

CONFIDENCE

With Elif Köse

ISSUE SEPTEMBER 2025



Dr. AMANDA HANSON

*“This Is Not a Midlife Crisis.
It’s Your Call to Rise”*

● LIVE

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The Season of Becoming

There's something magnetic about September. The air turns just slightly crisp, the light shifts to that golden hue that makes everything feel like a scene from a film, and there's a sense, quiet but undeniable, that something is about to change. For many, it's the month of return: to routines, to structure, to focus. But for me, September has always felt less like a return and more like a beginning.

Becoming is not a singular event. It's a layered unfolding, the gentle but unstoppable peeling away of identities, beliefs, and patterns that no longer serve us, revealing the truest version of ourselves underneath. It's the realisation that we are not static beings, but living, breathing works of art in progress. But here's the truth that no one really tells you about becoming: **before the expansion, there's often a contraction.** Before the light, there's the shadow. And before you step into who you're meant to be, you must often face who you've been and why.

So much of what holds us back in life is hidden in places we rarely think to look: the subconscious. These patterns are stealthy. They live in the undercurrent of our thoughts, shaping how we love, how we work, how we dream. They can even determine the way we walk into a room or the words we choose when we speak. These patterns are at the root of much of our suffering and yet, because they're familiar, we often mistake them for truth. Beliefs like I'm not ready yet, I have to earn love, or I must stay in control can run our lives without us ever questioning them.

In my own work, there's one question that changes everything when we dare to answer it honestly: **Do you love yourself when you do that?** It's a question that can dismantle illusions in seconds.

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You might ask it when you agree to something you don't want to do, when you silence your own opinion, when you push through exhaustion to meet someone else's expectations. It's a mirror, not for judgment, but for truth. **And truth, even when uncomfortable, is the most compassionate gift we can give ourselves.**

“BECOMING ISN’T about adding more, it’s about peeling back the LAYERS until you meet the woman WHO WAS ALWAYS THERE.”

Pain is not the opposite of growth; it is often the soil from which growth emerges. Transmuting loss into love is one of the bravest acts of becoming. And in the quiet moments, **there is immense power in listening**, truly listening. Not to reply, not to fix, but to witness. To connect from a place of love means to strip away agendas and meet people in the space between words.

So many of us spend years in seeking mode, searching for answers, approval, or the “right” path. But becoming is not about seeking. It's about exploring. Seeking is fuelled by a sense of lack; **exploring is rooted in curiosity**. When we shift from What's missing? to What's possible?, we open doors we never knew existed. Of course, the ego will resist. It fears being wrong. It clings to old stories. It identifies with problems because they feel safe, even if they're painful. But there's a freedom available when we stop identifying with the problem and start identifying with possibility. That freedom is available here, **now, in this moment**, no matter what your circumstances are.

One of the most subtle traps in personal growth is the spiritual ego, the part of us that turns even healing into a performance or a competition. Becoming requires us to notice this, to keep humbling ourselves before the work, and to remember that we are not here to “arrive” somewhere. **We are here to keep expanding into new heights of our potential.**

As you read these words, I invite you to see yourself not as an observer, but as a participant in your own becoming. Let them stir something in you. Let them nudge you toward that conversation you've been avoiding, that decision you've been delaying, that version of yourself you've been holding at arm's length.

Becoming is not about fixing yourself. You were never broken. **It's about remembering, reclaiming, and revealing the self that's been here all along waiting for you to arrive.**

With love and compassion,

Elif Köse

Editor-in-Chief, *Confidence Magazine*

SEPTEMBER

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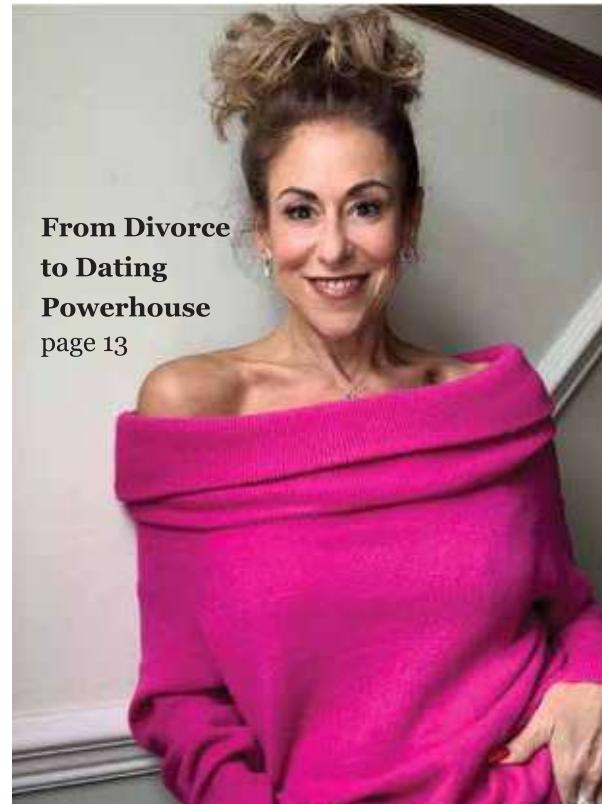
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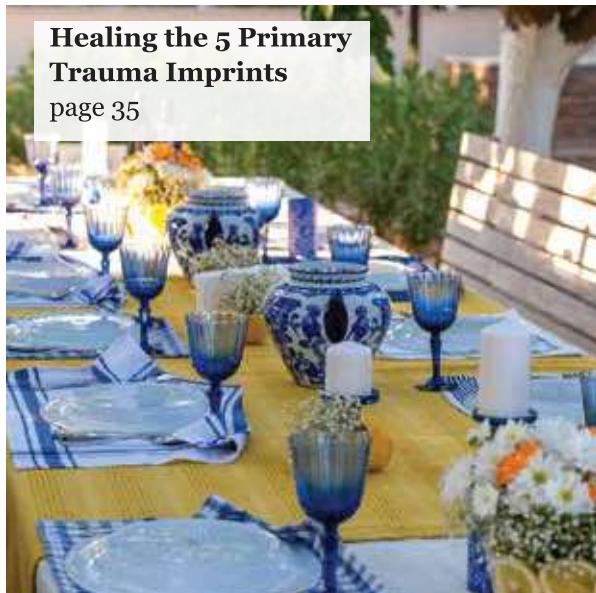
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**“EVERYTHING I’m
searching for is
ALREADY INSIDE
of ME.”**

Dr. Amanda Hanson: What If Midlife Isn't a Crisis... But a Call to Rise?

Interview by Elif Köse

In a culture obsessed with youth and staying small Dr. Amanda Hanson is a voice of unapologetic liberation. As a clinical psychologist, bestselling author, and paradigm shifter, Dr. Amanda is helping women reclaim their worth, their voices, and their wildness.

This is more than an interview. It's an invocation.

Elif Köse: Amanda, welcome. I've followed your work for years. Tell me what was the moment you stopped trying to fix yourself and started seeing yourself as whole?

Dr. Amanda Hanson: Around 40, I noticed the women around me talking more about fear of losing beauty, youth, relevance. And I realised I had a choice: either join in the panic, or ask myself what I truly believed about being a woman. I paused. I turned inward. I chose to define womanhood on my own terms. I've always questioned norms, but that was when I began living louder, more unapologetically. I didn't see enough examples of empowered aging. So I decided to become one.

Elif: That inner pause you speak of... it's everything. As a former fashion designer, I witnessed this firsthand. Women would breathe in and hold themselves stiff in the mirror, trying to look smaller while men would stick out their bellies, proudly saying, "Just measure around that." It made me realise how much fear women carry about aging, and how much we perform to stay "acceptable."

Amanda: Absolutely. So many women have been taught their worth lies in how youthful or desirable they appear. So if beauty is your only currency, of course you'll feel terrified when it starts to fade. But it's a lie. Your value isn't in your face. It's in your presence. Your truth. Your power.

Elif: What were the stories you had to unlearn about confidence, beauty or success?

Amanda: That aging should be feared. That our bodies should be fixed. I watched my grandmothers age naturally and beautifully. I never feared wrinkles or softness until someone told me I should. Just like I didn't know what cellulite was until someone told me to be ashamed of it. These fears are sold to us.

And if a woman fears herself, she's easier to control and easier to market to. That's the part that always infuriated me. Women are taught to distrust themselves, dislike their bodies, dim their power. Why? Because a woman who feels unworthy is a goldmine. We are talking about a billion-dollar industry that thrives on women feeling "not enough."

“A CONFIDENT WOMAN is a terrible consumer. She DOESN’T BUY products that promise to fix her, she INVESTS in her BECOMING.”

The beauty industry, diet culture, cosmetic procedures they're all built on the foundation of convincing women there's something wrong with them. If every woman woke up tomorrow feeling at peace in her skin and rooted in her worth, entire markets would collapse. Because a confident woman is a terrible consumer. She doesn't buy products that promise to fix her. She isn't seduced by scarcity. She invests in her becoming.

Elif: I always say: If we marketed confidence like we market Botox, the world would be a different place.

Amanda: It would be unrecognisable. But that's also why systems work so hard to keep women small. The pressure to stay thin, silent, and youthful isn't accidental. It's systemic. It's profitable. The system doesn't want you to rise because a woman who trusts herself is uncontrollable.

Elif: That hits home. In my work I often say confidence is a muscle we're taught not to use. Is confidence something we build, reclaim, or remember?

Amanda: Remember. We're born with it. Little girls sing loudly, wear whatever they want. Then society chips away at that joy. Research shows girls' confidence drops around age 10. The pressure to be pleasing, performative, acceptable it all begins so young. My work is about helping women remember who they were before the world told them who to be. I have a daughter who's 22 and I have a responsibility to give her something really beautiful, because what kind of a mother am I really if I stand there and tell her to like love and accept herself and then I turn and berate myself, erase myself, contort myself, inject myself with poison, what kind of a leader am I really?

