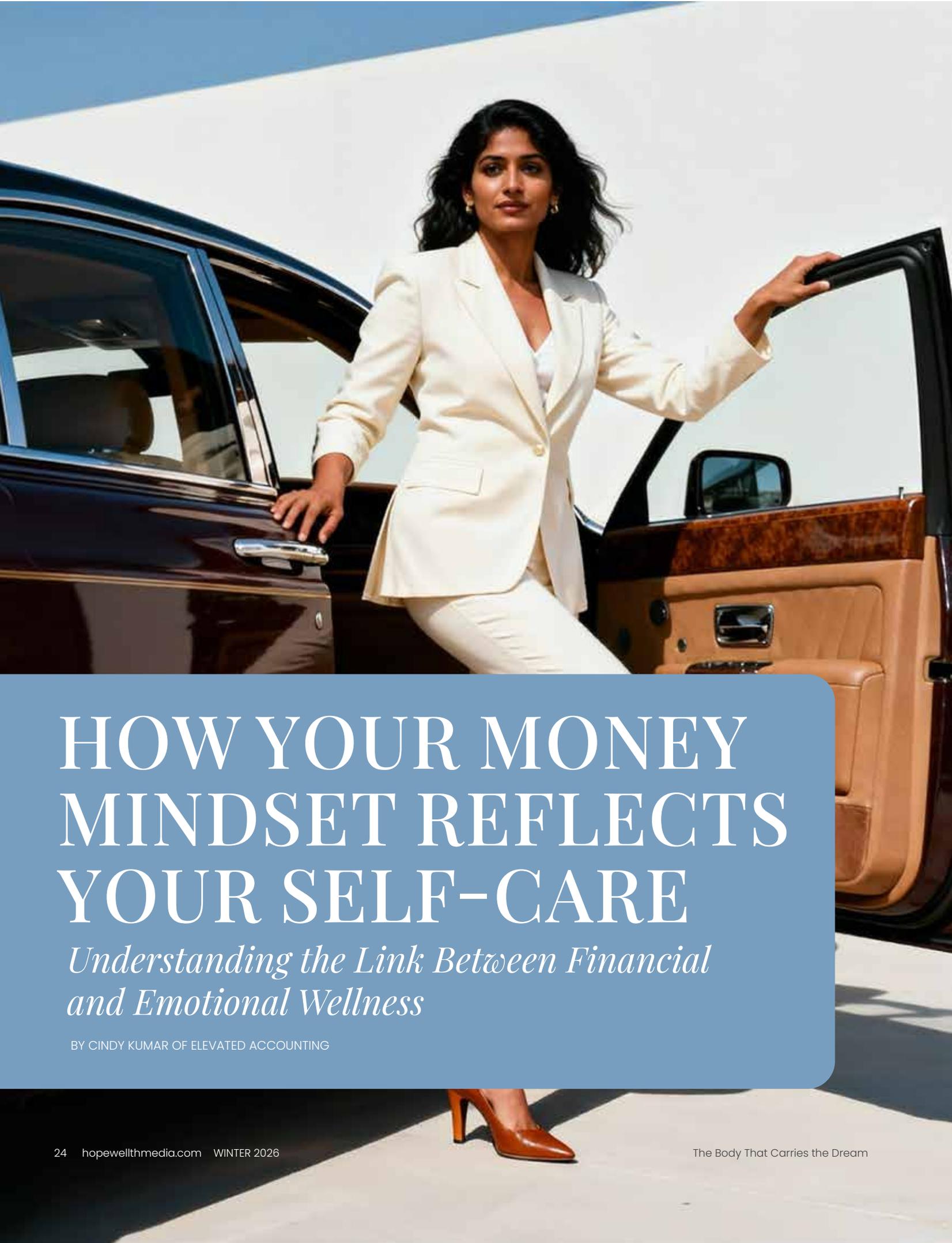
One glass of warm lemon water as my first drink in the morning.

A book, tv show or podcast you're currently obsessed with?

Right now, I am loving Emma Grede's content.

Your go-to comfort food after a long day of leading and dreaming?

Sunflower seeds and a glass of red wine.



HOW YOUR MONEY MINDSET REFLECTS YOUR SELF-CARE

Understanding the Link Between Financial and Emotional Wellness

BY CINDY KUMAR OF ELEVATED ACCOUNTING

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

When I review a woman’s financials, I can usually see her stress before she says a word. The late invoices. The maxed-out credit card she swears she’ll pay off next month. The way she underpays herself because things are slow right now. And every time, I think: this isn’t just about money. It’s about the body that’s carrying the dream while running on empty.

Most women don’t realize that their financial habits and their self-care habits are identical. If you overspend, you probably overgive. If you avoid your numbers, you probably avoid rest. If you run your business from survival mode, your body is doing the same.

The Energy of Scarcity

For many of us, money has never just been about dollars. It has been about safety, belonging, and proving we’re enough. When you grow up hearing that stability comes from hard work and sacrifice, rest feels like a risk. You convince yourself that pushing harder will fix the discomfort. But what actually happens is that the nervous system learns to live in constant alert. That’s scarcity, not just in your bank account but in your body. You can’t create, dream, or expand from that place. You can only survive.

I’ve seen women go years operating in that loop. They chase income goals while running on adrenaline and caffeine, telling themselves it’s just a busy season. But what they’re really chasing is the feeling of safety they’ve never had with money.

When Stillness Creates Abundance

I used to think I made the most money during tax season, when I was working twelve-hour days and juggling dozens of clients. But what I’ve learned is that my highest-earning months never come from those seasons of hustle. They happen when I’m taking care of my body, slowing down, and creating space for myself.

When my nervous system is calm, I can think clearly and make decisions that actually move the business forward. When I’m rested, I notice opportunities instead of reacting to problems. When I move my body, I feel grounded and creative again. Money flows when I’m regulated, not when I’m

running on stress.

That was one of the biggest mindset shifts I had to make; realizing that caring for my body wasn’t taking me away from success, it was building the capacity to hold more of it.



When the Body Says Enough

Money stress doesn’t just live on a spreadsheet. It lives in the shoulders, the gut, and the late-night thoughts that keep you from sleeping. Your body knows when your boundaries are blurred, when you’re saying yes to clients who drain you, or holding onto team members you can’t afford.

I worked with a client who was making over half a million a year. From the outside, she looked successful. But behind the scenes, she was exhausted, living month to month, constantly putting everyone else before herself. Once we mapped her spending, she realized her business was feeding everyone except her.

That’s when it clicked. Her lack of boundaries with money mirrored her lack of boundaries with time and energy. When she started paying herself consistently and protecting her rest like a meeting that couldn’t be canceled, her finances and her creativity started to flow again.

Clarity, Control, and Cashflow

This is the framework I teach every woman I work with.

Clarity is understanding what’s actually going on, knowing where your money is going, how much you’re keeping, and what it costs to run your dream. Without clarity, stress fills in the gaps with worst-case scenarios.

Control is about systems and boundaries. Just like you can’t rely on motivation to take care of your body, you can’t rely on willpower to take care of your money. You need structure, savings routines, income tracking, and spending rules that make you feel supported, not restricted.

Cashflow is what happens when both are in alignment. It’s the rhythm between giving and receiving. It’s the moment your money finally starts working for you instead of against you, and your body feels safe enough to exhale.

Money as Self-Respect

The real act of self-care isn’t what we post on Instagram. It’s how we treat ourselves when no one’s watching. It’s checking your numbers instead of avoiding them. It’s saying no to undercharging because you value your time. It’s choosing structure over chaos, peace over pressure.

Money mirrors that. When you operate from self-respect, you start to make decisions from abundance instead of fear. You spend intentionally. You save without guilt. You build a life and business that nourishes you instead of drains you.

The Body That Builds the Legacy

The body that carries the dream deserves to feel safe and supported, not constantly in fight or flight. When you start treating your finances like self-care, you stop chasing stability and start embodying it. Because when your nervous system and your numbers are in sync, that’s when you build real wealth, not just in your bank account but in your energy, your time, and your peace. 



READY FOR A CHANGE? 5 MINDSET SHIFTS TO HELP YOU LET GO AND MOVE TOWARD YOUR DREAMS

How changing your thinking can open the door to your next level of success

BY GLENNY ROSARIO, LIFE COACH

If you've been following my writing, you already know that I always write about what I know about my experiences, my lessons, and the things I've personally worked through. When I decided to write this piece, it really hit home.

When I first became a life coach, I was full of insecurities and limiting beliefs, about myself, about money, and even about success. I battled imposter syndrome constantly. I was helping others find clarity, yet inside, I often questioned whether I was truly capable or worthy of helping anyone at all.

It took time, patience, and a lot of inner

work to overcome those feelings. I worked closely with my own life coach and discovered that if you want to achieve your dreams, you must first heal the parts of you that are unconsciously stopping you from reaching them. Healing is not a straight path. There were many moments when I felt stuck, like I was doing everything right but still wasn't getting the results I wanted.

I would ask myself over and over: What am I doing wrong? Why isn't my business thriving yet? Why can't I get to the next level?

It was frustrating, even discouraging at

times. But eventually, I realized that the real work wasn't about doing more; it was about going deeper. I had to look within and identify what beliefs, fears, and emotional patterns I was still holding onto that were keeping me from fully stepping into my purpose.

Once I did that, everything started to shift.

Today, I want to share with you the five mindset shifts that helped me release what no longer served me and move me closer to the life and business of my dreams.

1. Set Your Ultimate Goal

Your dream should excite you, maybe even scare you a little. That's how you know it's big enough. A powerful goal dominates your thinking and keeps you inspired, even when things get tough.

When I first started coaching, my goal was simple: to help women build self-confidence and rediscover who they truly are. But as I grew, my vision expanded. I realized that I wanted to empower women all over the world to heal, manifest success, and create lives they love. That became my ultimate goal.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when setting goals is letting their current circumstances influence their vision. Don't let where you are right now limit where you're going. Your present situation is temporary; your potential is not.

Keep your mind focused on your desire, no matter what your external reality looks like. Don't give in to the negative voice that whispers, "Who do you think you are?" Instead, remind yourself daily: "I am capable. I am deserving. I will not give up."

Take time to uncover your subconscious mental conditioning, the old beliefs that might be running in the background. Once you're aware of them, you can reprogram them. Make a contract with yourself to never give up on your dreams, no matter how long it takes.

Because when you set an ultimate goal — one that stretches you beyond comfort — you become someone new in the process.

2. Take Aligned Action

Action is power. But not just any action — aligned action.

Aligned action comes from intuition, vision, and faith. It's not about forcing or hustling. It's about taking consistent steps that feel connected to your purpose.

Before any action becomes reality, it first happens in your mind. Visualization is a powerful tool —

imagine yourself taking the steps, having the conversations, and achieving the milestones. See it clearly and emotionally. When your ideas are ready, don't ignore them. Ideas are like slippery fish, if you don't catch them right away, they swim away.

Write your ideas down. Create plans. Take small, consistent steps forward.

Another key to taking aligned action is surrounding yourself with the right people. Read books that inspire you. Network with people who are doing what you aspire to do. Spend time with individuals who elevate your energy and challenge you to grow.

When I began to connect with other coaches and entrepreneurs who were walking similar paths, I felt my confidence grow. Seeing others thrive reminded me that my dreams were possible, too.

Aligned action builds momentum, and momentum is the bridge between vision and manifestation.

business began to thrive.

Think of it this way: "I will induce others to serve me because of the way I serve others."

Money is a result of the value you create. When you genuinely help others improve their lives, success follows. The law of giving and receiving is universal — when you give without expectation, you create space to receive abundance in return.

Ask yourself: How can I improve my service to others today? How can I deliver more value, more love, and more impact?

When helping others becomes automatic, you'll notice that everything is connected. The more you give, the more fulfilled — and successful — you become.



3. Lead with Service, Not Money

This one was a huge breakthrough for me.

When I started my business, I was so focused on needing to make it work financially that I unintentionally blocked my own flow. Every decision came from a place of scarcity — "I need clients," "I need income," "I need results."

But winners don't think in terms of getting; they think in terms of giving.

When I shifted my mindset from "How can I make money?" to "How can I serve more deeply?" Everything has changed. Clients started showing up naturally, opportunities flowed, and my

4. Build Unshakable Confidence

Confidence is not something you magically wake up with. It's something you practice every single day.

When I started out, I often doubted myself. I questioned my abilities, my message, and even my worth. There were moments when fear almost convinced me to quit. But I made a decision: to practice confidence until it became natural.

I would look at myself in the mirror and repeat: "I know like I know — I am a great life coach."

