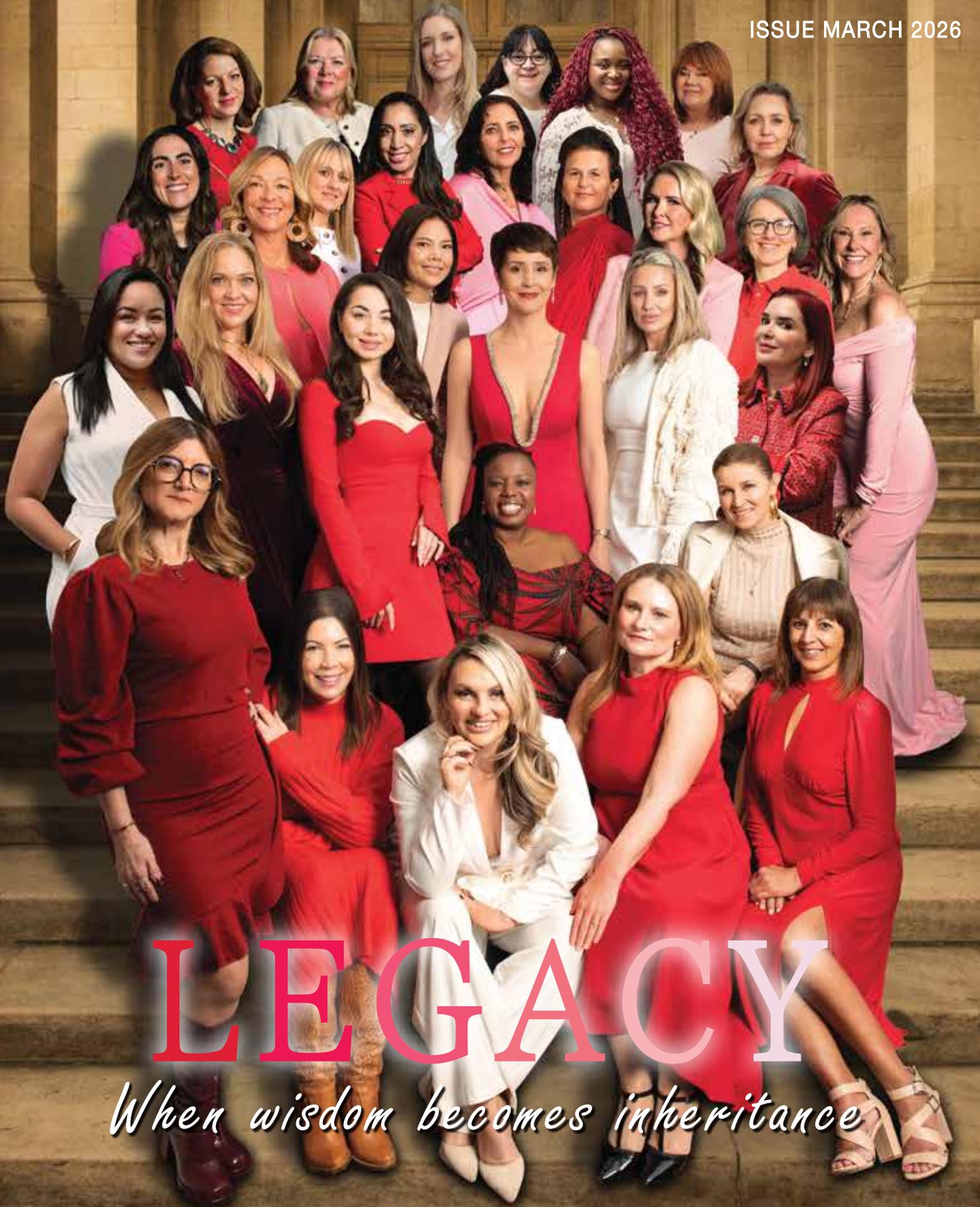


CONFIDENCE

ISSUE MARCH 2026



LEGACY

When wisdom becomes inheritance

● LIVE

Be part of CONFIDENCE TV



Talking of Confidence with Elif

Welcome to **Confidence TV**, home of *Talking of Confidence*, a talk show by Elif Köse designed to inspire, empower, and ignite change through real conversations with women who dared to rise.

This is more than just a talk show. It's a movement for those ready to rediscover their worth, reclaim their power, and create a life of confidence, clarity, and purpose.

Each episode features authentic, soul-led conversations with incredible individuals, leaders, creators, and changemakers, who open up about their journeys, their breakthroughs, and the lessons that shaped who they are today. You'll hear stories of courage, reinvention, and transformation that remind us all: confidence isn't something you're born with, it's something you build, moment by moment.