Elif: But that remembering can feel lonely, especially when we start outgrowing roles and relationships. How do you support women through that?

Amanda: That fear is real. In my six-month programs, women often start the journey feeling profoundly alone. Some are even in relationships and still feel lonely. That's one of the most heartbreak dynamics being surrounded but unseen. What changes everything is community. When women gather, when they witness each other

rising it changes their DNA. If you're stepping into a new version of yourself, you'll either bring people with you or attract new ones who match your evolution. But the ones who try to keep you small? That's not love. That's control.

And about loneliness let's reframe it. I had a client sitting alone by a river reading a book. A man walked by and said, "You must be lonely." She looked up and said, "No, I'm not." Imagine that a woman enjoying her own company is seen as something tragic. We must change that narrative.

Elif: Exactly. If someone tells you you're too much, they're just not your people. Don't shrink to fit their comfort. Shift the room.

Elif: If your younger self saw you now, what would she say?

Amanda: She'd be in awe. She'd say, "Thank you for not abandoning me." That girl once felt ugly, lost, too much, unworthy. I broke the cycle. I changed the legacy. For her. For all of us.

Elif: One sentence every woman should write in her journal tomorrow morning?

Amanda: "Everything I'm searching for is already inside of me."

Elif: Beautiful. And what I love most about your work is this reminder: aging is not an apology.

Amanda: Never. Men get to age and be called distinguished. Women get punished for having faces that show they've lived. It's time we call that out.

Elif: Amanda, thank you. For your truth. Your courage. Your example. If you're reading this and something stirred within you, follow it. Reclaim yourself.

Amanda: Thank you, Elif.



DR. AMANDA HANSON

Dr. Amanda Hanson (The Midlife Muse) is a doctor of psychology, bestselling author, international speaker, and paradigm shifting leader in the field of women's empowerment. Her transformative work redefines the modern understanding of womanhood, helping women around the world return to themselves with honour, truth, and embodied wisdom. In just the past three years, Dr. Amanda's message has reached over 400 million people globally. Her most recent book, became an instant bestseller in three categories within the first five hours of release, confirming the urgency and power of her message.

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***“If BEAUTY is your only currency,
of course you’ll FEAR losing it.
But your value isn’t in your face,
it’s in your PRESENCE,
your TRUTH, your POWER.”***



**“You don’t need to be
just ONE THING
to live a
MEANINGFUL
LIFE.”**

**DON’T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS
IN ONE BASKET**
*The art of reinvention and why
we were never meant to be
just one thing.*

There's a freedom in embracing the fact that you were never meant to be just one thing.

I've never believed success had to follow a single path. In fact, I've always known that variety doing many things, being many things is what fuels my passion. For me, it's the blend of creativity, reinvention, and saying yes to what moves me that brings fulfilment.

When people ask what I'm passionate about, my answer is always the same: many things. And when they ask how I make a living? Also, many things. Because I've realised that is what I'm passionate about. The variety. The possibility. The creative flow of not having to fit into a single box.

“KINDNESS always counts, especially the kind you offer YOURSELF.”

From Spotlight to Studio

My first love was performing musical theatre, the thrill of live shows, fronting a band, moving a room through sound. I adored it. But when I became a mother, I craved something different, still expressive, still creative, but steadier.

Voiceover work came knocking. I hesitated. I was dyslexic, and sight-reading scripts felt like standing at the edge of a cliff. But I said yes.

I'll never forget my first job. I was so nervous, I stopped seven times on the drive from Tooting to Soho just to find a loo. That journey became a map of public toilet locations across London. But I got there. I did the job. And that one terrified "yes" turned into a 26-year career.

Over time, I became the voice behind some of the UK's biggest brands from Jaguar to Huggies, L'Oréal to British Gas. And just when I needed it most, I was offered the voiceover campaign for the London 2012 Olympics. It felt like a full-circle moment, a reminder that my voice had value.

Then, one day, the phone stopped ringing.

The Recession Reset

The 2008 recession hit hard. I had small children, growing bills, and no work. That's when I realised I had built everything on one role. One income stream. One identity. It was time to rethink everything.

I longed for a gentler pace of life. Somewhere with space to breathe. So we left the city behind and moved to the coast. Brighton offered what we needed: sea air, fresh starts, and freedom.

That leap sparked something new. With space came creativity. I leaned into my love of beauty, not trends, but timeless design. Curating. Styling. Making things feel like home. A new chapter unfolded.

Saying Yes (Even When Terrified)

Then came a phone call and a lifeline, a dream project that pulled me back into voice work just when I needed it most. With the pressure eased, I followed curiosity elsewhere.

I co-created a concept store. Travelled. Designed. Curated. I dipped into radio, hosting live shows three hours of unfiltered connection.

I was terrified. But I didn't faint. I didn't swear. And I loved every second.

The years have been a dance between creativity and courage. Saying yes. Saying goodbye. Starting again.

Conversations That Matter

Eventually, I began holding weekly wellbeing circles, a quiet, open space for people to talk about how they were really doing, especially on the days they weren't fine.

It started at Rockwater in Hove, a venue that generously supported the idea, and has since moved to The Big Beach Café, where So Talk, co-hosted with my dear friend Jon Wilde, is now in its fifth year.

It was never about the setting, it was about the space we created. A warm room, a cuppa, and the kind of conversation that heals.



Featuring Dame Kelly with Sophie

I've also opened space for women's health conversations, particularly around menopause, and I host evenings on men's mental wellbeing too. Real talk, honest reflections, no shame. Because the more we talk, the more we heal.

There have been a few times in my life when things have felt overwhelming. I have lost three beautiful human beings in the last nine years two of them being my parents, my rocks. My Dad to MND, and my stepson James, who was just 22, and then my beautiful Mum. So I know what it's like to feel grief, to feel your heart breaking.

And maybe that's why I care so deeply about these conversations because they're real. They remind us we're human.

The Little Big Things

My proudest roles? Being a mother. A friend. A witness to beauty in all its forms.

I still sing. I dance weekly. I record a podcast with someone who sees every side of me. And I still believe there's power in small joys, a shared laugh, a well-styled room, a moment of feeling truly seen.

What I Know Now

Dance in the morning.
Be kind especially to yourself.
Don't waste energy on arguments.
Burnout isn't noble. Rest isn't lazy.
And yes, don't put all your eggs in one basket.

"You don't need to be just one thing to live a meaningful life. Sometimes, being many things is exactly what saves you."

I didn't realise how proud I was of my journey until I wrote it down.

So thank you, Elif.
Now, onto the next adventure.

Sophie x



SOPHIE CORBETT

Sophie Corbett was born into show business, following in the footsteps of her father, beloved British comedian Ronnie Corbett, and her mother, West End leading lady Anne Hart. From acclaimed stage roles to 26 years as one of the UK's top voiceover artists, Sophie's career spans theatre, voice artistry, fashion curation, and community healing.

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**“IT’S NEVER TOO LATE
TO CHANGE”**

***Lara Besbrode on Divorce, Reinvention,
and Dancing Her Way Through Midlife***
by Elif Köse

In a world that often tells women to shrink as they age, **Lara Besbrode** decided to do the opposite, to expand. After a 30-year career in PR and marketing, a harrowing international divorce, and the onset of menopause, Lara didn't retreat. She rebuilt.

Today, at 56, she's the founder and CEO of *The Matchmaker UK*, a globally respected matchmaking agency known for its heart-led, bespoke approach. She's also become a go-to voice on love, confidence, and reinvention, regularly featured on platforms like **BBC, MTV, and Real Housewives of Cheshire**.

But it wasn't always like this.

"I didn't choose to reinvent. It chose me," Lara tells me. *"I was going through a horrific divorce. The business I had built was no longer viable. I was perimenopausal, exhausted, and questioning everything. But something inside said: this is the pivot. You can break down, or you can break through."*

And that's exactly what she did.

"I knew the only way to SURVIVE was to become VISIBLE AGAIN, and that started with me."

Starting Over in a Storm

In February 2020, just before the pandemic, Lara woke up with a name in her head: *The Matchmaker UK*. She bought the domain, mapped out a business plan, and within months had certified as an international matchmaker. By the time the world locked down, Lara was already building.

"I was working 18-hour days while others were baking banana bread," she laughs. *"I had a 10-year-old learning to cook and make me coffee, an older child doing home schooling... It was all hands on deck. We became a little unit, a team."*

Lara's background in PR gave her an edge, while

other agencies froze, she grew. But it wasn't easy. She was grieving the loss of her marriage, managing menopause symptoms, navigating remote HRT appointments, and running a household as a single mum of three.

"It was survival mode. But also... there was fire in me. I wanted to prove to myself that I could start again."

"You can't find a MATCH if you don't know who you are. I HAD to BECOME the LOVE I was SEARCHING for."

Mirror Moments and the Weight of Becoming

Lockdown was brutal in many ways, physically, emotionally, financially. Lara found herself gaining weight, self-medicating with wine, and spiralling through antidepressants, sleeping pills, and anxiety meds.

"I didn't love myself enough. That's the truth. I was using food and alcohol to numb what I didn't want to feel."

The turning point came when she saw herself on TV. A media appearance, something that should have been a triumph, became a mirror moment.

"I realised, 'How can I help others transform if I haven't transformed myself?' I knew I had to take radical responsibility."

Over the next four years, Lara did just that. She lost nine stone, through sheer grit, discipline, and a deep desire to become the healthiest version of herself. No shortcuts. No injections. Just choice after choice after choice.

"It wasn't about size. It was about integrity. If I was going to lead women, I had to be the example."

Shuffle Dancing into the Spotlight

For her 55th birthday, Lara's children gifted her a six-week shuffle dancing course. Two years later, she's amassed millions of views and inspired thousands of women to move, not just their bodies,

but their beliefs about what's possible after 50.

"I'm not a dancer. I had two left feet. But I showed up. I practiced. And I proved to myself, and to anyone watching, that it's never too late to try something new."