It wasn't about arrogance. It was about aligning with the truth that confidence already existed within me. It's not something you find outside of yourself; it's a knowing, an inner serenity that no one can take away.

Confidence grows through understanding. The more you learn about your craft, the more competent and self-assured you become. Develop your strengths and manage your weaknesses. Remember, your heart will never desire something you're not capable of achieving.

Say to yourself often: "I am good enough. I am more than enough."

When you activate thoughts of self-worth, you create a powerful inner image that connects you with your soul. Confidence isn't just a mindset, it's an energy that magnetizes opportunities and people toward you.

5. Embrace Persistence as a Way of Life

Persistence is absolutely essential. There will be times when things move

slower than you want, when doors seem to close, or when life throws obstacles your way. But the key is to keep going — to hold your dream close and refuse to give up.

For me, persistence became so personal that I tattooed the words "Never Give Up" on my arm. It serves as a daily reminder that success isn't about luck; it's about commitment.

Persistence isn't just about working hard. It's about falling in love with your vision so deeply that you simply can't quit. You must want your dream so much that you're willing to keep showing up, even on days it feels impossible.

Dream big enough that facts don't matter. Don't let circumstances define what's possible for you. Stay consistent. Keep practicing. Be patient with your journey.

Persistence turns effort into mastery and dreams into reality.

Dare to dream and dream big. Because dreams do come true. You are powerful beyond measure. You are capable of more than you've ever imagined. The vision in your heart is not random — its divine guidance calling you forward.

There will be days when it feels hard, when the world doubts you, or when you question your own worth. In those moments, I want you to remember this: *You are not alone*. Every dreamer walks that path — the one between fear and faith, doubt and destiny.

But if you just keep believing, keep showing up, and keep choosing yourself, the universe will meet you halfway. Never give up on what sets your soul on fire. Never settle for less than the life you deserve. And never stop believing in the power of your dreams. 



Zarina DelMar

on Movement as Medicine and Presence as Power

THE BODY THAT CARRIES THE DREAM

For our cover story, we sit down with **Zarina del Mar**, whose life is a testament to what becomes possible when we choose to listen to the wisdom of our bodies. Once a tax attorney in Moscow, Russia, Zarina made the radical, soul-led decision to leave behind a prestigious career for a path filled with uncertainty, intuition and movement. What began as a quiet whisper in her chest evolved into a global wellness platform and her signature 3D Method, a practice that reframes movement as presence, not punishment. In this intimate conversation, Zarina opens up about **fear, reinvention, identity and the fierce courage** required to shed an old self in order to step fully into the woman she was always meant to become. Her story reminds us that the body doesn't just carry the dream; it shows us the way back home to ourselves.



Hope + Wellth:

You made a dramatic shift from working as a tax attorney to becoming a movement educator. Looking back, was there a single moment when you knew with absolute certainty that you couldn't keep living the life you were living as a tax attorney? What did that moment feel like in your body?

Zarina Del Mar:

Yes, there was a moment and I remember it not just as a thought, but as a *sensation in my body*. I was in Moscow, working late in the office, surrounded by piles of contracts and tax codes. On the outside, everything looked perfect: stable career, prestigious position, clear path ahead. But inside, my body was screaming.

I remember sitting at my desk and feeling this *heavy pressure in my chest* as if my breath had nowhere to go. My shoulders were locked, my hips were stiff from hours of sitting, and it felt like I was slowly turning into a closed box. That night, I realized: if I stay here, if I keep living in numbers and documents, I will lose the connection with my own body and that means losing myself.

That was the first time I stood up, walked to the window, and simply let myself breathe. It was such a simple action, but my whole body told me: *this is what freedom feels like*. I didn't know then that I would build a new career in movement, or that I'd move across the world to California, but I knew one thing with certainty that I could not ignore my body anymore. That was the turning point.

Now, every time I guide women through my 3D Method, I remind them: change doesn't start in the head. It starts with listening to your body because the body always knows before you do.

H+W: When you stepped away from law, did you experience any fear, grief or even resistance from those around you? If so, how did you navigate those emotions while still moving forward with your decision?

Zarina: Of course there was fear, mine and other people's. My family and colleagues thought I was crazy to walk away from a "secure" profession. There was grief too, because part of me had invested years of study, long nights, and so much energy into that identity of being a lawyer.

“I let curiosity and trust in my body lead the way.”

But here's the thing: every time I moved my body, I felt alive. Every time I helped someone feel better in their own body, I felt purpose. Fear and grief were real, but they were also signals proof that I was breaking away from what no longer served me.

I navigated it by allowing myself to feel those emotions, but not letting them be the driver. Instead, I let curiosity and trust in my body lead the way. And when people saw the results not just in me, but people in my community, resistance turned into support.

H+W: Your 3D Method reframes fitness as presence, not punishment. How do you see the connection between honoring the body and sustaining our biggest dreams?

Zarina: When you punish your body, you drain energy from your dreams. But when you honor your body, you unlock a different kind of presence. The body becomes your anchor, your compass. My 3D Method teaches that movement isn't about burning calories, it's about waking up your nervous system, aligning your posture, and clearing your mind. From that state, your decisions are sharper, your creativity flows, and your resilience grows.

The truth is your body is the first "business" you will ever run. If you manage it with care, everything else including your work, your relationships, your biggest dreams will have a stable foundation to expand from.

H+W: You have said that movement is a form of self-communication. What has your body told you at different stages in your life; from attorney to wellness educator to global influencer?

Zarina: When I was an attorney, my body whispered, *"You are exhausted."* I ignored it for years. The tension in my jaw, the shallow breathing, the heaviness in my chest. It was telling me that I was living a life out of alignment.

When I began exploring wellness and created my 3D Method, my body shifted its language. It said, *"I can recover, I can play, I can create."* Movement became less about discipline and more about dialogue. Every stretch, every mindful breath was my body saying, *"Thank you for listening."*

Now, as a global influencer, my body speaks differently. It says, *"Protect your energy, stay grounded, remember why you started."* The more people I reach, the more essential it becomes to keep that communication alive. Because my body isn't just carrying me, it's carrying my message to millions.

H+W: You have said that movement is a form of self-communication. What has your body told you at different stages in your life; from attorney to wellness educator to global influencer?

Zarina: When I was an attorney, my body whispered, *"You are exhausted."* I ignored it for years. The tension in my jaw, the shallow breathing, the heaviness in my chest. It was telling me that I was living a life out of alignment.

When I began exploring wellness and created my 3D Method, my body shifted its language. It said, *"I can recover, I can play, I can create."* Movement became less about discipline and more about dialogue. Every stretch, every mindful breath was my body saying, *"Thank you for listening."*

Now, as a global influencer, my body speaks differently. It says, *"Protect your energy, stay grounded, remember why you started."* The more people I reach, the more essential it becomes to keep that communication alive. Because my body isn't just carrying me, it's carrying my message to millions.

H+W: When did you first realize that movement wasn't just about exercise, but about reconnecting to your body and emotions?

Zarina: I realized movement was more than exercise during a time when I felt completely disconnected from myself right after becoming a mother. I was exhausted, overwhelmed, and my body felt foreign to me. One morning, instead of pushing myself through a punishing workout, I simply lay on the floor and breathed, stretching slowly, almost instinctively. At that moment, I felt my body say, *"I'm still here, and I can hold you."* It wasn't about burning calories or chasing results. It was about remembering that movement could soothe, heal, and reconnect me to my emotions. That moment changed everything and it was the seed of what later became my 3D Method.





H+W: As a woman of color in both the corporate and wellness worlds, what unique challenges have you faced, and how have they shaped the way you move through both your personal and professional life today?

Zarina: One of the biggest challenges I faced was being underestimated both in the corporate world and later in wellness. As a woman of color with an accent and an unconventional background, I often felt like I had to prove [myself] twice as much just to be seen as credible. In law, it meant long hours and constant pressure to “fit the mold.” In wellness, it meant stepping into a space often dominated by a very narrow image of what health and beauty should look like.

But those experiences also became my strength. They taught me resilience, clarity, and the importance of standing unapologetically in who I am. Today, I carry that with me into everything I do. It shapes the way I teach, reminding women that their uniqueness is their power and the way I lead my business, with empathy and a deep understanding that true transformation begins when you stop asking for permission to take up space.

H+W: When you're not teaching or creating, what are the small, everyday rituals that restore you. You know, those quiet acts of self-care that no one sees but that keep you whole?

Zarina: When I'm not teaching or creating, I find the quietest forms of care to be the most restorative. My mornings begin barefoot on the grass in my backyard, just breathing and letting my nervous system settle before the world rushes in. In the evenings, I'll often do a few minutes of self-massage, especially for my face and neck. It's my way of saying “thank you” to my body for carrying me through the day. I'm also very protective of sleep; going to bed early is my most radical form of self-care. These rituals may look simple, but they're what keep me grounded, creative, and able to show up fully for others.

“What remained was a version of me that measures success not in numbers, but in how alive, present, and connected I feel in my body and in my relationships.”



H+W: Transitions often require letting go of old versions of ourselves. What part of the old Zarina did you have to release in order to fully step into your new chapter?

Zarina: The hardest part was letting go of the Zarina who equated worth with achievement. As a lawyer, I was trained to measure everything in deadlines, billable hours, and external validation. That version of me always asked, "Have I done enough?" When I stepped into movement, I had to release that constant chase and learn to honor "being" instead of only "doing." It felt like shedding a very tight skin, uncomfortable at first, but ultimately freeing. What remained was a version of me that measures success not in numbers, but in how alive, present, and connected I feel in my body and in my relationships.

H+W: What does peace look like in your life today, and how is it different from the woman you were a decade ago?

Zarina: Peace today looks like mornings on my back patio in California, barefoot on the grass, moving gently before the world wakes up. It's the freedom to design my day around energy and creativity, not deadlines and someone else's expectations.

A decade ago, peace felt like something I had to *earn* by working harder, pushing through exhaustion, proving my worth. I thought stillness was laziness, and rest was weakness. Now, I see peace as strength: the quiet confidence of knowing I can build, create, and love without burning myself to the ground.

H+W: Our theme for this Winter is "The Body That Carries The Dream," what dream were you carrying when you first left law and what dream is your body carrying now?

Zarina: When I first left law, the dream I was carrying was survival. I wanted to breathe again, to wake up without dread in my chest, to live in a body that wasn't tense and braced all the time. My body back then carried the dream of escape from burnout, from a life that didn't feel like mine.

Today, my body carries a very different dream: expansion. Not just for me, but for every woman who has been taught to ignore her own signals, to numb, to push through. My body carries the dream of showing that movement can be medicine, that aging can be power, that joy can live in every cell. It's not about escape anymore, it's about creating a future where women's bodies are seen as the source of wisdom, not limitation.

H+W: When you imagine yourself decades from now, looking back on this season of your life, what do you hope you'll remember most clearly about the woman you were becoming right now?

Zarina: I hope I'll remember the courage. Not the polished achievements, not the numbers or milestones but the trembling moments where I still chose to step forward. I want to remember how imperfect I felt, how many doubts I carried, and yet how deeply I trusted the quiet voice inside my body saying, "keep going."

I hope I'll remember that this was the season where I learned to mother myself to choose rest without guilt, to choose presence over performance, to choose truth over approval.

And maybe, decades from now, I'll look back and smile, knowing this was the moment I stopped asking for permission and started moving as the woman I was always meant to become.

If you could have a dream movement session anywhere in the world, with anyone, where would it be and with whom?

Getty Villa. I'd love to meet every member of my community for a live movement session.

Hot cocoa or spiced tea on a Winter night?
Hot Cocoa

Coziest Winter tradition in your family?

My family's great tradition is making Russian food, specifically "post USSR food." We sit together to eat, talk, and play different games.

Last book or podcast that inspired you?

The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron

Morning ritual you can't live without?

3D Movement to wake up my body.



You're burned out because your success
has secretly become your survival.

But what if your level of success didn't
require more, but less?

- ▶ **Less Adrenaline**
More Alignment
- ▶ **Less Performance**
More Power
- ▶ **Less Pressure**
More Peace

Join Dr. Rebecca Hubbard
for a *Hope+Wellth* Exclusive
Webinar for
Women Who Want More!

Clarity
over
Chaos

Join our list to be the first to know when this game-changing webinar drops.

Sign up now

AT [HOPEWELLTHMEDIA.COM/CLARITY-OVER-CHAOS](https://www.HOPEWELLTHMEDIA.COM/CLARITY-OVER-CHAOS)



A woman with her arms raised in a graceful dance pose, wearing a long, flowing, ribbed dress. The background is a soft, greenish-yellow gradient. The word "BODY" is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the center of the image.