🎧 Tune in and be inspired by their wisdom.

Listen as Elif guides deep, heartfelt discussions that reveal what it truly takes to rise beyond fear, self-doubt, and limitation, and to live a life aligned with who you really are.

Who would you love to see featured next?

What topics about confidence would you like us to explore?

We'd love to hear from you!

✉ Email us at confidence@elifkose.com

🌐 Listen now at

www.theconfidencemagazine.com/confidencetv

Because every story you hear could be the spark that awakens your own confidence.



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Editorial Policy

Confidence Magazine is a values-led publication dedicated to amplifying women's voices, stories, and personal truths. We aim to inspire self-connection, confidence, and conscious leadership through emotionally intelligent content that honours lived experience, insight, and transformation.

Our editorial content includes personal essays, interviews, expert contributions, and curated features across categories such as health, business, creativity, relationships, wellbeing, and social impact.

We are committed to:

- Upholding the dignity and authenticity of each contributor's voice
- Representing diverse lived experiences with respect and compassion
- Avoiding sensationalism or exploitation of sensitive topics
- Providing content that empowers, educates, or supports emotional wellbeing
- Using inclusive and affirming language wherever possible
- Fact-checking data or claims provided by experts or guest writers
- Clearly labelling sponsored content or promotional features

Our editorial team reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, style, or length while preserving the intended message and tone of the contributor. We do not tolerate plagiarism, discrimination, or content that promotes harm.

This issue of Confidence Magazine has been made possible through the support of our contributing experts. Each contributor has invested in the creation of this edition to amplify women's voices, share lived wisdom, and support the sustainability of independent publishing.

All editorial content is curated with integrity and aligned with the values and mission of Confidence Magazine.

Disclaimer

The views, experiences, and suggestions expressed in this magazine are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Confidence Magazine* or its editorial team. Articles may include personal practices, lifestyle insights, and professional perspectives intended for general inspiration and information only. They are not a substitute for professional advice in areas such as health, business, or personal development. Readers are encouraged to use their own discretion before applying any ideas and, where appropriate, seek guidance from qualified professionals.

Corrections & Complaints

We take accuracy, fairness, and respectful representation seriously at Confidence Magazine. While our publication centres lived experiences and personal insights, we are committed to correcting any factual inaccuracies or addressing concerns in a timely and transparent manner.

If you notice an error, misrepresentation, or have a concern about any of our published content, please contact us at:

✉ elif@elifkose.co.uk

📧 Subject: *Correction Request or Editorial Complaint*

Please include:

- Your name and contact details
- A link or title of the article in question
- A clear description of the concern or suggested correction

We will review your message within **14 business days** and respond with an outcome or next steps. Corrections or updates, where required, will be noted in the article.

Thank you for helping us uphold integrity and trust in all we create.



A Letter of Thanks. A Living Archive. A Legacy in Motion.

This issue is more than pages bound together.
It is a record.
A remembrance.
A thank you.

As I write this, I am deeply aware that every word you are about to read sits on the shoulders of women who came before us. Women who spoke when it was unsafe. Who worked when it was unrecognised. Who led without permission. Who carried families, movements, businesses, ideas and futures, often invisibly.

This issue is my thank you letter to them.
And my offering to you.

In this quarter, and our first year celebration of launching the magazine, I brought together incredible women to share something rare: not instruction, not performance, not perfection, but wisdom. The kind that can only be earned through living. Through loss and courage. Through choosing again and again to come home to oneself. Every single person who touched my life has an impact on who I am today and becoming everyday.

Across these pages you will meet doctors, psychologists, teachers, artists, lawyers, broadcasters,

founders, healers and leaders. Some carry titles recognised by institutions. Others carry authority earned quietly, in rooms that never made headlines. What unites them is not status, but substance.

Each woman writes from the same place: a lived understanding that confidence is not bravado, but belonging. That leadership is not dominance, but devotion. That power is not something taken, but something remembered.

This magazine exists because I believe women deserve spaces that do not ask them to shrink, explain or perform. Spaces that honour depth over noise. Integrity over urgency. Presence over proof.

For me, this publication is not an accessory to my work. It **is the work**.

It is how I reach beyond borders.
How I create cultural conversations that outlive trends.
How I gather voices that deserve to be held with care and reverence.

These pages are a living archive. A record of what women know now, so that future generations do not have to relearn it the hard way. A reminder that wisdom does not expire and that the most powerful movements begin in the body, not the boardroom. As you turn these pages, I invite you to read slowly. To feel where something lands. To notice what stirs. To recognise yourself in places you didn't expect. This issue is not here to tell you who to be. It is here to remind you who you already are. With gratitude, for the women who paved the way, the women who walk beside us, and the women yet to come.