She's now nearly **700 days alcohol-free**, runs a multi-award-winning business, and radiates joy online. But the journey wasn't linear, it was layered with grief, rage, exhaustion, and healing.

Midlife Isn't a Crisis, It's a Catalyst

Lara's story speaks directly to women who feel stuck after divorce, menopause, or career loss. The message? You're not broken. You're becoming.

"I hear from women every day who feel invisible. Their kids have left home. Their relationships have ended. They don't know who they are anymore. And I say: good. Because now, you get to choose."

She's passionate about challenging the narrative that women over 50 aren't valuable. In fact, she says, they're more employable than ever, more stable, more experienced, and free from the pressures of early motherhood.

"You might not earn what you did at 30. But you're wiser now. And wisdom is currency. If you don't have qualifications, get them. Or lean into the university of life. Either way, stop telling yourself you're too old. It's a lie."

The Power of Radical Responsibility

When I ask Lara what changed everything, she doesn't hesitate.

"Radical responsibility. I stopped blaming my ex, the menopause, the pandemic, my finances, my

mental health. I looked in the mirror and said: "this is mine to shift."

That mindset became her fuel. No victimhood. No waiting to be rescued. Just one empowered decision after another.

"My life isn't easy. I'm still a single parent. I still have to exercise, manage stress, and make conscious food choices. But I'm in control now. And that's freedom."

Her Message to Every Woman Reading This

As we near the end of our conversation, I ask Lara one final question, the question I ask every woman I interview for *Confidence Magazine*:

If every woman in the world could hear you right now, especially those dimming their light or doubting their worth, what would you want them to remember?

Her answer is simple. And unforgettable.

"It's never too late to change."

"And to quote RuPaul: if you don't love yourself, how the hell is anyone else going to? I'm completely in love with myself, not in a narcissistic way, but in a way that honours the woman I fought so hard to become."

Lara Besbrode didn't just survive midlife, she met it head on, danced through it, and emerged more alive than ever. Her story is a reminder that reinvention is not a privilege, it's a choice.

So if you're reading this and wondering if it's too late for you...

The answer, as Lara would say, is a loud, dancing, vibrant: **No.**



LARA BESBRODE

Lara Besbrode is the founder and CEO of The Matchmaker UK, an award-winning and MMI-certified international matchmaker who has turned her passion for people into a calling. After three decades in PR and marketing, Lara dared to start over, channelling her gift for connection into building a globally respected matchmaking service. She's a regular expert guest on platforms like BBC, TalkRadio, Real Housewives of Cheshire, and MTV Catfish UK.

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SECOND TIME MAGIC: *The Radical Rebirth of Me*



By the time I turned 53, I'd walked away from everything that once defined me: a six-figure career, a 26-year marriage, and the woman I'd spent decades trying to be for everyone else.

People told me I was brave but truthfully, I was broken. I didn't know who I was anymore. What I did know was that invisibility had become my daily costume, and I couldn't wear it a moment longer.

Leaving my marriage wasn't just the end of something, it was the beginning of everything. And yet, there wasn't a single dramatic turning point. There were silent mornings staring at my reflection.

Evenings curled up wondering if I'd made the biggest mistake of my life. And slow, quiet reckonings with the little girl inside who still believed she had to earn love through perfection.

It took time. And tenderness. And rebellion.

Instead of rebuilding the old scaffolding, I chose something radical: pleasure. Colour. Dance.

Styling myself in ways that felt like reclamation, not disguise. I stepped into spaces where I didn't have to apologise for wanting more.

“INVISIBILITY had become my daily COSTUME, and I couldn’t wear it a moment LONGER.”

Healing looked like barefoot dancing in Ibiza. Laughter that poured from places I thought were buried. Sound baths, moon circles, and vision boards that reawakened my purpose. I wasn't looking for love in another person, I was coming home to it in myself.

My spiritual awakening came as a quiet, insistent whisper. On the surface, my life looked perfect, but something deep inside told me it wasn't enough. I tried everything: coaching, therapy, restrictive diets,

fitness plans. Thousands spent trying to "fix" myself. But healing doesn't come with a receipt. It comes with truth.

With the help of my spiritual coach, I stood before the mirror of my life and saw how deeply I'd abandoned myself, putting others first, people-pleasing, accepting less than I deserved. It became heartbreakingly clear: change had to come from within. And with that, I began the painful, liberating process of disentangling myself from the familiar confines of family and identity.

“Second time MAGIC isn’t reserved for SOULMATES. Sometimes it’s found in SOUL WORK.”

I also found myself holding space for my mother through a devastating mental health crisis.

It was, in every way, the most gut-wrenchingly difficult year of my life. And yet, it changed me forever.

My faith in something bigger than me helped me through when everything felt like it was imploding, I often say now. *“What didn’t kill me made me stronger and I’m here to role model that.”*

I learned to live alone. I let go of the big house, the luxury cars, the high-status career. And I began asking: *Who the hell is Josie?*

I immersed myself in astrology, human design, coaching, tarot, journaling, psychic readings, and movement medicine. I began piecing together my path, insight by insight, ritual by ritual.

I danced to wild woman dances in my living room. I meditated with style as my mirror. I began solo travelling, mastering DIY skills, and letting silence guide me instead of scaring me. Each practice returned a part of me I thought I'd lost.



Through this personal metamorphosis, I birthed Rebellious Essence. My luxury wellness retreats are the antidote to beige self-care, they're vibrant, raw, beautiful, and rebellious. I guide midlife women to scream into the sea, style their comeback, and remember who the hell they really are.

I still remember the moment during my Ibiza photoshoot when I saw myself in the images. "Who is that?" I whispered not in disbelief but in recognition. For the first time in decades, the woman I saw matched the woman I felt inside: wild, wiser, visible, beautiful.

Falling in love again, for me, wasn't about romantic partnership (though I remain open to that, too).

It was about remembering. Reclaiming. Reinventing. Saying yes to joy, style, luxury, and softness without apology.

There's so much conditioning around midlife. We're taught to fade. To settle. To stay safe. But I discovered that midlife is the perfect moment to rebel not against others, but against the parts of ourselves we had to hide just to survive.

Second time magic isn't reserved for soulmates. Sometimes it's found in soul work. And if you're wondering whether it's too late to begin again, let me say this clearly: You're right on time.

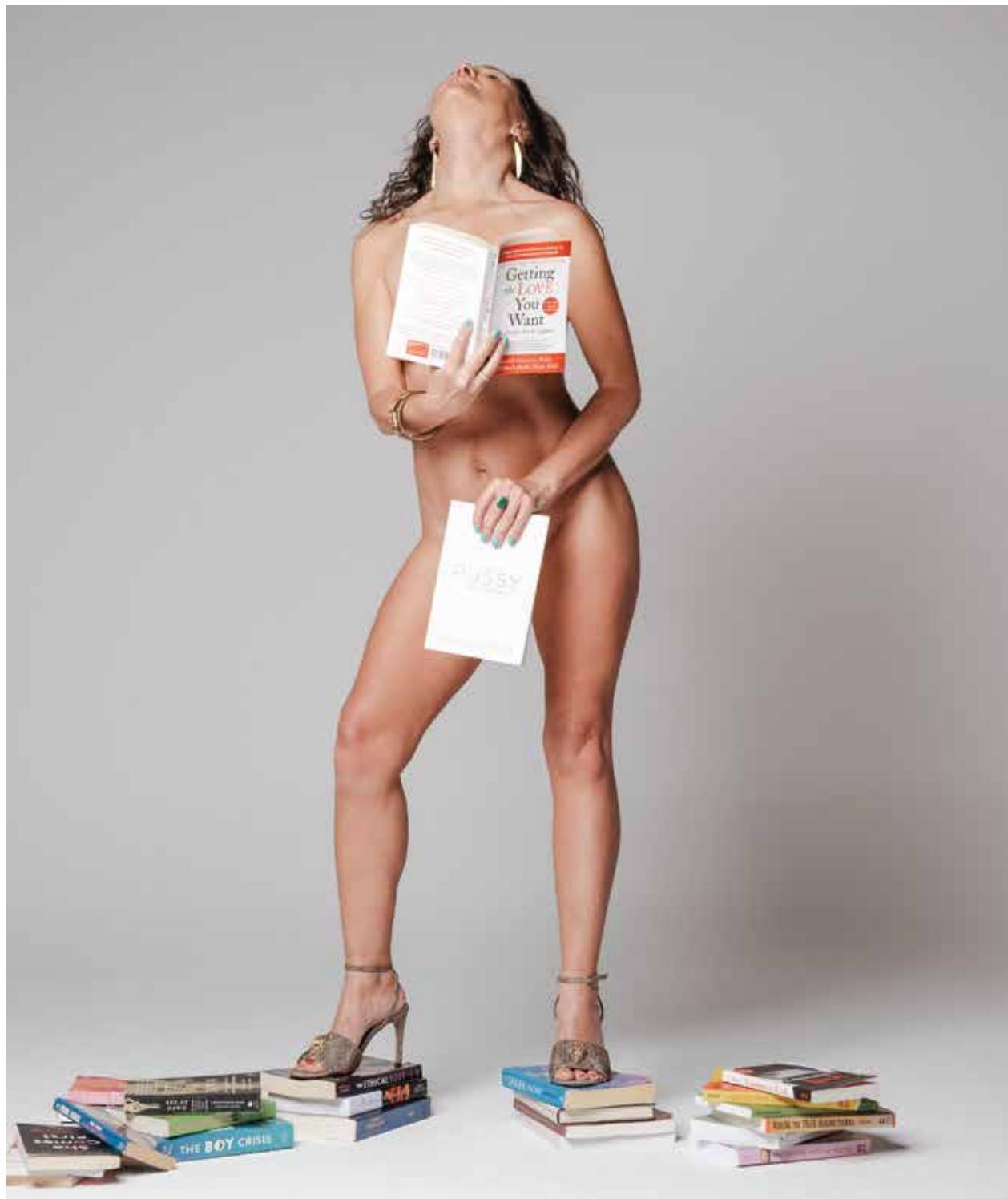
Your becoming doesn't need permission just rebellion.