BODY

The body holds our stories, our healing, our habits, our scars, and our strength. Let's celebrate the body as an active partner in our wellbeing, whether through movement, music, metabolic health, or deeply personal journeys of resilience. From walking as a pathway to connection to turning housework into everyday fitness, remember that wellness isn't reserved for the gym. It's woven into daily life, into community, into listening to the body and honoring what it needs. We encourage you to move with intention, nourish with compassion, and trust in the body's ability to support transformation.



The Power of Group Workouts

How Exercising Together Builds Connection and Joy

BY GLENNY ROSARIO / LIFE COACH

Ever since I had my first baby, the gym has been part of my life. Back then, I went because I wanted to *look* fit. Now, I go because I want to *live* to be healthy, strong, and full of energy all the way to 90 (yes, 90!).

Over the years, I've tried just about everything to motivate myself to exercise. I've gone with friends — which worked until they couldn't make it, and then neither did I. I've gone alone, thinking that maybe doing it on my own schedule would help me stay consistent. But no matter what I tried, I always had a mental battle with myself every single morning.

I'd wake up and think, *Okay, today's the day. I'm going to the gym because I want to be healthy, strong, and live a long life.* And then my mind would answer right back: *No, you're tired. You're busy. You'll go tomorrow.*

Sound familiar?

That inner tug-of-war lasted for years. I did the 30-day challenges, the habit trackers, the motivational quotes and while they helped for a while, I still had to convince myself every single day to get moving.

Then one morning, I had an honest talk with myself.

If I truly wanted to live to 90, I had to stop fighting myself. I needed to figure out a way to **enjoy** exercising — not just push through it. I needed to find something I looked forward to doing.

I decided to try something completely new: **group yoga.**

Now, here's the thing, I'm not really one to be around a lot of people. But I'm always working on improving the parts of me that no longer serve me, and I knew that maybe the connection I'd been avoiding was actually what I needed.

I thought about it for eight months before I finally signed up for a class.

THE FIRST CLASS THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

The first day of yoga was...intense. The room was hot, really hot and packed with women sitting close together. I remember thinking, *what have I gotten myself into?*

But I stayed.

There were women of all ages, shapes, and colors and that instantly made me feel at ease. The teacher was a small Chinese woman with the calmest voice I've ever heard. Just listening to her made me feel peaceful.

Then came the poses. I had no idea what I was doing. I wobbled. I fell. But here's the beautiful thing — I didn't feel embarrassed. Nobody was judging me. Every woman in that room had her own reason for being there, her own story, her own battle.

By the end of that first class, something inside me shifted. I felt *strong*. I felt *proud*. I felt *connected*.

And when we ended with meditation, surrounded by women breathing and moving with the same intention to take care of themselves, the experience felt almost magical.

I walked out of that studio, smiling, sweaty, and completely hooked.

I told everyone I knew to try yoga. (No one did, of course!) But I went back. Again, and again.

FINDING MY PEOPLE AND MY PEACE

A year later, yoga completely transformed my relationship with exercise. I still go to the gym twice a week, but now it's no longer a battle. And I joyfully go to yoga three times a week.

Every time I roll out my mat, I feel happy to be there. My body feels stronger. My balance has improved (I don't fall anymore!), and my mind is calmer. But what I love most is the **community** I've found.

The women in my yoga class are some of the kindest, most supportive people I've ever met. We sweat together, we encourage each other, and sometimes, without even saying a word, we lift each other up just by showing up.

**“Dare to take that first step —
and then take another.”**

WHY GROUP WORKOUTS WORK

There’s something powerful that happens when people move together toward a shared goal. Science even backs it up; research shows that group workouts can:

Increase Motivation

Exercising with others helps you stay consistent because you feel part of something bigger.

Reduce Stress

Moving and breathing in sync with a group releases endorphins; your body’s natural “feel-good” chemicals.

Boost Accountability

When others are expecting you, you’re more likely to show up (even on the days you’d rather not).

Build Connections

Humans are wired for community. Working out with others satisfies that need for belonging and shared energy.

Enhance Joy

Shared laughter, encouragement, and post-workout high-fives all contribute to an emotional lift that solo workouts don’t always bring.

In group fitness, whether it’s yoga, Zumba, spin, or boot camp, you’re reminded that you’re not alone on your journey. You see others showing up despite their challenges, and it inspires you to do the same.

That’s what I discovered through yoga. I went looking for motivation, but what I found was **connections** — and that changed everything.



When you approach movement with love instead of resistance, it becomes something you look forward to — not something you have to talk yourself into.

To every woman who finds it hard to exercise; I see you.

I know what it feels like to fight that inner battle, to find every excuse, to say, “I’ll start Monday.” But I also know this: inside you is a woman who *wants* to feel strong, free, and alive. She’s waiting for you to choose her.

So, start where you are. Find something that brings you joy dancing, yoga, walking, lifting weights, or even laughing with a group of women who just get it.

You don’t have to be perfect. You just have to show up.

Because every time you move, you remind yourself that you’re still here, still growing, still capable.

Dare to take that first step — and then take another.

Find your people. Sweat together. And let that movement become a celebration of the life you’re creating. 

THE MINDSET SHIFT THAT OPENS THE DOOR TO JOY

The biggest change wasn’t physical, it was mental.

I stopped seeing exercise as punishment and started seeing it as *self-love*. I stopped thinking, *I have to go to the gym*, and started saying, *I get to move my body today*.

That one mindset shift opened the door to my next level of joy and health.

It’s no longer about forcing myself. It’s about honoring myself — my body, my mind, and my future.



Walking Together

How Healing Conversations Happen When We're in Motion

BY LYNN LEWIS

The mature trees lined the streets in the park, their colorful leaves blowing gently in the light wind. The morning air was brisk, perfect for an early morning walk. The sun was peeking through the trees to take its rightful place for the day. A few squirrels were scampering about, and some birds were singing sweet melodies. The sounds and sights of the morning were refreshing.

The walking partners emerged from their vehicles, greeted each other, and decided on their route for the morning. Would it be six to eight loops on the trail inside the park? Would it be one loop on the trail and then the trek to the coffee shop? Would it be a straight trek to the coffee shop? Visions of coffee, chai tea, and pastries dancing in their minds might have had something to do with the final decision!

MEET THE WALKING PARTNERS

Elle, a 66 year old, five-foot-three African American woman is joyfully retired from what she refers to as her W-2. She is seasoned by many of life's joys and heartbreaks. Elle is self-employed as a Certified Grief Educator and enjoys few things more than a cup of tea and an early morning walk!

Tomas, a 45 year old, six-foot white male, is at the height of his career as a highly sought-after manager in learning and development. He is an extraordinary friend's friend who also enjoys an early morning outing in nature.

This pair of unlikely walkers met during the COVID-19 pandemic in a virtual volunteers' training class for a non-profit organization. They were doing a get-acquainted session in their training when Elle extended the invitation for anyone interested to have tea with her, virtually or in person. Tomas accepted the invitation. One day during their virtual teatime, Elle suggested they meet up for a walk. As the saying goes, the rest is history since July 2021.

AGE DIFFERENCE...HUMANITY MATTERS MOST

Elle and Tomas often joke that she is the same age as his parents. To someone on the outside looking in, their friendship may seem unusual. After all, they are two people from different generations and lifestyles and at vastly distinct stages of life. None of that matters to them. Elle brings wisdom from her life's experiences, quiet strength and a calm understanding that only time can teach. Tomas brings fresh perspectives from his own life experiences and his love of travel. He never fails to encourage and challenge Elle to do things and go places she otherwise may not have considered.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE MOTION OF WALKING?

Walking side by side with someone creates a subtle but powerful rhythm that can deepen connection and emotional well-being. The side-by-side motion is comforting. Words come freely before they float away, making room for more. Elle and Tomas noticed that the more time they spent walking together, their steps aligned naturally. The physical synchrony fostered emotional attunement and contributed to them feeling more bonded and understood, even without words. This quote from David Baum's article *The Power of Walking Conversations* (www.davidbaum.com), is spot on. "First, when we move, everything in our bodies is engaged, and as a consequence, we become more open and stimulated. The external environment and the motion stimulate our nervous system, making it more highly activated, which keeps us focused and present. When conversation takes this kinesthetic form, our intuition and creativity are activated because both mind and body are engaged."

HEALING POWER OF BEING HEARD

There is something therapeutic about being heard without the fear of being judged. On their walks, Elle and Tomas do not try to fix each other's problems. They simply listen unless advice is solicited.

Elle has endured the tragic loss of her son. On the days when the grief of her loss is heavy and she needs to talk about him and how she is feeling, Tomas holds space for her. His usual response is that it is okay to feel the way she feels. Likewise, Tomas has

often shared some of his innermost thoughts about life's challenges, knowing beyond a shadow of any doubt that he can trust them with Elle. The rhythm of the walking contributes to them being emotionally vulnerable with open hearts, releasing thoughts that they have sometimes not shared with anyone else.

WALKING EXTENDS BEYOND THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS

What began as a walk on the park's trail morphed into emotional medicine. Elle and Tomas' walks are meditative. It is a time to breathe, reflect and reset. They sometimes do quick meditative practices on their walks. It is evident to Elle and Tomas that walking triggers the release of endorphins and serotonin, the brain's feel-good chemicals, because they always feel refreshed and rejuvenated after their walks. The September 10, 2025 blog in www.middlewaywellnessmi.com is about walk and talk therapy and its benefits. Ironically, Elle and Tomas will occasionally say to each other "bill me for that session."

LESSONS FROM THE JOURNEY

Their walking partnership offers more than improved health or conversation. It reveals lessons about connection, healing, and the quiet power of being present.

- **Healing happens in motion.** Sometimes we need to move our bodies to help move through our emotions.
- **Safe spaces do not always have to be created; sometimes they emerge.** When there is no agenda, authenticity takes root.
- **Age does not define connection.** Open hearts and a willingness to learn across cultures and generations remind us that our shared humanity matters most.
- **Deep transformation does not always require deep intention.**



Their story reminds us that the people who walk into our lives both literally and figuratively may be the ones who help us heal in ways we didn't know we needed. Elle and Tomas did not set out to create anything profound. They simply walked and discovered that healing will show up when we are in motion. It is during those times when hearts are open, we are reminded that we are never truly alone. There's something ancient and human about walking together; a kind of wordless companionship that speaks volumes.

Have you ever experienced that kind of connection on a walk? Consider taking a walk to connect. You just may meet healing on your path.





Walking for Healing: How Moving My Body Helped Me Return to Myself

BY REQUEL JASMINE

I didn't notice the change right away. Exercise wasn't a practice in my family. We went to church together. We ate together. We attended sporting events together. But outside of sports, physical activity was not a priority. It wasn't woven into the fabric of our family principles and dynamics. Playing a sport? Absolutely. Moving your body just to move it? That wasn't part of our culture. We showed love through shared meals, laughter, and presence, not through the rhythm of a heartbeat on a morning run or the stretch of muscles beneath sunlit skies.

It was against this backdrop that I stood in front of my mirror one Monday morning and paused longer than usual. I had just returned from a scholarship gala over the weekend, and a photo from the event lit up my phone screen. I glanced from my reflection to the photo, then back again. The woman in the picture had lashes, a full face of glam, and confidence that photographed well. But the woman staring back at me in the mirror—bare-faced, caramel brown skin, braids framing my cheeks—looked different. Not worse. Not better. Just... unfamiliar.

It was in that quiet, personal moment that something honest rose up inside me—I no longer recognized myself. Not physically, not emotionally, not in the way I carried my body or the energy behind my smile. It unsettled me. I didn't want to admit it, but I could feel the weight—not just on my body but on my spirit. Somewhere along the way, I had stopped prioritizing myself.

The Weight of Realization

That summer was fun. Too much fun. Restaurant after restaurant. Bottomless laughs. Late-night conversations. And ice cream—my forever weakness. Ice cream is a love language in my family. My father, my brother, and I could each have our own favorite flavors and still bond over our shared obsession. It's one of those small comforts that doesn't ask questions. It just smiles back at you in a cold bowl.

Except by September, all that smiling caught up with me. I gained 45 pounds without even realizing it. Thirty came and tapped me on the shoulder like a loud auntie at a family reunion—reminding me that my metabolism no longer worked for free. The way I used to eat in high school and college? Those days were long gone. But I had been too busy enjoying life to pay attention.

My clothes fit tighter. My energy dropped. My mood shifted. But I brushed it off. I told myself I'd start Monday. Then Monday became next week. Then next week became next month. And then I saw that gala photo—and the denial cracked.