JOSIE HAMILTON-COOK

Josie Hamilton-Cook is a 53-year-old midlife rebel, mum, and founder of Rebellious Essence. Through transformational retreats, styling, and soul work, she guides women to reclaim their identity, visibility, and power, reframing midlife not as a crisis, but as a bold awakening. Her mission? Radical self-love, inside out.

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TOO HOT FOR LINKEDIN?

When a woman's skin becomes a site of censorship, what does that say about our freedom to become?

I had a photo removed from LinkedIn. Not because I was naked but because I dared to look naked.

There I was, standing in my power, in my skin, with books covering my body as a symbol of the stories that shaped me. The books weren't to hide me, they were a symbol of me honouring myself, reclaiming lost parts and as a liberation from a past that kept me small and unexpressed. I want to be clear, nothing explicit was shown, you can see the photo for yourself. The image was 'too much', 'too bold', 'too alive', 'too much woman'. And that, it seems, was the problem.

“CONFIDENCE isn’t just a MINDSET, it’s an EMBODIMENT.”

For me this isn't just about a photo. It's about the deeper discomfort our society still has with women who are fully expressed in their bodies, their sensuality and their confidence. Especially when that woman dares to lead!

My work lives at the intersection of sex, love and leadership. I support women, men and couples in building deep connections, erotic aliveness and authentic self-expression, taking that embodiment from the bedroom to the boardroom.

So when LinkedIn removed that post, it didn't just feel like censorship of an image, it felt like censorship of a message. A refusal to acknowledge that our power, our pleasure and our voice are professional.

As a society we are still so deeply uncomfortable with female embodiment. We applaud confidence but only if it's polished, corporate and tame. We celebrate leadership but only if it doesn't disrupt, provoke or arouse. However, I'm not here to be palatable, I'm here to be real and lead from that place of authenticity.

I speak about the uncomfortable truths many are too afraid to voice. Which are, that women still shrink themselves to be accepted. That being desired and being taken seriously are still seen as opposites. That we don't feel safe to talk about the

way disconnection from our bodies affects everything; our careers, our relationships, our sex lives, our creativity...

The reason I'm so passionate about this work is because I've walked this path myself. There was a time I didn't feel sexy - I dragged myself through the day-to-day mundane life I had unconsciously created.

I didn't care for myself because I didn't feel I was worthy enough of giving myself that attention. I didn't feel powerful - and felt like things happened to me but most of the time this was because I was putting myself in rooms and situations where I didn't have permission to be me.

Often, I felt like I belonged in the room. I had to tone myself down so that I wouldn't be a threat. All of this had me feeling resentful, because deep down, I wanted it for myself. I've battled the voice that said I was too much. I've felt the sting of comparison, of shrinking and of second-guessing my worth.

What I began to notice is that in fact the more I reclaimed my body, my pleasure and my voice, the more magnetic my work became because I was giving people the experience of the real me.

When I started showing up in my full expression, clients came faster, wanting to 'have what she's having'. When I stopped hiding my sensuality I connected deeper to myself and to others.

“From the BEDROOM to the BOARDROOM your SENSUALITY is not a liability. It’s your SUPERPOWER.”

Sensuality isn't just about sex, it's about connecting to our senses and feeling fully in our bodies, our desires and our somatic experience. When I started leading from wholeness, not just the polished parts, I saw I am creating real impact. I am actually giving women (and men) real permission to show up, warts and all and still receive acceptance.

The thing is, confidence isn't just a mindset, it's an embodiment. So, when a woman feels alive in her skin, her whole life expands. What happens is her voice gets louder, her standards rise, she asks for more and she settles for less.

I see this especially in women in mid-life, who really have 'reclaimed' what they had abandoned to keep a family and a man. When this shift happens she becomes the woman she used to think only other people got to be.

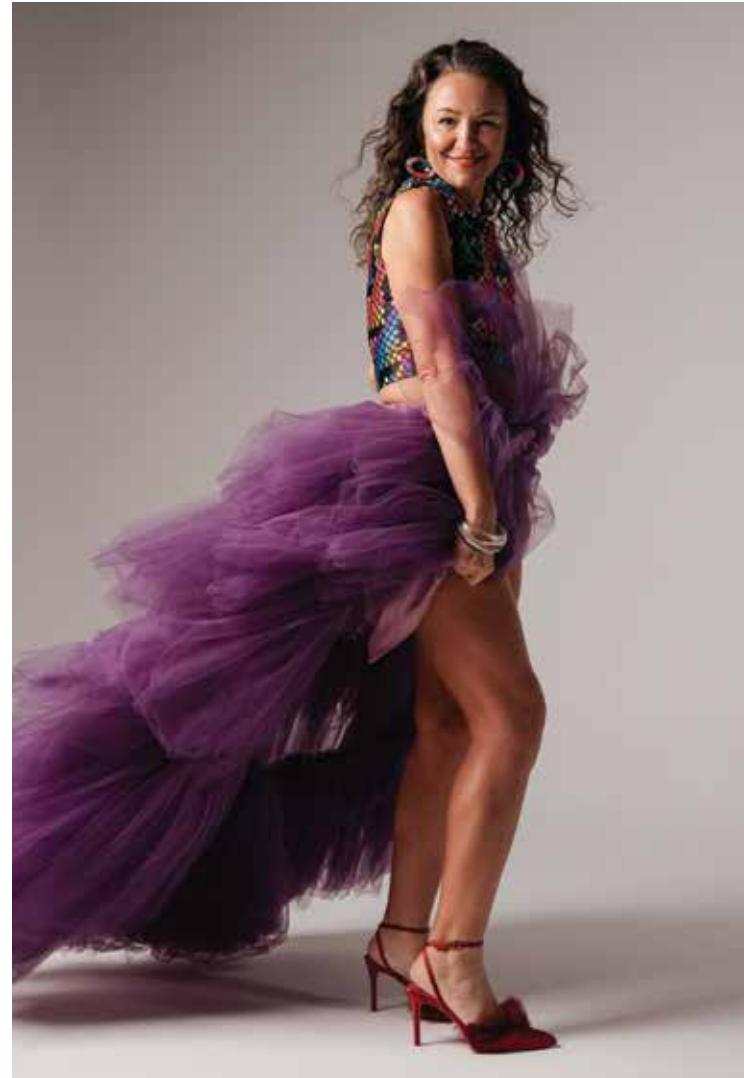
This is what I see every day in my work... women who were unsure, disconnected, hesitant and now reclaiming their turn-on, their desires and their identity. Couples reigniting their sex lives not through tricks but through truth.

We have to stop pretending these conversations don't belong on platforms like LinkedIn. Because your relationship to your body is professional. Your sexuality is leadership. Your voice, your energy, your presence all shape your business, your relationships and your impact.

What I see is that when women are still being told to cover up, tone down and be safe, we all lose.

I will not let a platform's discomfort dilute my message. I will keep showing up in my fullness. I will keep inviting women to remember who they are beyond shame, beyond the rules and beyond the roles they were handed. Because I see and I know that when a woman is free in her body, she becomes unstoppable.

So here's to the women who refuse to shrink.
Who is rewriting the rules!
Who is done apologising.



From the bedroom to the boardroom your sensuality is not a liability. It's your superpower.

And if that makes some people uncomfortable then good. Because the world doesn't change by playing small. It changes when women rise.

Fully. Boldly. Unapologetically.
Carla Crivaro

CARLA CRIVARO

Carla Crivaro is a Sex, Love & Relationship Coach helping leaders reignite their sex lives and deepen intimacy so they feel confident, connected and powerful in every area of life. Through coaching and workshops, she helps clients thrive in the bedroom and the boardroom - because your personal life fuels professional success.

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WHY NO ONE TALKS ABOUT LEAKING WHEN YOU LAUGH: THE QUIET CONFIDENCE KILLER

Pelvic floor dysfunction after childbirth or menopause and how to reclaim your power

By Grace Lillywhite

It's time pelvic floor health stopped being a taboo subject.

In the UK, over 60% of women have at least one symptom of poor pelvic floor health. Yet 69% haven't spoken to anyone in the NHS about it. (Source)

That has to change.

We live in a culture where you can buy wall art that says, "Sometimes I laugh so hard, tears run down my legs." It might sound funny, but it normalises dysfunction and for many women, leaking is far from funny.

It's deeply embarrassing and isolating. It can have a real negative impact on quality of life. In fact, 21% don't seek help because they're too embarrassed.

Pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) is common, yes. But that doesn't mean it's normal or that you have to live with it.

Why Kegels Aren't the Full Story

When women experience leaking, pelvic heaviness, or even back pain, the first stop is usually their GP. In an ideal world, that would lead to a referral to a women's health physio who can properly assess what's happening.

But too often, women are dismissed. Told it's "just part of motherhood" or "part of getting older." They're told to do their Kegels and sent on their way. Here's the problem:

Kegels aren't always the solution. In fact, they're not

always helpful.

Squeezing your pelvic floor repeatedly is like trying to build stronger arms by flexing your biceps in mid-air, it's not how muscles build long-term strength. The pelvic floor responds better to load, movement and coordination with the rest of the body.

"CONFIDENCE begins in THE BODY. Especially the parts no one TALKS about."

And crucially, not all pelvic floor issues come from weakness. Some are due to tightness, muscles that are overactive or gripping. If that's the case, repeated Kegels can actually make symptoms worse.

Your Pelvic Floor Is Part of a Bigger Picture

Your pelvic floor doesn't work in isolation. It functions as part of a system, your whole body, including your breathing patterns, your posture, your glutes, your abdominal muscles and even your nervous system.

If you're always bearing down through your pelvis, breathing shallowly, or holding tension in your belly, your pelvic floor might be under more

pressure than it can handle. This is why pelvic floor health needs a whole-body approach, not a "one-size-fits-all" quick fix.