How did I get here? That was the question that echoed in my head. The truth wasn't complicated. I stopped moving my body and stopped honoring it.

The First Step—Literally

I thought back to gym class in high school, when the first thing we did every semester was walk a mile around the track. No excuses. Rain or shine. That memory came back to me with surprising clarity—and it gave me direction. If walking was the first physical discipline I ever learned, maybe it could be the one to guide me back.

So one day, during my lunch break, I drove to a nearby park.

I didn't have a workout plan. I didn't have gym clothes. I didn't have a step goal or a calorie tracker. I just had a simple decision: move.

The track wrapped around a field lined with trees that swayed in the breeze. The grass was a deeper green than I remembered from childhood field days. Birds darted across the sky like they had somewhere meaningful to be. And the air... the air tasted different. Clean. Honest. Free.

I started walking. One lap. Then a second. Then a third. My heart woke up. My legs stretched awake. My breathing steadied. It wasn't easy, but it felt familiar—almost ancestral. Like my body had been waiting to be used again.

Movement Became My Medicine

I went back again the next day. And the day after that. Soon, walking became my anchor. When everything felt overwhelming—work stress, responsibility, unanswered questions

pavement in rhythm, sun rising slowly like hope. Movement wasn't just changing my body—it was reviving me.

My Reflection Is Clear Again

I stopped chasing a smaller body and started building a stronger one. I stopped obsessing over the scale and focused on how I felt—how I slept better, breathed deeper, and thought clearer. Walking wasn't just helping me lose weight. It was helping me reclaim discipline,



“The body we ignore today becomes the body we will wish for tomorrow.”

about life—I knew I could always step onto that track and reset.

Some days I didn't feel like going. Some days I argued with myself in the car before climbing out. There were moments where my muscles ached, and the voice in my head whispered, “Stop. You've done enough.” But I refused to let my comfort zone rob me of my comeback.

On that track, I saw life in motion. Families pushing strollers. Couples walking dogs. Solo thinkers like me, earbuds in, chasing quiet. One day, I saw a new mother pushing her baby in a stroller, determination on her face. She didn't have a nanny or a trainer or fancy workout equipment—she just had commitment. And at that moment, I told myself, if she can make time, so can I.

I added evening walks. Then I hired a trainer and worked out twice a week. But no matter what I did in the gym, I always came back to walking. Mornings on the track became sacred. Cool air filling my lungs, shoes hitting

peace, and confidence.

I didn't need perfection. I needed consistency.

Now every time I lace my shoes, I'm reminded: my health is not disposable. My body is not a burden. Movement is not a punishment. It is a privilege.

No More Excuses

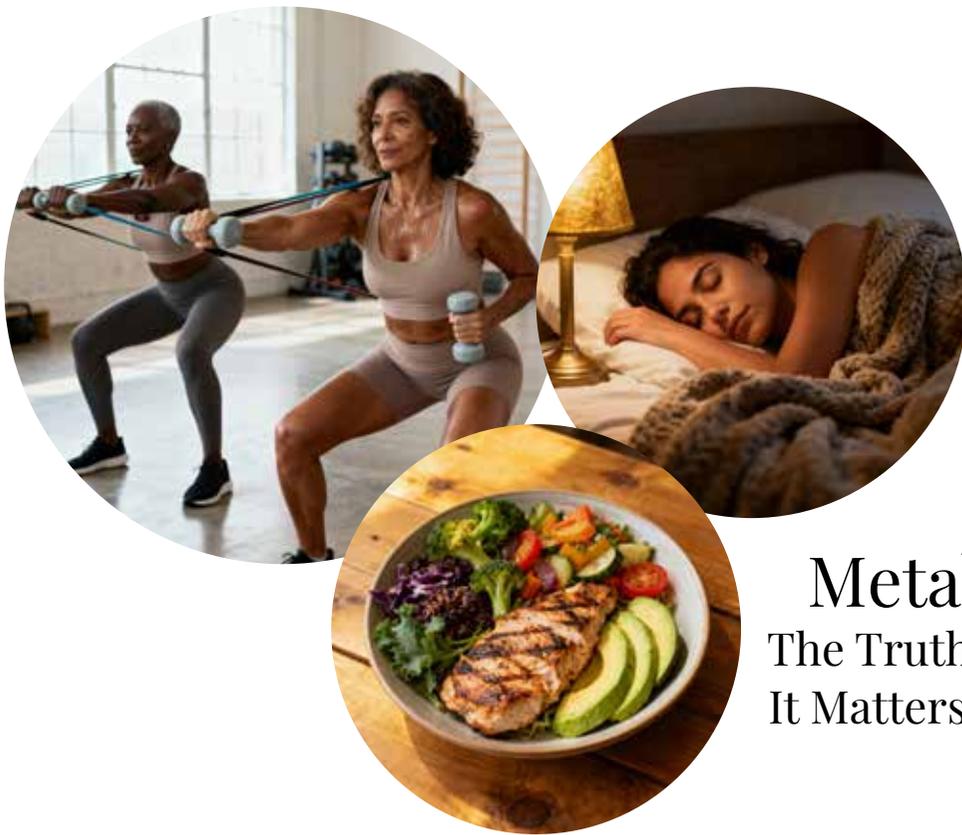
Life will always be busy. There will always be reasons not to start—work, kids, fatigue, fear, doubt. But the truth is simple: the body we ignore today becomes the body we will wish for tomorrow.

You don't need a gym membership. You don't need fancy leggings. You don't need to “find time.” You need to make time—because no one else can do this for you.

Start walking. Walk your street. Walk your block. Walk your park. Walk your way back to yourself.

Because somewhere between yesterday's choices and tomorrow's goals is a moment where you decide to show up for your own life.

And it begins with one step. 



Metabolic Health: The Truth, the Myths, and Why It Matters Beyond Diet Culture

BY DR. NEHA LALANI

Metabolic health is about how efficiently your body converts what you eat and drink into usable energy and how well that energy supports everything you do, from thinking and breathing to healing and moving. It is not just about “burning calories.” It is a reflection of how your cells, hormones, and organs communicate with each other with harmony.

When your metabolism is working well, your body is better able to regulate blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, and energy levels effectively. It is about stability and resilience, not speed or perfection.

Myth: A slow metabolism is permanent.

Truth: Although there is a genetic component to it, for the most part, metabolism is dynamic. It changes in response to lifestyle, muscle mass, hormones, stress levels and even sleep. You can support and improve your metabolic function at any age through consistent, healthy habits.

Myth: Metabolism only changes with age.

Truth: While age plays a role, most of the changes attributed to “aging metabolism” actually come from decreased activity, muscle loss, stress and poor sleep. Staying active, nourished, and well-rested helps maintain metabolic vitality throughout life.

How movement, nourishment, rest, and stress management influence metabolic function

Movement

Regular physical activity, especially strength and resistance training, helps preserve muscle; one of the most metabolically active tissues in the body. More muscle means your body uses energy more efficiently even at rest.

Nourishment

Balanced meals with enough protein, fiber, healthy fats, and

micronutrients keep blood sugar stable and prevent energy crashes. Undereating or extreme dieting can actually slow down your metabolism by signaling “energy shortage” to your body. Instead of that, focusing on whole food, a well balanced diet, moderation and regular eating habits is important.

Rest

Quality sleep regulates hunger hormones (like leptin and ghrelin), cortisol (stress hormone) and supports insulin sensitivity, thereby playing a key role in maintaining metabolic balance. Good-quality rest means more than just getting enough hours of sleep; it’s also about ensuring there are no underlying sleep disorders such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome, which can significantly reduce sleep quality even if you seem to be sleeping enough. Additionally, alcohol can interfere with restful sleep. While it may help you fall asleep initially, it disrupts REM and deep sleep later in the night, leaving you feeling less refreshed.

Stress

Chronic stress elevates cortisol, which can disrupt blood sugar, appetite, and fat storage. Managing stress through mindfulness, movement, or simply taking time to rest supports a healthier metabolic rhythm.

Overall, it’s important to support metabolism with compassion, not fear. Metabolism isn’t something to “fix”; it’s something to nurture. Instead of chasing quick fixes or punishing routines, focus on consistency and care: eat regularly, eat clean, move in ways you enjoy, prioritize rest, and listen to your body.

True metabolic wellness is built on self-awareness and respect for your body’s needs; not on restriction or guilt. When you care for your metabolism with patience and compassion, you’re really caring for your whole self. Please let me know if you would like additional information. I would be happy to discuss this topic with you further. [🔗](#)

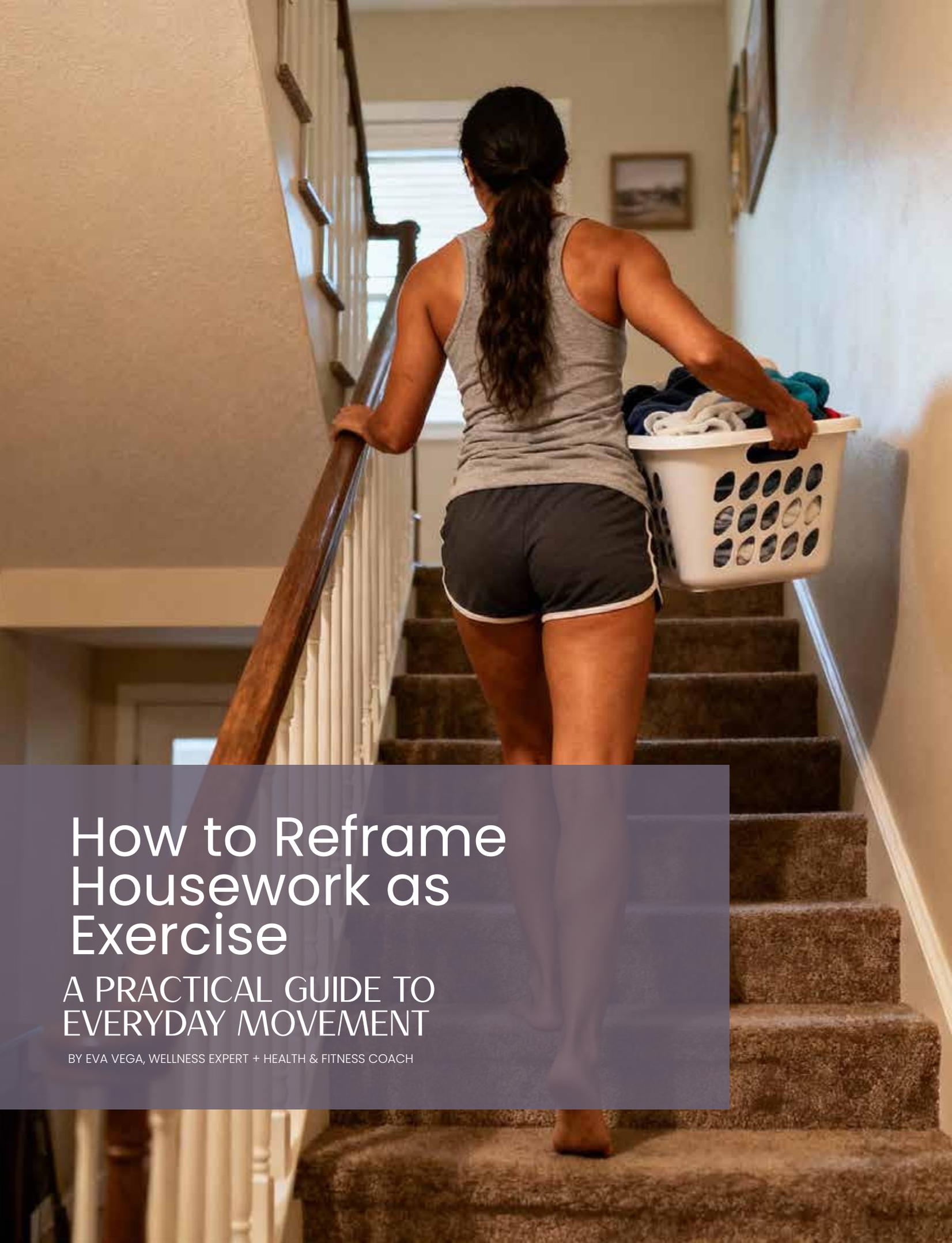
Wander Lounge



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

Website: www.wanderloungepodcast.com
Instagram and Tik Tok: @wander_lounge

Wander
Lounge



How to Reframe Housework as Exercise

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
EVERYDAY MOVEMENT

BY EVA VEGA, WELLNESS EXPERT + HEALTH & FITNESS COACH



Housework isn't just a list of chores — it's one of the simplest ways to build real strength, mobility, and confidence in your everyday life. For many women, traditional workouts can feel overwhelming or hard to sustain, but our expert, **Eva Vega**, believes movement can be practical, accessible, and built right into your routine. With 20 years of experience as a certified personal trainer, yoga and barre instructor, health coach, and wellness leader, she's helped countless people reconnect with their bodies through mindful, functional movement. As Senior Program Director at the YMCA of Western North Carolina, Eva blends fitness, yoga, and coaching to meet people where they are and help them get stronger from the inside out. In this practical guide, she shows how even the simplest household tasks can become intentional opportunities to move with purpose and feel your best.

Our bodies are the vehicles that carry our dreams, our families, and our responsibilities. They show up for us every day — not just at the gym, but while we cook dinner, clean the house, or reorganize a messy closet. These ordinary movements are anything but meaningless; they're the foundation of functional fitness, the kind that keeps us strong for real life.

RETHINKING ROUTINE: MOVEMENT THAT MATTERS

Functional movement is about training your body for the activities you do daily. It's strength that helps you lift your toddler, endurance that keeps you going through errands, and balance that keeps you steady on your feet. When you reframe everyday chores as opportunities to move with awareness, they become a form of wellness practice — a mindful connection between your body and your life.

COOKING: CORE. SHOULDERS. AND MINDFULNESS

Chopping vegetables? That's fine motor work for the hands and forearms. Stirring, mixing, and lifting pots engage your shoulders and triceps. Reaching for pantry items activates your core and stabilizers as you extend and twist. Even standing at the counter offers a chance to align your posture: soften your knees, engage your abs, and keep your shoulders down and back. It's balance training in disguise — and a grounding moment to connect breath to movement.

Body focus: Core, shoulders, forearms, back

Try this: Alternate feet while standing at the counter — one foot slightly forward or resting on a small stool to ease the lower back and engage balance muscles.



CLEANING: THE ULTIMATE FULL-BODY CIRCUIT

Vacuuming or sweeping works your arms, core, and legs through repeated lunging and rotational patterns — the same ones used

in athletic training. Reaching to dust higher shelves becomes an overhead press. Scrubbing surfaces strengthens your chest, shoulders, and triceps while engaging your abdominals for stability. Every time you lift a laundry basket or take out the trash, that's a loaded carry — a move that fires up your grip strength, shoulders, and core stability. You're essentially performing a "functional workout" built right into your daily rhythm.

Body focus: Legs, glutes, shoulders, arms, core

Try this: Switch hands often when vacuuming or mopping to build balanced strength and coordination on both sides of the body.

LAUNDRY: WEIGHTED CARRIES AND FUNCTIONAL BENDS

Carrying laundry baskets up and down stairs? That's a weighted stair climb. Bending to load the washer or dryer mimics a hip hinge or deadlift — crucial for back health. Hanging clothes activates your shoulders and improves range of motion.

Body focus: Glutes, hamstrings, lower back, shoulders

Try this: Keep your spine long and hinge from the hips when lifting laundry — your glutes and hamstrings will thank you later.



ORGANIZING: MOBILITY AND MIND-BODY AWARENESS

Sorting closets, reaching under beds, or moving boxes requires squatting, hinging at the hips, and sometimes crawling — all primal movement patterns that enhance flexibility and mobility. Kneeling and standing repeatedly strengthens the lower body and challenges cardiovascular endurance.

Organizing also benefits mental health: repetitive, purposeful movement releases tension while creating visual calm, giving both body and mind a reset.



Body focus: Hips, hamstrings, quads, knees, and spine mobility

Try this: When squatting to reach lower shelves, plant your heels, keep your chest lifted, and engage your glutes as you rise. You're not just tidying up — you're training your lower body.



GARDENING: NATURE'S STRENGTH AND STRETCH ROUTINE

Pulling weeds, lifting soil, and kneeling to plant are gentle yet powerful exercises that enhance mobility and joint stability. The repetitive push and pull motions work your upper body, while squatting and lunging engage your legs and core. Plus, being outside reduces cortisol and boosts serotonin — nature's built-in mood support.

Body focus: Legs, shoulders, back, grip strength

Try this: Alternate kneeling sides every few minutes to balance hip and knee mobility.

THE BODY THAT CARRIES THE DREAM

Especially for women — and particularly women of color — strength is often expressed through care, labor, and persistence. We cook, clean, lift, organize, nurture, and create — and our bodies do it all. Recognizing these daily movements as valuable, intentional exercise is a radical act of self-care.

You don't need to *add* movement to your life — you just need to notice it. Every time you stir, lift, fold, or stretch, your body is whispering: "I've got you."

MAKE EVERY CHORE A MOMENT OF WELLNESS

- **Move with intention.** Focus on posture and breath, even in small moments.
- **Switch sides.** Balance prevents overuse and builds symmetry.
- **Engage your core.** It supports almost every movement you do.
- **Stretch between tasks.** Give muscles recovery and mobility.
- **Honor your effort.** Every movement counts — not just the ones tracked by a smartwatch.

THE FUNCTIONAL FREEDOM MINDSET

You're not "just doing chores." You're building endurance, mobility, and mindfulness. You're strengthening the very body that carries your dreams. So, the next time you fold laundry, vacuum a room, or simmer a pot of soup, remember: movement is already part of your life — and every action is a chance to move with purpose, strength, and gratitude. 



Book Club Pick

A Soulful Vegan Recipe Book for Living a Healthy Plant-Based Life

BY SAMMESH DOMINGUEZ

As we step into the new year, it's never been a better time to go vegan and create healthy practices around your eating habits. When we nourish our bodies, the foods we consume not only fuel the body physically but also mentally and spiritually. The relationship you have with food now can have an everlasting impact on your health in the future. So why not take the comfort of food and create comforting healthy meals that are good for you in more ways than one? Today, I challenge you to step outside your eating zone and indulge in a world of mindful cooking and intentional eating by satisfying your hunger with delicious plant-based vegan dishes.

Vegan lifestyle expert and public health nutritionist Tracye McQuirter partners up with her mother, Mary, to share their secrets for maintaining radiant health for more than 30 years (hint: it's all in the greens), and 100 of their favorite plant-based recipes that have kept them looking and feeling ageless. Also exploring personal life experiences, resources, and tips on how to become a vegetarian. *Ageless Vegan* contains the perfect fourteen step guide to motivate, inspire, and help you get started on your plant-based journey. This recipe book is a celebration and an affirmation that a healthy vegan lifestyle can help keep you ageless.

AGELESS VEGAN'S FOURTEEN STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

1. Know Your Why
2. Liberate Your Mind and Your Mouth Will Follow
3. Choose a Date and Begin
4. Find Your People
5. Know That You're Worth It
6. Start Where You Are
7. Eat Whole Foods
8. Explore New Recipes
9. Plan Your Meals
10. Read the Label
11. Stay on Budget
12. Eat Out with Ease
13. Keep a Stash
14. Enjoy the Journey

Here are the names of three of my favorite delicious recipes featured in *Ageless Vegan* that taste as good as they look and will change your tastebuds for the better.

BRUNCH: *Maple French Toast with Strawberries*

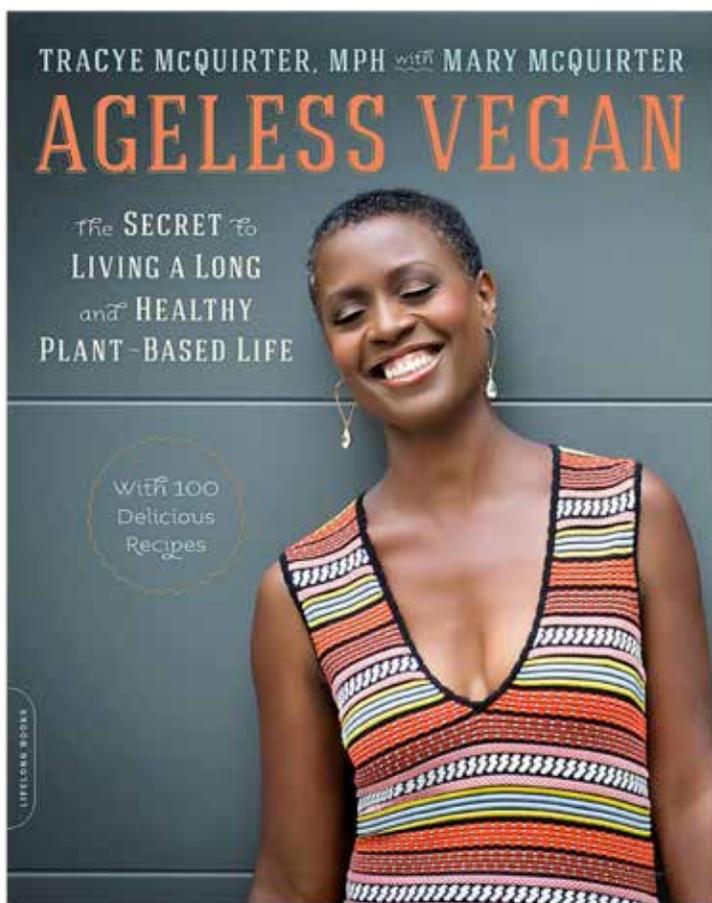
ENTREE: *Peach BBQ Tempeh*

DESSERT: *Fudge Walnut Brownies*

Ageless Vegan: The Secret to Living a Long and Healthy Plant-Based Life

by Tracye McQuirter and Mary McQuirter

"Being vegan is a path, not a destination."



Ageless Vegan will help you explore different foods on your plant-based journey and learn new ways to replace the foods you love with healthier options. You'll come to realize being vegan gets easier, to the point it becomes your new norm. Healthy eating can be fun and doesn't have to be overly complicated. All it takes is starting where you are.

A woman with long dark hair and bangs, wearing a brown halter-neck dress, is captured in a joyful dance pose. She is barefoot and smiling broadly, with her arms and legs in motion. The scene is set in a living room with a large window in the background, through which bright sunlight is streaming, creating a warm, golden glow. A dark sofa is visible behind her, and the carpeted floor has a bright patch of light from the window.

The Soundtrack to My Healing

*Music That Moves the Soul
and the Body*

BY ERIKA BROOKS, LPC, CSAC



Music has always had a way of slipping past our defenses. It reaches places inside us that words alone can't touch. A melody can unearth a memory, soothe a tired spirit, energize a weary body, or bring clarity to a cluttered mind. As a therapist, I often encourage clients to use music as a tool for emotional regulation, grounding, and healing. But long before I recommended music to others, music was quietly healing me.

We all have a soundtrack to our lives—the songs that saw us through heartbreak, helped us find our strength, lifted us during grief, or carried us through transition. Our healing has a rhythm. Our bodies respond to the beat. Our souls lean into the lyrics. And often, our deepest emotional breakthroughs begin with a single song.

This is the power of music: it connects the mind, body, and spirit in ways few other tools can. It reminds us that healing isn't always quiet. Sometimes, it's a full-bodied experience—felt in the chest, tapped out in fingertips, released through tears, or expressed in movement.

The Science Behind Music and Healing

Research consistently shows that music has measurable, therapeutic effects on the brain and body. Music influences:

- Heart rate and blood pressure
- Cortisol levels (the stress hormone)
- Breathing patterns
- Muscle relaxation
- Mood regulation
- Memory and emotional processing

When you hear a song you love, your brain releases dopamine, the “feel-good” neurotransmitter. Slow, soothing music activates the parasympathetic nervous system—the part of the body responsible for rest and recovery. Upbeat music can enhance

motivation and focus. And deeply emotional music can help release unprocessed feelings stuck in the body.

So when people say music “saved” them, they aren't exaggerating. The body truly responds to rhythm, tone, and harmony.

My Personal Healing Playlist

Every season of my life has had its own soundtrack. I can trace my growth, my pain, my hope, and my resilience through the songs that carried me. Here's a glimpse into the types of music that have moved both my soul and my body—and that I often recommend to others navigating their own healing journey.

1. Songs of Release: Music that Helps You Let Go

There are songs that make you cry without warning—because they speak to the very thing you've been holding inside. When we bottle up emotions, they settle in the body as tension, heaviness, or anxiety. Music gives those emotions permission to rise.

These songs often have slow tempos, soulful vocals, or reflective lyrics. They create space for emotional honesty.

Healing purpose:

- Releases suppressed emotions
- Softens the heart
- Eases the nervous system
- Encourages vulnerability

These are the songs you sit with, breathe through, and let wash over you like a warm rain.