So What Can You Do?

1. Tune Into Your Breath

The pelvic floor and diaphragm move together with every breath.

- Inhale: diaphragm lowers, pelvic floor lengthens
- Exhale: diaphragm rises, pelvic floor lifts

Breathing well helps manage pressure in your core. Poor ribcage mobility or shallow breathing can lead to too much pressure being forced downward into the pelvic floor.

Try this:

Sit or lie down.

Place one hand on your belly and one around your ribcage. Take a few breaths and observe — are you breathing mostly into your belly? Your chest?

Aim for 360-degree ribcage expansion on the inhale, with gentle movement into the belly and pelvic floor.

2. Notice Daily Habits

The little things matter:

- Do your ribs stack over your pelvis when you stand?
- Do you move throughout the day and keep your pelvic floor active?
- Are you doing activities that put pressure on your pelvic floor (like running)?
- Are you constipated or straining on the toilet?
- Do you use a squatty potty?
- Can you get up from the floor or chair like a squat, using glutes and legs?

Start observing how your everyday movements support or strain your pelvic floor.

3. Build Strength Through Movement

Here is where the magic happens! Specialist Pilates-based movement has been shown to improve pelvic floor contraction more effectively than Kegels. (Source)

Here are some of my favourite exercises that you use to build strength at all life stages when you want

to improve your pelvic floor function.

TIP 1: Ball Squeeze

- Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat
- Place a soft ball or cushion between your thighs (close to pubic bone)
- Inhale to relax
- Exhale to gently squeeze the ball and feel your pelvic floor engage
- Inhale to release

Repeat ×10

TIP 2: Bridge

- Lie on your back in neutral spine
- Exhale to curl your pelvis under slightly and feel your abdominal muscles gently connect
- Push into your feet and slowly lift your pelvis off the floor, one vertebra at a time
- Inhale at the top
- Exhale to slowly lower with control

Repeat ×8

TIP 3: Squat

- Stand with feet slightly wider than hips, toes facing forward, outside edges of the feet parallel to each other
- Inhale to lower into a squat. Make sure your pelvis is untucked. Feel how the sit bones widen.
- Keep spine long and chest lifted
- Exhale to stand, feeling pelvic floor and glutes engage

Repeat ×10

Your pelvic floor deserves more than silence or shame.

If you're leaking, feeling heaviness, or noticing discomfort, it's not just something to "put up with." Your body is not broken. It might just be asking for a different kind of support.

Movement, breath, awareness, and strength can help you feel confident in your body again, and that's something worth talking about.



GRACE LILLYWHITE

Grace Lillywhite, founder of Centred Mums, is a women's health Pilates specialist with 15 years' experience. She's lectured widely, created teacher training programmes, and appeared in national media. Her mission is to help women reconnect with their bodies and move in ways that feel supportive, energising and genuinely transformative.

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HORMONES, MOOD SWINGS AND THE MYTH OF BEING “TOO MUCH”

PMS, perimenopause and the natural rhythms of being a woman, it's not in your head.

By Emily Barcley

“She’s so crabby, must be on her period”

“Crazy period pains/mood swings? She must be making it up”

“Menopause? She must be hysterical - send her to the asylum”

These tropes are all too familiar to any of us who experience anything other than a ‘normal’ menstrual cycle.

Maybe we have a bleed that is ‘too heavy’, maybe we get monthly cramps that debilitate us, radiating from our ribcage to our knees that we are told is ‘normal - everyone experiences period pains, just take some over the counter pain tablets’, maybe in the menopause transition we experience anxiety like never before and we are dismissed with ‘pull yourself together, you always used to be able to do X, Y and Z’.

And with every dismissal we make ourselves that little bit smaller, we speak up that tiny bit less, we start to invalidate our lived experience that little bit more.

Enough, I say. Enough of being small. Enough of not talking about “women’s issues”. Enough of this systemic gaslighting. It’s time for us to take control. And to do that we need to understand our bodies and our cycles.

In short, through every menstrual cycle, we have a phase when our oestrogen levels are high, we are invincible, we have energy, we want to take part in life.

This is the follicular phase, from our period until ovulation. Then, after ovulation, in the luteal phase, we start to have lower oestrogen levels relative to our progesterone. This leads to us potentially feeling fatigued, moody, weepy and more.

If we lived in a world where everyone was ruled by oestrogen and progesterone, we’d likely be more sympathetic to these peaks and troughs in mood and energy. However, we live in a world where we are expected to show up the same every day, and

we are belittled when we are unable to do that.

So what can we do? Well, my primary suggestion is always to start cycle tracking. Get to know YOUR body and YOUR cycle. Use an app, use paper, use a series of fridge magnets; do whatever is right for YOU to get to know how you feel at each stage of your cycle.

**“ENOUGH of being SMALL.
Enough of not talking
about ‘WOMEN’S ISSUES’.
Enough of this systemic
GASLIGHTING.”**

When I talk about cycle tracking, I am talking about so much more than knowing when your next period is likely to show up (and by the way, if you are on a form of birth control that means you don’t have periods, you can still track), I’m talking about leaning into the inherent wisdom your body has about what you need on any given day.

Track your mood, your energy levels, your appetite. Whatever feels right for you. You might even want to start understanding what foods you crave, what music you want to listen to, what fabrics feel right at these different stages.

Once you have been tracking for a couple of months and have a clearer picture of what little cues your body is giving you at different stages in your cycle, you are then in a much stronger, more empowered, place than you were previously.

Now you know what these little indicators from your body might mean. You can potentially plan things for when you know you’ll be at your best and factor in downtime for when you might need it (I

am aware that in the real world this isn't always an option!). Most importantly, you can start to forgive yourself for those times when you are "too much" and those times when you are "not enough".

You are neither too much nor not enough. You are you. Perfectly flawed you. And that is absolutely enough.

"You are NEITHER TOO MUCH nor not enough. YOU ARE YOU. Perfectly flawed you. And that is ABSOLUTELY ENOUGH."

So lean into your cycle. Eat the salads in the follicular phase and the stodge in the luteal phase.

Wear the pretty dresses around ovulation when you feel you can take on the world, allow yourself the luxury of comfy clothes as your period approaches. Feel the emotions that come with each phase.

Let them in. The more they are allowed to live alongside you, the less power they have over you - when we fight the negative emotions, we are desperately trying to bury something that needs to come out.

Those emotions are valid and real. Sit with them for a little while if you feel up to it. And if you can't let them in on your own, I would strongly advise seeking some therapeutic support.

Your emotions are not inherently bad things, and

you are not a bad person for experiencing them. You may, however, wish to learn some coping strategies if things are overwhelming.

As for those oft-used throw-away statements, let's rise up against them:

"Yes I am more crabby because my hormones are allowing me the luxury of a few days when I am not in full people pleaser mode, and frankly your behaviour is out of line."

"Crazy period pains/mood swings? If I tell you I am going through this, grant me the kindness to hear me and accept my lived experience might be different from yours. Try to help me. (Or at least bring me chocolate!)"

"Menopause? I don't need an asylum, I need a life audit and in saying that to me you've helped me identify at least one person who no longer serves a purpose in my life."

In short, your hormones do not make you "too much". Let's join together and take up space, allow our ever changing bodies and moods to have a place in our daily lives.



EMILY BARCLAY

Emily Barclay launched Perimenopause Hub in 2019, following over 3 years of what she came to learn were perimenopause symptoms, bringing together experts from around the world to support women through this life stage. Emily is passionate about helping women feel epic. She lives in Scotland with her partner and 5 dogs.

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ACCIDENTAL LIVES, UNBREAKABLE BONDS:



How Two Women Turned Friendship into a Force for Change

By Lindsay Swan

Fifty years ago, in the Johannesburg winter of 1975, two women met in a PR agency. One, was an independent, globe-trotting pre-war baby; the other was me, a young Scot 13 years her junior. My chance encounter with Sylvia Holder would spark a half-century of friendship, adventure, and world-changing impact, much of it from Hove, where she settled in 1998 on a self-described “whim.”

Our story is now told in our recent memoir *Accidental Lives*, published by Black Spring Press.

A Friendship Forged in Fun and Fearlessness

From our earliest days in Johannesburg, Sylvia and I worked well together and quickly became friends. She was launching the Wombles; I was a Womble, in fact, all of them. Soon after, we organised the first South African Celebrity Tennis event, featuring Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton and (some of) the Monkees.

Back in London, for more than 20 years, we ran Holder Swan Public Relations, often compared to *Absolutely Fabulous*. Certainly, the office fridge was always stocked with champagne for good days, bad days, or simply any days.

What fun we had! Our eclectic mix of clients took us on safari in Zambia, to Mexico’s Mayan ruins, Iceland’s volcanoes and the high rises of Hong Kong. At home, we publicised Chichester Festival Theatre, Hampton Court Flower Show and many more. Other celebrities crossing our paths included Roger Moore, Joan Collins, Elton John, Diana Rigg and Cliff Richard, as well as members of the Rolling Stones. I was even in a movie, *Greenfingers*, with Helen Mirren.

When not travelling the world, we held court in our quirky London office, the original Chalk Farm

farmhouse, thought to have been artist Walter Sickert’s studio. Our entrepreneurial sidelines included a City sandwich bar and PR training business. Underpinning everything was and is our friendship, our shared delight in the absurd, sense of adventure, belief in the power of the possible and enthusiasm for making things happen

Tragedy and a Promise

In 2003, everything changed. Sylvia, now retired and newly settled in Hove, received a late-night phone call, the kind we all dread. Venkat, whom she’d met by chance as a skinny 12-year-old on an Indian beach, and whose education she had sponsored, had been killed in a road accident at just 27.

Heartbroken, she returned to Kovalam, Venkat’s village near Chennai, determined to help in some way. On impulse, as is her way, she promised to bring free education to every child in the village as, strangely for such a poor place, families had to pay fees for secondary education. Despite being 65 and newly retired, with no experience of education, charities, or India, Sylvia set up the Venkat Trust, naturally with me by her side.