2. Songs of Strength: Music that Builds You Back Up

After release often comes rebuilding. This is where empowering, uplifting music becomes essential. These songs put resilience back into your bones and remind you of your capacity to rise, even after difficult seasons.

Empowerment music engages the body—your posture shifts, your energy rises, your self-belief strengthens. Rhythmic beats activate the motor cortex in the brain, giving you a sense of movement and momentum.

Healing purpose:

- Boosts motivation
- Encourages confidence
- Replaces negative self-talk
- Reconnects you with your inner strength

These are the songs you play on days when you need a reminder of who you are.

3. Songs of Stillness: Music that Anchors the Mind

Stillness is a form of healing many people underestimate. Instrumentals, nature sounds, soft worship music, or meditative tracks offer a sense of grounding. They bring the mind into the present and help the body settle.

These songs have minimal lyrics, gentle pacing, and calming tones that slow the heart rate and deepen your breathing. They create room for reflection, prayer, journaling, or simple rest.

Healing purpose:

- Reduces anxiety
- Improves sleep
- Supports mindfulness
- Grounds the body

These are the songs you play when you need silence without being alone.

4. Songs of Movement: Music that Awakens the Body

Some healing is only possible through movement—the kind that music inspires. Dance has long been a cultural and spiritual form of release. When you move your body, you activate emotions stored in the muscles, joints, and fascia.

Upbeat music with strong rhythms encourages physical expression. Even gentle swaying can loosen tension and reboot your energy.

Healing purpose:

- Releases physical stress
- Improves energy levels
- Enhances mind-body connection
- Promotes joy and self-expression

These are the songs that get you up, even when you didn't think you had the energy.

5. Songs of Faith: Music that Lifts the Spirit

For many people—and certainly for me—healing includes spiritual alignment. Worship music, inspirational hymns, and gospel songs carry a unique emotional resonance. They connect you to hope, peace, and divine reassurance.

These songs often provide the strength you didn't know you needed on days you weren't sure how to keep going.

Healing purpose:

- Restores hope
- Builds faith
- Provides comfort
- Centers your spirit

These are the songs that remind you you're never walking alone.

How to Create Your Own Healing Soundtrack

Your soundtrack should be as personal as your healing journey. Here's how to curate a playlist that supports both your emotional and physical well-being:

1. Choose songs based on how you want to feel.

Do you need to cry? Move? Reflect? Pray? Feel empowered?

2. Create categories.

Make separate playlists for release, strength, stillness, movement, and faith.

3. Listen intentionally.

Give yourself permission to pause, breathe, and let the music work.

4. Notice your body's response.

Which songs relax your shoulders? Bring tears? Energize you? Spark hope?

5. Refresh your playlist as you heal.

New seasons require new soundtracks.

To help you with some ideas for your playlist, here are some songs from my playlist:

- "I Am Light" by India.Arie. The slow, easy-going tempo helps me to slow myself down, lets my mind relax, and just breathe. I can take a moment to reflect on the joys of the day and let go of the stress.
- "Stand" by Donnie McClurkin to remind me where my strength truly comes from.
- "Superwoman" by Alicia Keyes gives me that extra boost to face the day
- "Fighter" by Christina Aguilera encourages me to fight through the tough times
- "I am Not My Hair" by India.Arie reminds me I am not just what is seen on the outside; "I am the soul within"
- "Breathe" by India.Arie helps me to slow down and remember to breathe out the negative and breathe in the good.
- "Ain't No Stopping Us Now" by McFadden and Whitehead is my get up and get moving and reminds me not to let anything or anyone stand in my way of what I want
- "Go Get It" by Mary Mary is the song to wake me up and remind me to set my sights on what I want and go for it.

Music as Medicine for the Soul

Healing isn't linear. Some days require silence; other days require singing at the top of your lungs. Whatever your journey looks like, music can be a powerful companion—one that speaks when you can't find the words, holds you when you feel alone, uplifts you when you feel weary, and brings your body and spirit into alignment. 

**YOUR HEALING HAS A RHYTHM.
YOUR BODY HAS A VOICE.
AND SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE
TWO, THERE IS A SONG WAITING TO
CARRY YOU FORWARD.**





Her Battle Became Mine: A Daughter's Story of Breast Cancer Risk, Fear, and Early Detection

BY REQUEL JASMINE

The statistics have always lingered in my mind: one in eight.

That's how many women in America will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. My mother, Requita, was one of them—the one in eight. (American Cancer Society, 2024)

I don't remember much about her journey with the disease. I was only around four or five when she was diagnosed. What I do remember are the quiet hospital rooms, the rhythmic beeping of machines, and my mother's arms wrapped around me as I drifted to sleep beside her. Her body was frail, but to me, it still felt like home.

My brother and I would curl up in her hospital bed, believing she'd get better—that she'd come home like she always did. But over time, I realized this back-and-forth, this living between hospital visits and short stays at home, was our new normal.

We traveled from hospital to hospital, treatment center to treatment center, my father leading us through the maze of her illness. Until the day the doctors said there wasn't much more they could do. The treatments had lost their power. Hospice became the final word.

When my mother passed, we didn't get to say goodbye.

Years later, at 24, I asked my father a question that had been living inside me since childhood. "Why didn't she fight longer?"

He looked at me with the kind of exhaustion that only memory brings and said, "Your mother was 92 pounds when she passed. The cancer had eaten away her body. It was time for her to go."

That truth broke me, yet it also gave me perspective. Losing her so young shaped me in ways that words can't fully express. I learned independence early. I learned to love, to lead, and to nurture others, even while still searching for the mothering I never got.

But I also made a silent promise to myself: her story will not be mine.

BECOMING MY OWN ADVOCATE

Every doctor's office I visited growing up carried the same reminder:

"Early detection is key."

Since my mother passed at 42, my doctors told me I should begin mammograms at 21. So the moment I turned 21, I booked my first appointment, nervous but determined.

I remember sitting on the cold exam table, my hands folded tightly in my lap, thinking: What if it's me next? What if I'm also the one in eight?

But when I told the doctor my history, she simply said, "You're too young."

Too young? The words echoed. I'd been preparing for this moment for years—mentally bracing myself—only to be told to wait.

Every year after that, I asked again. Every year, I got the same answer.

At 28, a new doctor finally explained: "Young breasts are dense. It's hard to read mammograms accurately at your age. Let's schedule ultrasounds until you're 31."

And that's what we did—year after year. I kept showing up. Not just because I was afraid, but because I'd promised my mother I'd fight differently. I'd fight early.

Still, I often wondered how many women heard the same words I did—"too young"—and walked away. How many of them later learned that waiting cost them precious time?

Because when it comes to breast cancer, early detection isn't just important—it's survival.

THE MOMENT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

At 31, I went for my first mammogram. I went alone.

The gown was thin and crinkled, loud against the silence of the waiting room. I tried to steady my breathing, whispering a quick prayer under my breath. The procedure felt routine at first—until it didn't.

The technician took longer than usual on my right side, studying the screen carefully, scanning and rescanning. That's when I knew something wasn't right.

They found a lump.

The next step was a biopsy—to find out if it was cancerous.

Those two weeks of waiting were some of the longest of my life. I tried to keep up with work and daily life, but every quiet moment was invaded by fear. I thought of my mother, of her strength, of the 40% of Black women diagnosed with breast cancer who don't survive it. (American Cancer Society, n.d.) I thought of my daughter—and what her world would look like if I didn't make it.

But I held on to faith. I held on the way a child holds her mother's finger—tight, certain, unrelenting.

When the results finally came, the doctor said, "It's not cancer. It's a benign fibroid tumor."

I exhaled, and for the first time in weeks, I felt my body release the fear it had been holding. It wasn't cancer. But it was a wake-up call.



LIVING LIKE I'VE ALREADY WON

After that, I made a decision. I wouldn't wait for a diagnosis to start fighting for my health. I began eating better, limiting alcohol, and scheduling every annual exam without hesitation.

Because while I can't control everything, I can control how I show up for myself.

My mother's story didn't end in defeat—it ended in legacy. Her courage gave me the blueprint. Her battle taught me how to prepare for my own.

So if cancer ever comes knocking, I'll be ready. I'll fight. I'll advocate. I'll do what my mother taught me—stand strong in faith and take care of my temple.

Because this battle?

It wasn't just hers.

It was ours.

And through faith, vigilance, and wellness—

we've already won. 





More Voices. More Stories.

The journey doesn't stop at the last page. Our online platform brings you even more stories, perspectives, and wisdom—crafted just for you!

hopewellthmedia.com

A Holistic Approach to Health and Wellness

SERVICES

- Individual Coaching Sessions
- Group Workshops
- Healthy Catering
- Vegan Baked Goods
- In-Home & Virtual Cooking Classes



**Schedule Your Free
Health Consultation Today!**



Trilanda Colbert
Certified Integrative Nutrition Coach

www.kei2health.com
info@kei2health.com





FOOD

Winter nourishment is more than comfort, it's strategy, protection, and care wrapped in warmth. In this section, Celebrity Chef Serena Poon guides us through 20 immune boosting recipes, including 10 exclusively for you, and the deeper principles of winter nutrition. Her approach blends healing ingredients with mindful rituals, helping you strengthen the body from the inside out. This is your invitation to eat with intention, support your vitality, and savor flavors that fortify you for the season ahead.



Photo Credit for Serena Poon's Images:
Todd Domenic Cribari/Inspiro Studio
and Milla Kuhto

Celebrity Chef

Serena Poon

Shares 10+ Immune-Boosting Winter Recipes and Her Guide to Nourishing the Body

As a certified nutritionist and founder of Serena Loves, Serena Poon specializes in integrative, holistic lifestyle medicine that supports long-term vitality from the inside out. Her work blends evidence-based nutrition, culinary expertise, and mindful well-being practices to help individuals nourish their body, mind, and spirit with intention. For this Winter issue of *Hope+Wellth Magazine*, Serena offers her expert insights and delicious immune-supportive recipes designed to empower readers, especially women of color, to reclaim their strength, honor their wellness, and elevate everyday nourishment into a ritual of care.

Essential Winter Pantry Staples for Everyday Nourishment

During the colder months, when fresh produce might be less abundant, stocking versatile staples ensures you can create nourishing meals effortlessly. My top five pantry staples recommendations are:

Oats: A hearty base for breakfasts or baked goods, rich in beta-glucans that support heart health and steady energy levels. You can prepare them as overnight oats for an easy grab and go in the morning, or prepare them hot for a warm start to your day.

Lentils: Protein-packed and shelf-stable, lentils are perfect for soups or stews. I love making a big batch of dal

and freezing it for easy reheat and a quick meal later. Lentils are also known for a high fiber and iron content to combat winter fatigue.

Canned or jarred tomatoes: They're absolutely essential for sauces and chilis, baked Italian comfort dishes and tomato-based soups. And tomatoes provide lycopene for antioxidant protection against seasonal stressors.

Nuts and seeds: They are my go-to favorites for snacking or topping dishes, offering healthy fats, fiber and zinc to bolster our immunity.

Spices like turmeric, ginger, and cinnamon: These add warmth and anti-inflammatory benefits, transforming simple meals into flavorful, healing experiences.

Transforming Cooking Into a Calming, Present-Moment Ritual

Cooking transforms from a chore into a soothing ritual when approached mindfully, engaging all the senses to anchor us in the now. With Culinary Alchemy, we approach food and cooking with a beautiful intention and a grateful acknowledgment of the journey it took for the ingredients to arrive from farm to our kitchens. You can also create energy with the environment. Start by setting an intention—perhaps lighting a candle or playing soft music—then focus on the textures, aromas, and sounds. This sensory immersion fosters present-moment awareness, reducing stress and elevating overall mood.

How Shared Meals Become Community Care in the Colder Months

I've always said that food is love and a tangible way we share our love with others. Shared meals act as a powerful antidote to winter's isolation, fostering emotional bonds, connection and a sense of belonging. When we prepare food together, we also build intimacy and create rituals that prioritize care.

The Connection Between Nourishment and Emotional Well-Being

Nourishment and emotional well-being are deeply intertwined through the gut-brain axis, where nutrient-rich foods influence serotonin. We actually produce most of our serotonin in our gut. Comforting winter dishes offer emotional solace and help regulate mood. Food as healing comes from the fact whole, mindful ingredients support both emotional and physical health.

Immune-Supporting Ingredients That Add Flavor and Function

Vitamin C-rich produce like citrus, carrots, and bell peppers brighten dishes and support immunity. Garlic, ginger, and turmeric enhance depth and flavor profiles while also offering antiviral and anti-inflammatory benefits. Seeds and fermented veggies layer vital minerals and nutrients effortlessly into meals.