Twenty-one years on, the Venkat Trust is a huge success story. It has built a 1,000-pupil higher secondary school, runs a 400-child sponsorship programme, and pays university fees for 75 students every year. The India side of the operation is run by Janikiraman, or JR, Venkat’s older brother, who rang Sylvia with the news of Venkat’s death on that fateful day, a friendship forged across cultures, continents and generations.

Brighton, Hove and the Spirit of Possibility

Hove, Sylvia writes in *Accidental Lives*, “just seemed like a good idea.” In fact, it became a launchpad for the Trust. Many of our trustees hail from Brighton and Hove. In March 2025, 71 runners



from Brighton's UberMummies group, led by its extraordinary founder Alex Smallman, raised £34,000 for the Trust's university fund during the Brighton Half Marathon.

Alex, our unstoppable Honorary Fundraiser, is already planning a bigger effort for 2026. We hope each runner will bring a friend to join the 1 March event, the ripple effect could be life-changing.

A Celebration of Friendship, Power, and Purpose

Accidental Lives isn't just a memoir. It's a book about tragedy turned to triumph, 'sliding door' life changers, chance encounters and a glorious friendship.

As the author, biographer and our fellow traveller to India and Africa Dame Margaret Drabble writes,

"This book gives an entertaining and moving account of the adventurous lives of that fine duo, Holder and Swan, two fearless, funny and brave women. It's a story of friendship and enterprise and extraordinary generosity, of triumph over tragedy, with some amazing anecdotes and an exhilarating sense of life lived to the full."

Rockwater's Book Club Social is hosting a special Accidental Lives evening at Rockwater's Lodge, Western Esplanade, on Tuesday 7 October from 6–8pm, hosted by Ciara Teefey, where Sylvia and I will do an authors' evening of stories, readings and a Q&A.

To support the Venkat Trust or for more information on how to join next year's UberMummies Brighton Half Marathon team or sign up for the Rockwater Book Social Evening on 7 October, contact info@venkattrust.org.uk.



SYLVIA HOLDER & LINDSAY SWAN

Sylvia Holder is the founder trustee of the Venkat Trust, an education charity she established in memory of a young fisherman's son she met in India. A recipient of the BEM and The Times Sternberg Active Life Award, she lives in Hove and regularly visits the Trust's projects in South India. Lindsay Swan, a trustee of the Venkat Trust, was Sylvia Holder's partner in a London PR consultancy for over 20 years. Based in west London, she is involved in therapeutic gardening projects and serves on the Wandsworth Prison Independent Monitoring Board, promoting fair treatment in custody. She frequently travels to the Trust in Kovalam, India.



THE 5 TRAUMA IMPRINTS HIDDEN IN YOUR BREATH AND HOW TO RELEASE THEM

I still remember the moment I first learned about primary trauma imprints.

Five patterns. Five invisible wounds that sit so deep in the body, they shape the way we think, feel, and respond to life, without us even realising it.

When my teacher Brian Kelly first described them, I felt something shift in my chest.

It wasn't just theory. It was me. My life. My choices. My reactions. And it was also the lives of so many clients I'd worked with over the years.

Suddenly, I understood why people could "do all the mindset work" and still find themselves repeating the same painful patterns.

It's because trauma isn't only stored in the mind, it's stored in the body. And no amount of thinking can override what your nervous system still believes to be true.

"YOUR BREATH is the BRIDGE between who you were and who you're BECOMING."

Over the years, I've seen these imprints in almost everyone I've worked with, regardless of background, culture, or success level. They are universal because they form so early in life, often before we even have language.

Your Body Holds the Story. Your Breath Writes a New One.

Most of us believe our personality is *just* who we are.

We don't question the patterns, the triggers, the moments we shrink or armour up.

But what if those aren't your personality at all?

What if they're simply imprints, echoes of moments your younger self never got to fully meet, feel, and release?

Not in a "let's analyse it" way, but in the sense that I finally understood why so many of us live with invisible limitations we never agreed to.

Five Invisible Imprints

There are five core imprints I see in nearly everyone. They're not flaws. They're simply *adaptations*, brilliant survival responses your system created to protect you.

Shame

The moment you learned that your natural expression wasn't welcome. Maybe you spoke up in class and got laughed at. Maybe you were told your feelings were "too much." And yes, most of us were handed a silent rulebook about sex that made our bodies something to hide.

Abandonment

Even a few minutes of losing sight of your parents in a supermarket can plant this seed. The body learns: I'm alone. *I'm not safe*. Later in life, loss, divorce, or even emotional withdrawal can reactivate it instantly.

Rejection

Being excluded from the group. Having love withdrawn. Hearing "no" when you risked showing your heart. The body remembers that sting, and might choose safety over authenticity.

Absence of Love

This is the wound of what never came. Parents are busy. Caregivers stretched thin. Love might have existed, but it didn't land. The nervous system learned to fend for itself.

Premature Separation from Love

Being deeply loved... then losing it. This is the heartbreak that can make you hold back from loving fully again, not because you don't want it, but because you fear the pain of losing it more than the joy of having it.

***“Every IMPRINT SOFTENS
when it is witnessed in the
SAFETY of a circle. What
once felt unbearable becomes
BREATHABLE.”***



Transformational Retreat, July 2025, Turkey

Here's the truth: the mind loves a good story, but the body doesn't care about logic.

You can understand your wounds intellectually for decades and still feel them run your life.

That's because these imprints are stored in your nervous system, not your conscious memory. They live in your breath, in the way your shoulders tighten, in the subtle pauses before you speak your truth.

Talking about them might give insight, but insight doesn't dissolve them. In fact, over-talking can keep reinforcing the story of what happened to you, instead of revealing the freedom that exists beyond it.

This is where the work I do as a Breathmaster is different.

We don't sit in circles rehashing old wounds. We don't need to dissect who did what and why.

Instead, we work somatically, with the breath as the bridge between the conscious and subconscious.

Through specific patterns of breathing, we bypass the analytical mind and invite the body to show us what it's been holding. Not to relive it, but to release it.

And here's the beautiful paradox: the moment you stop trying to get rid of an imprint and instead meet it fully, without judgement, without making it wrong, it begins to dissolve.

Here is How The Journey of Breathwork Unfolds

1. Creating Safety for the System

Nothing opens without safety.

Before we begin, we set the conditions for your nervous system to relax: the environment, your body position, the rhythm of your breath.

When the body feels safe, it will allow you to access the layers that usually stay hidden.

2. Entering the Space Beyond Thought

Through a specific breath pattern, we slow the brainwaves, moving from beta into *alpha* and *theta*.

This is the space where the conscious mind loosens its grip and the subconscious can surface, not in words, but in sensations, emotions, and energy.

"The moment you meet your PAIN with COMPASSION is the moment you STOP being its PRISONER."

3. Meeting What Arises

Shame might appear as tightness in your chest. Abandonment as a hollow ache in your belly. Rejection as a sudden wave of heat.

We don't chase it away. We don't label it "bad." We simply meet it with breath and presence, the same presence it never had at the time it was formed.

4. Release Without Forcing

As the imprint is met fully, the body knows what to do.

Sometimes it shakes. Sometimes there's laughter or tears. Sometimes it's a subtle exhale that feels like a lifetime of holding and letting go.

This isn't about fixing. It's about allowing.

5. Rewriting Through Embodiment

Once the old imprint releases, there's space for something new.

Not a mantra forced into the mind, but a felt sense of freedom in the body.

You *become* the new story. One breath at a time.

6. Integration into Daily Life

The real magic is in how you meet life afterwards.

Where you once reacted, you now respond.

Where you once avoided, you now lean in.

Life still happens, but you're no longer meeting it from the wound.

This Is Why I Host Retreats

This is why I host retreats. Breathwork is powerful in a single session but in retreat, it becomes life-altering.

When you step out of your daily environment and into a space dedicated entirely to release, you give your nervous system permission to rewire in a way that sticks.

From **21–25 October 2025**, I'm leading a small group through an **all-inclusive Soul-Deep Transformational Retreat** in Ayvalik, Turkey.

Here's what you can expect:

- Luxury accommodation and nourishing chef-prepared meals
- Daily breathwork journeys designed to meet and release your imprints
- Somatic practices that anchor your new state of being
- Rest, exploration, and time to integrate, without the rush of normal life
- A safe, expertly held container where you can finally stop “working on yourself” and simply be *with yourself*.

If you've felt like no matter how much you work on yourself, you keep meeting the same feelings, the same stuck points... This is not because you're broken.

It's because you've been trying to solve a body-based pattern with a mind-based approach. Your body doesn't need another story. It needs presence. Breath. Space to remember it's safe.

And when that happens, the old imprints, shame, abandonment, rejection, absence of love, separation, lose their grip.

You're left with the truth of who you've been all along:

Whole. Worthy. Free.

From that place, life looks different. Not because the world changes... but because you do.

If that calls to you, I'd love to welcome you to Turkey this October.

Reserve your place here retreats.elifikose.com

Elif x



Photography by Jo Thorne
Hair Dan W Chapman at Riah Hair Studio.



CREATIVE OXYGEN

By Ali Mapletoft

I need creativity like I need air. By the age of 10, most educated children don't believe they're creative. At the same time, people achieve extraordinary feats of mind-blowing creativity all over the world.

I'm an artist, I've never had what many people would call "a proper job". I've always run businesses though, and I intend to live by my creative wits even if that means being misunderstood and judged. Being brave enough to call myself an artist will be the measure of my success.

But here's the truth: you don't even need to call yourself an artist to live a deeply creative life.

What you need to do is tune out the noise telling you that you can't be creative because you aren't one of the chosen few.

Let me take you back to the first time I encountered this myth.

Picture this: An awe-inspiring land of rich blue snow-capped mountains, gigantic waterfalls, epic cliff faces, and impossibly big skies.

That's where my story begins.

I grew up in a multicultural enclave in the mountain kingdom of Lesotho during the last years of South African apartheid.

This tiny, landlocked island known as "The Kingdom in The Sky" sits in the clouds at over 4,593 ft feet, completely surrounded by South Africa. This tiny country is home to a resourceful and creative people: the Basotho.

Lesotho was also a political safe-haven during the oppressive apartheid regime in neighbouring South Africa. During my childhood, in the 1980s and 90s, this tiny country sat like an island in shark-infested waters, attracting political exiles, freedom fighters, banned authors, journalists, photographers, filmmakers, and artists.

My school friends were the children of shopkeepers, school teachers, engineers and business people. But they were also the children of freedom fighters, revolutionaries, spies, and exiled political leaders.



This was a country where, on the one hand, we grew up barefoot and carefree, riding horses in the mountains, and on the other hand, we checked the car for bombs every morning before setting off for school. Our world was one of perpetual contradiction, of the certainty of uncertainty.

It's against this backdrop that I begin my life as a young creative visionary. One glorious day in the early 1980s. I'm four or five, crouching, making traditional clay animals on the dusty ground outside the pottery. An enormous sky boasts triumphant streaks of cloud, artfully dry-brushed against vaulted ceiling of the blue heavens. I'm content.

The clay dries quickly in the heat of the sun. You can actually see the water retreating as it evaporates under the sun's glare. I carefully wet and scratch the legs of a ram to make them stick, before



smoothing the joins away just like I've seen the artisan craftsmen do in the pottery.

The whitewashed walls of the circular workshop buildings gleam against a backdrop of rust and ochre scrubland. The old water tower, suspended on spindly metal legs, creaks like an empty stomach in the heat haze. The Maluti mountains glower in the distance- purple crags telling tales of dragons and lost Elfin kingdoms. Tolkien was born just a few miles from here— not that you'd guess, looking at the sparse thorny trees and pitted dusty road shimmering into the liquid distance.

I'm so engrossed in my work that I don't notice the

dapper young policeman lean his bicycle up against the whitewashed wall of the workshop. I don't see or hear him until he emits a low whistle in my direction. I eye his khaki uniform warily and busy myself, attaching little pointed clay horns onto my ram. We seem suspended there, the policeman and I, floating- as if one of us might suddenly fall into the sky by some accident of reverse gravity. And then he speaks, unequivocally, unmistakably to me.

"Little girl, what are you playing with? You should do some real work, or I'll take you to prison!"

He laughs heartily at his own joke and cycles away whistling merrily.

I'm suddenly ashamed and afraid. I hide under the stairs for what seems like hours, just in case the policeman comes back to arrest me. For the first time, I'm carrying a heavy load of troubling ideas: Some work is serious and some isn't. Some people are allowed to make things, and some aren't. And worst of all: you can get punished if you don't follow the rules.

As trivial as my encounter with the policeman might sound, it set off a subtle chain reaction. This was the foundation on which more myths could take root like weeds. It's easy to see why so many people believe that only the chosen few will ever succeed at being creative.

In most schools and workplaces, creativity gets treated like the soft furnishings of life –nice to have, but not essential. It's often the first thing to go when budgets are cut. We're taught early that creativity is separate from logic. You might have experienced being typecast by your parents and teachers if they defined you as either creative or academic. Labelling people like this can stop them from living their creative potential.

In my 20+ years of being an artist, coach, and creative director, I've identified 7 Deadly Myths About Creativity that hold people back from living and working creatively.

1. **Creativity is for the chosen few**
2. **Creative people are flaky and disorganised**
3. **You have to sacrifice a lot to be creative**
4. **Creativity is frivolous**
5. **Logic is more important than magic**
6. **Creativity leads to loss (of finances, reputation or control)**
7. **Creativity is for children**



Photography by
Anna J Felicia Sevenhuijsen

We're missing out on powerful opportunities to educate, to work, and even to heal more effectively, because we don't treat creativity as a guiding principle. So here's my invitation to you.

Take another look at the myths I listed

Ask yourself: How much has each one shaped your decisions, your confidence, your willingness to try? Give every myth a score from 0 to 10. Zero if it hasn't touched you at all, ten if it's been a heavy influence in your life.

Then, go a step further. Think about the role you play in passing these myths along—to your family, your friends, your team, or your colleagues. Mark each one with a colour:

- **Red** if you know you've reinforced it often.
- **Amber** if you've repeated it sometimes, maybe without realising.
- **Green** if you've managed to challenge it and stand for a different story.

By being honest with yourself and others, you can begin to set the stage for a truly creative life. You need creativity like you need air. It's time to breathe!

These ideas are part of Creative Oxygen, my forthcoming book, which explores how creativity can transform the way we live, parent, work, learn, and connect. My work with teams and leaders continues this mission, helping to place creativity at the heart of healthier, more inspired ways of being.

ALI MAPLETOFT

Ali Mapletoft is a multidisciplinary artist, creative director and creative consultant. Her own creative work exudes a potent feminine energy infused with myth and theatricality. Ali's public speaking and consultancy work focuses on revolutionising the way industry, education and healthcare view creativity as a vital tool for a healthy society.

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WHY PRESENCE PRECEDES PROFIT

By Elif Köse

Think about the last time you bought something without hesitation. It might have been your favourite skincare brand, a book by an author you trust, or a coffee from the café that knows your order before you speak. You didn't need to read reviews, compare prices, or overthink the decision. You simply said yes.

Why? Because presence builds familiarity. Familiarity builds trust. And trust is the real currency of business.

The Misconception of Systems

So many entrepreneurs today pour their energy into perfecting their website, tweaking email sequences, setting up ads, and building elaborate sales channels. Don't get me wrong, these tools matter. But here's the truth: most people don't want to admit: no system will work if people don't feel connected to you.

We've been sold the idea that business is a numbers game. Get enough traffic to the website, and some will buy. But the brands we truly love, the ones we return to without question, don't rely on gimmicks. They've earned our trust long before we ever land on their homepage.

It isn't the *system* that creates the sale. It's the relationship.

We Buy with Our Feelings

Humans are not purely logical beings. We like to believe we make rational decisions, but in reality, we buy with our feelings first and justify with logic later.

When we feel seen, understood, and inspired, we are far more likely to lean in. That's why no amount of clever design or technical set-up can make up for a lack of authentic presence.

Think about your own habits: you might follow someone for months before buying from them. You read their posts, you watch their videos, you sense their values, and something inside you begins

to trust them. When the right offer comes along, the decision feels easy.

That ease doesn't come from manipulation. It comes from resonance.

Visibility Before Conversion

Before you worry about the perfect sales page, ask yourself: *Do people really know who I am? Do they feel the woman behind the brand?*

Visibility is not about flooding social media or chasing algorithms. It's about showing up consistently, aligned with your truth, in a way that makes people pause. It's about sharing your story, your perspective, and your values so deeply that your audience can't help but recognise themselves in you.

When presence is authentic, it becomes magnetic. And when visibility reflects your real voice, it naturally attracts the right clients, the ones who want to work with you, not the ones you have to convince.

Building Offers that Breathe

The most successful offers are not created in isolation. They are built in a relationship with your audience. That means listening to their needs, observing their desires, and paying attention to what they are asking for.

Your presence and your voice become the foundation.

Your offers become the bridge.

And your systems, whether it's your website, your emails, or your sales channels, become the pathway

But here's the order too many get wrong:

1. Presence first.
2. Visibility second.
3. Offers third.
4. Systems last.

When you reverse the order, everything feels forced. When you follow it, everything flows.

The Confidence Movement

This is the philosophy behind the **Confidence Movement**. We are not here to chase trends or teach "bro marketing." We are here to bring the human back into business. To remind women that confidence, clarity, and connection are not just personal traits they are business strategies.

That's why we created the **Event Mastery**

Workshop. It's more than training on events or marketing, it's a space where entrepreneurs refine their message, position themselves as a go to expert,



**“It isn’t the SYSTEM that
CREATES THE SALE. It’s
the RELATIONSHIP.”**

work with associates to lift their profile, own their stage presence, and learn to craft offers that feel alive. Because when you know how to embody your message, your website and channels stop being static platforms and start becoming living invitations.

It's also why our **International Women's Day stage** has become such a powerful platform. It isn't just another speaking slot it's an opportunity to step into visibility that opens doors, builds authority, and leaves a legacy. For many women, it has been the spark that led to deeper impact, bigger collaborations, and an audience that truly sees them.

The truth is, sales are not about pressure. They are about permission, permission for your audience to say yes to something that already feels right.

So ask yourself: how can your presence be felt so deeply that people don't hesitate? How can you show the real you, so trust is built before you ever

mention an offer?

Because when you embody your presence, visibility expands. When your visibility reflects your truth, your offers align. And when your offers align, sales become the natural by-product of trust.

The question is not “How do I sell more?” The question is: How do I create such resonance that people already know I’m the one they want to work with?

That’s the journey we’re on at Confidence Magazine. That’s the stage we’re building. And if you feel it’s time for you to step forward, whether through refining your event presence, sharing your story in these pages, or stepping onto our IWD stage, then consider this your invitation.

Not a sales pitch. A movement. Not just a sales channel. A legacy.

The choice is yours.



Photography by Beth Wild

Featured in picture left to right: Laura Beddoe-Collins (Founder of Soul Speaks), Lauren Lepley, Kahreela An Ha, Tanya Fisher, Sherrisie Bisram, Gill Kirkham, Rosanna Harness, Melissa Matson, Stacey Beecham 2024 speaker at her two day immersive event Soul Speaks.

INFLUENCE IS BORN WHEN WOMEN REWRITE THEIR STORY

By Laura Beddoe- Collins

As women, so many of us were taught to dim our light. To be “good,” to not brag, to keep quiet about the things we’re proud of. For me, that played out painfully as a teenager.

At home, my parents were going through a messy separation. I felt invisible.