Simple, Time-Friendly Cooking Methods for Busy Schedules

Roasting and slow simmering can maximize flavor and nutrition with minimal effort. Most homes have some sort of a slow cooker or pressure cooker (or a machine that does it all). Batch-roasting or slow-cooking broths and stews supports nourishment throughout the week. These methods fit any lifestyle and help prevent burnout and overwhelm.

A Winter Message of Nourishment, Restoration, and Self-Compassion

Your body is a sacred vessel, well deserving of deep nourishment. Embrace wellness as your birthright and choose warming, nutrient-dense foods without guilt or second thought. Prioritize self-care rituals and community connections that support emotional resilience and vibrant health.

Immune-Boosting Winter Vegetable Stew

A one-pot vegetable stew loaded with winter veggies and legumes simmered in a warming ginger-turmeric broth.

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 inches fresh ginger, grated (about 2 tsp)
3 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 medium parsnip, peeled and chopped
2 cups diced butternut squash (or sweet potato)
1 cup dry red lentils, rinsed
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp dried thyme (or 1–2 sprigs fresh)
6 cups vegetable broth (low-sodium)
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper, to taste
Juice of 1 lemon
¼ cup fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped

Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Sauté onion for 5 minutes until translucent.
2. Add garlic and ginger; cook for 1 minute.
3. Add carrots, celery, parsnip, and squash. Sauté 3–4 minutes.
4. Stir in turmeric, cumin, and thyme; cook for 1 minute to toast the spices.
5. Add lentils, vegetable broth, and bay leaf. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat and simmer covered 20–25 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Remove bay leaf. Stir in lemon juice and chopped herbs. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
7. Serve warm, optionally over quinoa or brown rice.

Pumpkin Spice Roasted Chickpeas

A crunchy, high-fiber snack with warming spices and plant protein – perfect for immunity and satisfying cravings.

Ingredients:

1 can chickpeas, rinsed and dried
1 tablespoon melted coconut oil
1 teaspoon pumpkin spice
½ teaspoon sea salt
Optional: drizzle of allulose syrup and a pinch of cayenne

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. In a bowl, toss the chickpeas with melted coconut oil, pumpkin spice, and sea salt until evenly coated.
3. Spread the chickpeas on a baking sheet in a single layer and roast for 20–25 minutes, until golden and crunchy.
4. If desired, finish by drizzling with allulose syrup and sprinkling cayenne, then toss to coat.
5. Let cool slightly and enjoy warm.



Pumpkin Spice Roasted Chickpeas

Golden Glow Hummus (Carrot & Turmeric Hummus)

A vibrant orange hummus blending roasted carrots, chickpeas, and turmeric for a golden, immune-supportive dip.

Ingredients:

2 large carrots, cooked until tender and cooled
1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
2 cloves garlic
Juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons tahini
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions:

1. Combine cooked carrots, chickpeas, garlic, lemon juice, tahini, turmeric, olive oil, salt, and pepper in a food processor.
2. Blend until completely smooth and creamy, adding a bit of water if needed.
3. Taste and adjust seasoning.
4. Serve drizzled with olive oil and extra turmeric or fresh herbs.

Ginger-Walnut Energy Bites

No-bake energy bites with oats, walnuts, dates, ginger, and chai-like spices for an easy, nourishing snack

Ingredients:

1 cup rolled oats
1 cup raw walnuts
½ cup soft medjool dates, pitted
2 Tbsp crystallized ginger, chopped (or 1 Tbsp fresh grated ginger + 1 Tbsp honey)
2 Tbsp almond butter
1 Tbsp chia seeds (optional)
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground ginger
Pinch of salt
1-2 tsp water, as needed

Instructions:

1. In a food processor, pulse oats and walnuts into a coarse meal.
2. Add dates, ginger, almond butter, chia seeds, cinnamon, ground ginger, and salt. Process until mixture clumps together.
3. If too dry, add water ½ tsp at a time and pulse again.
4. Roll tablespoon-sized portions into balls.
5. Chill at least 20 minutes to firm up. Store in the fridge.





Pumpkin Spice Turmeric Golden Milk Latte

A velvety caffeine-free latte loaded with anti-inflammatory turmeric and warming spices – an immune-boosting cozy drink.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup unsweetened coconut or almond milk
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon pumpkin spice blend
- ½ teaspoon coconut oil or ghee
- Optional: a dash of black pepper

Instructions:

1. In a small saucepan, warm the non-dairy milk over low heat (do not boil).
2. Whisk in the turmeric, ginger, pumpkin spice, and coconut oil/ghee until well combined.
3. Simmer gently for about 5 minutes, whisking occasionally, until the latte is fragrant and frothy.
4. Pour into a mug and, if using, add a tiny pinch of black pepper on top.



Delicious Creamy Vegan Hot Cocoa

A dairy-free, antioxidant-rich hot cocoa made with raw cacao powder for a mood-boosting, cozy drink.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups organic nut milk
- 2 Tbsp raw cacao powder
- ½ tsp raw organic coconut oil
- ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of sea salt
- Pinch of ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp pure maple syrup, or to taste

Instructions:

1. In a saucepan, whisk together nut milk, raw cacao powder, coconut oil, vanilla, sea salt, cinnamon, and maple syrup.
2. Heat over medium-high, whisking, until hot but not boiling.
3. Alternatively, blend all ingredients, then heat until warm.
4. Pour into a mug and top with coconut whipped cream or shaved dark chocolate, if desired.

Herb-Roasted Winter Roots & Chickpeas (Sheet-Pan Dinner)

A simple sheet-pan roast of root vegetables and chickpeas with olive oil, warming spices, and herbs.

Ingredients:

2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
3 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
2 medium beets, peeled and cubed
1 large red onion, cut into wedges
1 can (15 oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp smoked paprika
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp garlic powder
1 tsp sea salt
½ tsp black pepper
2 tsp fresh rosemary, chopped
2 tsp fresh thyme leaves

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment.
2. Combine sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, onion, and chickpeas in a bowl.
3. Drizzle with olive oil and toss with cumin, smoked paprika, cinnamon, garlic powder, salt, pepper, rosemary, and thyme.
4. Spread in a single layer on the baking sheet.
5. Roast 30–35 minutes, stirring once halfway, until vegetables are tender and caramelized.
6. Serve warm as an entrée or hearty side, with optional squeeze of citrus and fresh herbs.

Golden Spice Oatmeal with Apples & Walnuts

Creamy oatmeal infused with turmeric, ginger, and cinnamon, topped with sautéed apples and walnuts.

Ingredients:

1 cup rolled oats
2 cups almond milk (or milk of choice)
½ tsp ground turmeric
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground ginger (or 1 tsp fresh grated)
Pinch of black pepper
Pinch of sea salt
1 Tbsp maple syrup
1 apple, peeled and diced
1 Tbsp coconut oil
¼ tsp cinnamon (for apples)
2 tsp maple syrup (for apples)
¼ cup walnut halves, chopped

Instructions:

1. In a saucepan, combine oats and almond milk with turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, black pepper, and salt.
2. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until creamy.
3. Stir in 1 Tbsp maple syrup and cover to keep warm.
4. In a skillet, heat coconut oil over medium heat. Add diced apple and ¼ tsp cinnamon; sauté 3–5 minutes until softened.
5. Stir in 2 tsp maple syrup and walnuts; cook 1 more minute.
6. Divide oatmeal into two bowls and top with warm apples and walnuts. Serve immediately.



Herb-Roasted Winter Roots



Veggie-Packed Tater Tots

Veggie-Packed Tater Tots (Broccoli & Spinach Tots)

A fun, healthy twist on tater tots loaded with greens, baked or air-fried to crispy perfection.

Ingredients:

1 lb russet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1 cup finely chopped broccoli florets
1 cup finely chopped baby spinach, squeezed dry
¼ cup finely grated onion or 1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp garlic powder
2 Tbsp nutritional yeast (optional)
¼–1/3 cup oat flour
1–2 tsp cornstarch or tapioca starch
¾ tsp fine sea salt
Black pepper, to taste
Zest of ½ lemon (optional)
Avocado oil spray

Instructions:

1. Steam potato chunks until just tender, then cool completely.
2. Finely chop broccoli and spinach, squeezing out excess moisture.
3. Pulse cooled potatoes in a food processor until roughly chopped.
4. Combine potatoes, greens, onion, garlic powder, nutritional yeast, oat flour, starch, salt, pepper, and lemon zest. Mix to form a dough.
5. Shape into small tots.
6. To bake: preheat the oven to 425°F, preheat a baking sheet, then spray and bake tots for 12 minutes, flip, and bake another 10–12 minutes.
7. To air-fry: air-fry at 375°F for 10–12 minutes, shaking once, until crisp.

Chai-Spiced Almond Cookies

Grain-free almond flour cookies infused with chai spices for an anti-inflammatory treat.

Ingredients:

2 cups blanched almond flour
¼ cup coconut flour
½ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground ginger
½ tsp ground cardamom
¼ tsp ground cloves
¼ tsp ground black pepper
½ cup coconut sugar
¼ cup coconut oil, melted
2 Tbsp almond milk
1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. In a bowl, whisk together almond flour, coconut flour, baking soda, salt, and all chai spices.
3. In another bowl, mix coconut sugar, melted coconut oil, almond milk, and vanilla.
4. Combine wet and dry ingredients to form a soft dough. Let rest for 5 minutes.
5. Roll tablespoon-sized portions into balls, place on a baking sheet, and flatten slightly.
6. Bake for 10–12 minutes until the edges are lightly golden. Cool on sheet, then transfer to a rack.



Choco-Bean Bliss Hummus

Choco-Bean Bliss Hummus (Black Bean & Cacao Hummus)

A sweet-savory hummus using black beans and raw cacao for a nutritious, dessert-like dip.

Ingredients:

1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 Tbsp raw cacao powder
2 cloves garlic
Juice of 1 lemon
2 Tbsp tahini
3 Tbsp olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions:

1. Combine black beans, cacao powder, garlic, lemon juice, tahini, olive oil, salt, and pepper in a food processor.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy, adjusting seasoning as needed.
3. Serve with fruit or whole-grain crackers.

Miso Ginger Detox Soup

A dairy-free, antioxidant-rich hot A light, gut-soothing soup with Napa cabbage, shiitake mushrooms, tofu, and probiotic-rich miso.

Ingredients:

1 Tbsp sesame oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp fresh ginger, minced
1 small onion, thinly sliced
4 oz shiitake mushrooms, sliced
4 cups thinly sliced Napa cabbage
6 cups water or low-sodium vegetable broth
3 Tbsp yellow miso paste
2 Tbsp tamari or soy sauce
1 block (14 oz) soft or silken tofu, cubed
2 scallions, sliced
1 carrot, grated (optional)
Juice of ½ lemon (optional)

Instructions:

1. Heat sesame oil in a large pot over medium heat. Sauté garlic, ginger, and onion 2–3 minutes.
2. Add shiitake mushrooms and Napa cabbage; cook for 2 minutes.
3. Pour in water or broth. Bring to a gentle boil, then simmer for 5–7 minutes.
4. Place miso in a bowl and whisk with ½ cup hot broth until smooth.
5. Turn off heat and stir miso mixture into soup. Do not boil after adding miso.
6. Stir in tamari, tofu cubes, and grated carrot (if using). Add lemon juice if desired.
7. Serve topped with scallions.

Warm Kale & Butternut Squash Salad with Citrus Vinaigrette

A warm winter salad combining roasted butternut squash, sautéed kale, and a bright citrus dressing.

Ingredients:

1 small butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 Tbsp olive oil (for roasting squash)
1 bunch lacinato kale, stemmed and torn
2 tsp olive oil (for sautéing kale)
2 cloves garlic, minced
¼ tsp chili flakes (optional)
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 Tbsp fresh orange juice
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
1 tsp orange zest
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 tsp honey or maple syrup
3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1/3 cup pomegranate arils
¼ cup toasted pumpkin seeds

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Toss butternut squash with 1 Tbsp olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast 20–25 minutes until tender and lightly browned.
2. Whisk orange juice, lemon juice, orange zest, Dijon, honey/maple, and 3 Tbsp olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.
3. In a skillet, heat 2 tsp olive oil. Sauté garlic and chili flakes briefly, then add kale and a pinch of salt. Cook 3–4 minutes until wilted.
4. Combine warm kale and roasted squash in a bowl. Toss with citrus vinaigrette.
5. Top with pomegranate arils and toasted pumpkin seeds. Serve warm or at room temperature.

10-Minute Protein-Rich Pumpkin Hummus

A savory-sweet hummus featuring pumpkin and cannellini beans, spiced with cumin, smoked paprika, cinnamon, and garlic.

Ingredients:

1 (15-oz) can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
2/3 cup unsweetened pumpkin purée
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 Tbsp tahini
½ tsp Himalayan pink salt
½ tsp ground cumin
¾ tsp smoked paprika
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
Pinch of black pepper
¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
5 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves only

Instructions:

1. Place cannellini beans in a food processor with pumpkin, lemon juice, tahini, salt, cumin, smoked paprika, cinnamon, cayenne, and 1 Tbsp olive oil.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy, adding a bit of water if needed.
3. In a skillet, warm the remaining olive oil and lightly sauté garlic and thyme leaves until fragrant.
4. Stir or pulse the garlic-thyme oil into the hummus.
5. Chill or serve immediately, garnished with extra thyme and olive oil.



Savory Pumpkin Spice Lentil Soup

A cozy fall/winter soup that's hearty, anti-inflammatory, and loaded with seasonal goodness (pumpkin and warming spices).

Ingredients:

- 1 cup red lentils
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup pumpkin purée
- ½ onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin spice
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- Pinch of cayenne pepper

Instructions:

1. In a large pot, sauté the chopped onion until softened.
2. Add lentils, vegetable broth, pumpkin purée, pumpkin spice, turmeric, and cayenne. Stir well to combine.
3. Bring to a simmer and cook until lentils are tender (about 20 minutes).
4. Optionally, blend the soup for a smooth texture or leave it chunky, as desired.
5. Serve warm.

Curried Lentil–Stuffed Sweet Potatoes

Baked sweet potatoes filled with a warmly spiced lentil and spinach mixture for a complete meal.

Ingredients:

- 4 medium sweet potatoes
- 1 cup dry brown or green lentils, rinsed
- 1 Tbsp coconut oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp fresh ginger, grated
- 1 Tbsp curry powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp garam masala (optional)
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
- 2 cups vegetable broth or water
- 2 cups baby spinach, chopped
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Chopped cilantro, yogurt or coconut yogurt, and lime wedges for serving

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Pierce sweet potatoes and bake 45–60 minutes until tender.
2. Meanwhile, heat coconut oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onion 5 minutes; add garlic and ginger for 1 minute.
3. Stir in curry powder, cumin, garam masala, turmeric, and cayenne; cook 30 seconds.
4. Add lentils and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, then simmer covered ~30 minutes until tender and saucy.
5. Stir in spinach and cook for 2 minutes until wilted. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Slice baked sweet potatoes open and fluff the flesh. Fill each with curried lentil mixture.
7. Top with cilantro, yogurt or coconut of lime.

Comforting Potato, Leek, and Fennel Soup

A creamy, nourishing soup featuring winter staples like potato, leek, and fennel, rich in fiber and comforting flavor.

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups coarsely chopped onion
- 4 cups sliced leeks (white parts only)
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- ½ pound fennel bulb, sliced (fronds reserved for garnish)
- 3 tablespoons butter (or coconut oil for vegan)
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- Salt and white pepper, to taste
- 1 cup half-and-half (or coconut milk for dairy-free)

Instructions:

1. In a soup pot, melt the butter over medium heat.
2. Add chopped onion, leeks, diced potatoes, and sliced fennel. Sauté for 8–10 minutes.
3. Pour in the vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, until tender.
4. Purée the soup until smooth and creamy.
5. Season with salt and white pepper. Stir in the half-and-half or coconut milk and heat through without boiling.
6. Serve hot, garnished with fennel fronds.

Comforting Potato, Leek, and Fennel Soup



“Your body is a sacred vessel, well deserving of deep nourishment.”

Garlic-Ginger Tofu Stir-Fry with Mushrooms and Bok Choy

A quick one-pan stir-fry with tofu, shiitake mushrooms, bok choy, garlic, and ginger.

Ingredients:

14 oz firm or extra-firm tofu, drained and cubed
2 Tbsp tamari or soy sauce, divided
1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil, divided
1 Tbsp avocado or peanut oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 Tbsp fresh ginger, minced
6 oz shiitake mushrooms, sliced
3 heads baby bok choy, chopped
1 red bell pepper, sliced
2 tsp rice vinegar
1 tsp chili-garlic sauce (optional)
1 tsp honey or coconut sugar
¼ cup vegetable broth or water
2 Tbsp chopped scallions
Sesame seeds, for garnish

Instructions:

1. Toss tofu cubes with 1 Tbsp tamari and ½ Tbsp sesame oil.
2. Heat avocado/peanut oil in a skillet over medium-high. Sear tofu until browned on most sides, then set aside.
3. In the same pan, add garlic and ginger; cook for 30 seconds.
4. Add mushrooms, bok choy, and bell pepper. Stir-fry 2–3 minutes.
5. Add vegetable broth to deglaze and steam vegetables for 2 more minutes.
6. Mix remaining 1 Tbsp tamari, ½ Tbsp sesame oil, rice vinegar, chili-garlic sauce, and honey. Pour into the pan and toss.
7. Return tofu to the pan and cook for 1 minute more. Garnish with scallions and sesame seeds and serve, optionally over rice or quinoa.

Black Bean & Sweet Potato Chili with Cocoa

A thick, hearty plant-based chili with black beans, sweet potatoes, and a hint of cocoa for depth.

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 bell peppers, chopped
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced (optional)
2 Tbsp chili powder
2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp smoked paprika
½ tsp dried oregano
1 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
1 (6 oz) can tomato paste
1 (14.5 oz) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
3 cups vegetable broth
2 cans (15 oz each) black beans, drained and rinsed
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar

Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Sauté onion 4–5 minutes.
2. Add garlic, sweet potatoes, bell peppers, and jalapeño; cook for 5 minutes.
3. Stir in chili powder, cumin, smoked paprika, oregano, and cocoa; cook for 1 minute.
4. Add tomato paste and cook for 1 minute more.
5. Add diced tomatoes, vegetable broth, and black beans. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 25–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until sweet potatoes are tender and chili thickens.
7. Stir in balsamic vinegar. Adjust seasoning to taste and serve with desired toppings.



Sweet Potato & Carrot Muffins



Sweet Potato & Carrot Muffins

Moist, lightly spiced muffins that sneak veggies into a delicious treat, high in fiber and vitamin A.

Ingredients:

1 cup cooked sweet potato, mashed
1 cup finely grated carrot
1½ cups oat flour
½ cup almond flour
½ cup unsweetened plant-based milk (plus 1–3 Tbsp extra if needed)
1/3 cup pure maple syrup or coconut sugar
¼ cup avocado oil (or melted coconut oil)
1 Tbsp ground flaxseed + 3 Tbsp water
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
¼ tsp fine sea salt
Optional: hemp seeds, orange zest, raisins or chopped walnuts

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a 12-cup muffin tin with liners.
2. Mix ground flaxseed with water and set aside to gel.
3. Whisk together mashed sweet potato, grated carrot, plant milk, maple syrup, oil, vanilla, and spices.
4. In another bowl, combine oat flour, almond flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
5. Fold dry ingredients into wet, adding extra milk if needed. Stir in optional add-ins.
6. Divide batter into muffin cups and bake for 22–26 minutes, until a tester comes out clean.
7. Cool in the pan briefly, then transfer to a rack to cool completely.

JOY LIFE COUNSELING BLACK MOTHERS WELLNESS PROGRAM



PURPOSE

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

SERVICES

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

GROUP THERAPY TOPICS

Moms with Children 0-3

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

Moms with Children 4-18

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

INFORMATION

WHERE

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

COST

Free



THERAPISTS



Veronica Mugi



Joy Ewing

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

Wellness We're Watching

Wellness doesn't live in perfection, but it lives in practice. In the small, everyday choices we make to move our bodies, nourish ourselves, rest deeply, and listen inward. This season, we're spotlighting a group of wellness voices who remind us that caring for the body is not about trends or aesthetics, but about sustainability, joy, and alignment.

These creators show us what it looks like to honor the body that carries the dream.

Follow along, be inspired, and take what serves you. Your body will tell you the rest.

☆ **Shar Fit Mama**
youtube.com/@SharFitMama
instagram.com/sharfitmama/

☆ **Marie-Claire**
Fabulous Haitian
youtube.com/@fabuloushaitian
instagram.com/acneexpert

☆ **Johanna "Jo" Devries**
growwithjo
youtube.com/@growwithjo
instagram.com/growwithjo/
growwithjo.com

☆ **Natalie Yco**
youtube.com/@natalieyco7009
instagram.com/natalieyco/

☆ **Synthia Diana**
instagram.com/synthia_d

☆ **Tildawn**
instagram.com/tildawn

☆ **Josie Liz**
youtube.com/@HelloJosieliz
instagram.com/hellojosieliz

☆ **Fabiana Ferrarini**
instagram.com/fabiana_ferrarini/
queenwarriors.com/

☆ **Jenne Claiborne**
Sweet Potato Soul
youtube.com/@SweetPotatoSoul
instagram.com/SweetPotatoSoul
sweetpotatosoul.com/

☆ **Maxine Sharf**
Maxi's Kitchen
youtube.com/@maxiskitchen
instagram.com/maxiskitchen
maxiskitchen.com/

☆ **Lisa Nestor**
instagram.com/lisa.nestor
lisanestor.com/

☆ **Ava Bracey**
youtube.com/@aaaaayevuh
instagram.com/aaaaayevuh

☆ **Donnetta "Donnie" Moss**
Fit and Fierce with Donnie
instagram.com/fitandfiercewithdonnie

☆ **Maxi Ducer**
instagram.com/maxiducer
maxi.fitness/
tiktok.com/@maxiducer

☆ **Andika "Dee-Dee" Rodriguez**
instagram.com/andika.rodriguez
cutandcurvy.com/

☆ **Dr. Robin Barrett**
instagram.com/dr.robinb/

☆ **Ebony Cierra**
The Keto Kween
instagram.com/the.ketokween/
ebonycierra.com/
tiktok.com/@ebonycierrax

☆ **Raginée Mora**
Mommy Mango
youtube.com/@mommy_mango
instagram.com/mommymangorae/
facebook.com/ragineemora/

☆ **Samantha "Sam" Perpignand**
Salt n Sprinkles
youtube.com/@SaltNSprinkles
instagram.com/saltnsprinkles
saltnsprinkles.com/

☆ **Chef Babette Davis**
instagram.com/chefbabette/
therealchefbabette.com/

☆ **Jen Jones**
youtube.com/c/JenJonesmylife
instagram.com/thejenjones/

☆ **Tatiana Fulton**
Debloating with Tatiana
instagram.com/debloating_with_tatiana
debloatingwithtatiana.com/

☆ **Jessamyn Stanley**
youtube.com/@jessamynstanley
instagram.com/mynameisjessamyn/
jessamynstanley.com/

The
MORE *Confidence*
LESS *Compromise*
Planner



Plan your goals.

Protect your peace.

Prosper with purpose.

GET YOUR COPY NOW

www.hopewellthmedia.com



Is your child's
language
development
blossoming at the
pace you hoped?
Don't worry, you're
not alone!

BOND2BLOSSOM

BOND 2 BLOSSOM'S MEMBERSHIP PLATFORM IS HERE TO HELP!

Membership Benefits

- \$9.99 per month/\$120.00 annually
- Access to various courses aimed at helping your child improve their learning
- Benefits kids ages 5 months old to 5 years old
- Interactive videos
- Payments made through Authorize.net

Why Should You Become a Member:

- Give your child the gift of confident communication: Equip yourself with the tools to unlock their full potential.
- Access a comprehensive library of engaging and evidence-based learning resources, developed by speech-language specialists.
- Build a stronger foundation for your child's future success by investing in their communication skills today.

Dont
Miss
Out!





**YOU'RE NOT
ALONE. YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
STAY STUCK. YOU
WILL FIND JOY
AGAIN.**

Lynn Lewis

*Certified Grief Educator |
Coach | Author | Speaker |
Mental Health First Aider*

Grief is the normal, natural, and necessary response to loss.

After losing her son to suicide, Lynn Lewis turned heartbreak into hope. Now, as a Certified Grief Coach, she helps adults 50+ move from "Now what?" to meaningful, impactful living.

If you're ready to go from pain to peace, heartbreak to happiness and grief to gratitude, Lynn is here to guide you.

BOOK YOUR DISCOVERY SESSION TODAY
www.DestinedToThriveGriefCoaching.com

*Destined
2 Thrive*
GRIEF COACHING 