If I spoke about something I was proud of, it was seen as showing off.

So I stopped. Instead, I found attention another way: I fell in with the “naughty kids” at school becoming disruptive for attention.

For the first time, I felt noticed. I felt popular. But underneath it all, I was just a young girl who wanted to be seen and valued.

That wound followed me into adulthood. **I silenced myself, even when I knew I had something important to share. I took jobs and shrunk my truth, I became a chameleon,**

to what I thought people wanted me to be.

I was lost.

But influence doesn’t come from silence. It doesn’t come from fitting into a mould.

It comes from rewriting your story and being brave enough to own it.

Today, I embody the identity and vision I once longed for. I survived domestic violence, overcame addiction, and even faced homelessness. Yet, I rebuilt from the ground up turning my pain into purpose, and my voice into influence.

I’ve since built a multi-six figure business, mentored women across the globe, and founded **Soul Speaks**, a community of over **18,000 women**, committed to building businesses with integrity and owning their truth unapologetically.

The truth is business success is what you make it, you are allowed to create a new path and it should

never require you to sacrifice authenticity or being proud of what you stand for.

The strongest brands are not the most polished. They're the most real.

Your story is the soil from which your influence grows. When you stop hiding your past and instead transform it into your message, you build a brand that's remembered.

A brand that inspires. A brand that lasts.
This is what I call an **Elevated Brand** one that's unapologetic, rooted in purpose, and impossible to ignore.

Conscious Leadership Creates Movements
With over 20 years in sales and marketing, a background in corporate telecoms, and my experience launching *The Brighton Definitive* magazine in 2016, I know what it takes to lead. But leadership today requires more than strategy. It requires consciousness. It requires a nervous system that feels safe.

Through my work as a qualified psychotherapist, Reiki practitioner, keynote speaker, mentor, retreat facilitator, and podcast host, I've learned that leadership is about identity work (the unconscious mind) as much as it is about strategy.

Trauma-informed leadership allows women to rise, not by proving themselves, but by embracing their wholeness.

I am dyslexic, ADHD and I have still created a global movement, why, because I lead with an unshakable mission and I know you gorgeous reader have what it takes too.

This is what it takes to create a movement.

Your unshakable mission and unwavering belief which outways fear.

Empowered Voices Change the World

When I launched *The Podcast for Soulful Women in*



LAURA BEDDOE-COLLINS

Laura Beddoe-Collins survived domestic violence and homelessness to build a global empowerment movement for female entrepreneurs. As founder of Soul Speaks and host of a Top 100 Charting podcast, she teaches ethical sales and authentic leadership to her platform of 18,000+ women worldwide.

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Business (which reached the Top 100 charts), I saw firsthand the power of women's voices.

Every time a woman decides to stop hiding and start speaking, she lights the path for others. Purpose driven influence isn't about ego, it's about being brave enough to tell the truth and proud enough to stand by your gifts even when it scared the Sh*t out of you.

That's how we create ripple effects. That's how we build a legacy. That's how we change the world.

YOU ARE INVITED

This October at **Soul Speaks 2025**, I'm creating a two day activation experience teamed with 11+ world class leaders & creators giving you permission to rise into your influence and build a brand that creates a lasting legacy, your voice matters.

Together we'll be working through four pillars: **Impact, Sisterhood, Sales, and Leadership.**

Together, we'll explore how to:

- Claim your authority and step fully into visibility.
- Align your business with your soul's calling.
- Lead in ways that inspire movements.

Transform your story into a roadmap for others to rise.

It's time to stop letting your past story hold you back.

It's time to stand up, stand out, and rise as the trailblazer you were born to be.

Because the future belongs to women who build **Elevated Brands, lead with Conscious Leadership, and share Empowered Voices** that create lasting change.

If you are ready to step up to start leading here is your permission slip.

Remember your voice matters,
Laura Beddoe-Collins



5 WAYS TO TAKE BACK FINANCIAL CONTROL AFTER DIVORCE, BURNOUT, OR A LIFE RESET

There's a quiet kind of grief that comes with starting over financially. Not the loud kind people rally around, but the one you feel alone at 2am when you're trying to figure out how to pay the bills, hold it all together, and still feel like yourself.

I know this because I've lived it.

I'm a qualified accountant and now a financial coach for high-earning women but for years, I was hiding in plain sight. I looked like I had it all together: good career, smart with numbers, juggling work and motherhood. What most people didn't know was that behind closed doors, I was trapped in a financially controlling relationship. Despite all my qualifications, I couldn't access my own money without a fight. Leaving meant risking my license, my livelihood, and my stability but staying meant losing myself entirely.

I stayed longer than I should have because I couldn't afford to leave.

That's why I now specialise in helping women take back financial control; not just by budgeting or saving more (though yes, that matters), but by owning their voice when it comes to money. And if you're going through a life change right now - whether that's divorce, burnout, or leaving a 9-5 to build something on your own - know this: you can rebuild. Not just survive but actually lead with money.

Here's how to get started:

1. Let go of the shame - it's not your fault

Whether you're coming out of a controlling relationship, a career that left you burned out, or you're waking up to the reality that you never really learned how to manage money for yourself, none of this means that you're 'less than'. It makes you human.

I work with so many women who say "I should have known better." But no one teaches us this stuff properly. Especially not as women. We're taught to be grateful, modest, good with the emotional load, not how to negotiate a raise, leave a financial abuser, or rebuild from scratch.

Your first step in owning your voice financially is ditching the shame. You can't build wealth from a

place of self-punishment.

2. Know your numbers - without numbing out

A lot of women I work with tell me they're "bad with money" but they've actually just never had the right tools or safety to look at the truth. Clarity is not the enemy. Avoidance is.

Start simple:

- What do you own (bank accounts, savings, property)?
- What do you owe (loans, credit cards, tax bills)?
- What's coming in and going out monthly?

You don't need a spreadsheet to start. A blank piece of paper or voice note works. The act of facing your finances is powerful. It says: I'm not shrinking anymore.

One of my clients, recently separated after a 20-year marriage, started by reviewing her bank statements with a highlighter in one hand and a glass of wine in the other. She sent me a message afterwards: "For the first time in years, I feel like I'm back in the driver's seat."

"You can't BUILD WEALTH from a place of SELF-PUNISHMENT."

3. Build a Safety Fund - even if it's slow

I call this your "f*** off fund" — and every woman needs one.

This isn't about preparing for failure, it's about reclaiming choice. Whether you're freelancing, building a business, or recovering from financial trauma, having cash you control gives you breathing space.

Start small. £20 a week. £100 a month. I don't care how slow it feels; slow money is still powerful money.

One of my coaching clients built her fund by selling old designer handbags and pausing one of her kids'

unnecessary subscription boxes. She now has £6,000 saved, and the confidence that comes with it? Priceless.

“Every woman needs a F OFF FUND, not for failure, but for FREEDOM”***

4. Upgrade your identity - not just your bank balance

This is the bit most people miss. Money mindset isn't fluff; it's how you see yourself in the financial story.

Do you see yourself as a woman who always struggles? Who's lucky if she gets by? Or as someone who can learn, grow, and lead with money?

Start by asking: What's the next-level version of me doing with her money right now?

Is she checking her accounts weekly?

Saying no to chaotic clients?

Investing in support instead of doing it all herself?

I worked with one woman who used to call herself “a disaster with money.” Six months later, she had a standing Thursday money date in her calendar, three new revenue streams, and a whole new standard for the kind of clients she would (and wouldn't) take on.

5. Ask for help - unapologetically

You don't have to do this alone. One of the biggest lies we tell women is that they have to figure it all out themselves or else they're failing.

Get support. Whether it's a coach, an accountant, a trusted friend, or even a podcast that helps you feel less alone (like *Breaking Financial Chains* — shameless plug!), let yourself be supported.

This work can feel heavy. But when you're not carrying it all in silence, it gets lighter.

You don't have to roar to lead.

Owning your financial voice doesn't mean shouting louder. It means refusing to shrink.

You're allowed to say:

“That doesn't work for me.”

“I need to earn more.”

“This is my standard now.”

You're allowed to want ease, wealth, peace, and power - and you're allowed to start where you are.

There's no shame in rebuilding. There's only strength in deciding that this next chapter is yours.



TANYA IBBERSON

Tanya Ibberson, aka the Financial Wingwoman, is a trauma-informed financial transformation coach and qualified accountant with over 28 years experience. She helps women reclaim financial clarity, confidence, and control, especially after financial abuse or divorce, so they can rebuild safely, strategically, and on their own terms.

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If You've Been Waiting for Permission, This Is It

*Transformational Confidence Coach | Strategic Business Advisor
Keynote Speaker | Fashion Designer*

Every story in these pages is a mirror, not just of who we've been, but of who we dare to become. If you let them, they will meet you where you are, and perhaps open a door you didn't even know was waiting. That is the power of allowing life to speak to you in whispers, not just in shouts.

The season of becoming is not a single chapter. It is a lifelong unfolding, a deeper conversation with yourself and with the world. It is in how you show up for the people you lead, the love you give without condition, and the quiet courage it takes to reimagine your own story.

I have witnessed what happens when someone chooses to cross that invisible threshold, the shift in their energy, the clarity in their decisions, the way they draw others toward them. I've seen it in boardrooms, in retreat spaces, and in the stillness between breaths. And I know it's possible for anyone willing to walk toward it.

My wish is that these words do not end when you

close the final page. Share them. Discuss them. Let them spark conversations that matter, at your dinner table, in your team meetings, with your oldest friends, and with strangers who become confidantes.

And as you move through this season, remember: every transformation begins with one choice. The choice to stop standing at the edge of yourself, and to step fully, unapologetically, into the life that has been waiting for you all along.

"True confidence is not built in the spotlight, it's forged in the quiet moments when you decide that your worth was never up for negotiation."

With love and compassion,
Elifx

Elif Köse
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LUXURY TRANSFORMATIONAL DEEP LIBERATION RETREATS

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