Elif Köse
Editor-in-Chief, *Confidence Magazine*

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Website www.theconfidencemagazine.com

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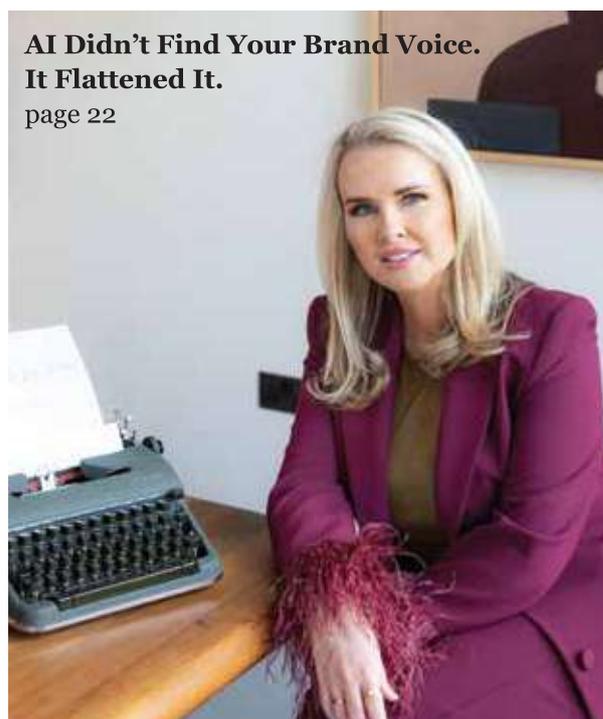
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Confidence, not as something to prove. but as something to come home to.

“A powerhouse is defined as a person of great energy, strength, or force. When I look back over my life, every chapter points to that word. Not because it has been easy, but because it has required me to rise, again and again.

But I did not always feel powerful.”



I Didn't Become a Powerhouse

I Remembered That I Already Was One

By Elizabeth McQuillan

Let me ask you something honestly.

Do you see yourself as a powerhouse?

Not the glossy, highlight reel version.

The real one. The woman who has been through things and kept going anyway.

Because I do. Without hesitation.

A powerhouse is defined as a person of great energy, strength, or force. When I look back over my life, every chapter points to that word. Not because it has been easy, but because it has required me to rise, again and again.

But I did not always feel powerful.

At eleven years old, I was anything but.

My body started doing things that made no sense. Violent nosebleeds. Bruising without explanation. Total exhaustion. I collapsed backstage during a dance routine, aged eleven, when I should have been bouncing with energy.

Within hours, I was blue lit to Manchester Children's Hospital and diagnosed with a rare blood disorder. I needed a bone marrow transplant to survive. If no family member matched, time was not on my side.

At that moment, I was not brave. I was scared

But I survived.

My sister saved my life. Something permanent embedded itself into me then. A deep awareness that life is precious, fragile, and not to be wasted.

That awareness became part of how I live.

Years later, it activated again.

“Every growth spurt came from relationships built in rooms, not algorithms.”

In 2015, as a thirty-year-old mum, my world cracked open. A relationship ended suddenly and painfully. I moved back into my parents' box room, sharing a bed with my two-year-old daughter. No safety net. No plan. Just me and the responsibility to keep going.

And then came 2020.

I had just left a fourteen-year teaching career. I was stepping into business with my husband. Our wedding was planned. Our future felt expansive.

Then the lockdown hit.

The wedding disappeared overnight. My job was gone. I asked to retract my resignation and

was told no. Someone else had my role.

So there I was. No job. No ceremony. No certainty.

And do you know what I did?

I showed up every morning anyway.

I turned my kitchen into an office. I built the business quietly. I showed up online. I connected. I learned. I trusted myself when nothing around me felt certain.

Within months, the business exploded. Not by accident. Not by luck.

Through connection.

Every sale came from conversation.
Every breakthrough came from trust.
Every growth spurt came from relationships built in rooms, not algorithms.

That is when I realised something important.

I am not just good at business.

I am exceptional at holding rooms.

At bringing people together.

At creating spaces where women feel safe to speak, visible enough to be seen, and supported enough to rise

That realisation changed everything.



Today, I shine brightly as The Event Expert™, consciously supporting businesses to sustainably scale their impact and increase their commerciality. Not through hustle or burnout, but through strategic rooms, meaningful connection, and experiences that actually convert.

Flamingo Business was born from that knowing. The Awards followed, not as a brand extension, but as a leadership statement.

A statement that women deserve recognition without apology. That success does not need to be quiet to be respectable. That creating rooms is one of the most powerful leadership moves you can make.

“I didn’t become a powerhouse. I remembered that I already was one.”

The Awards are not about trophies. They are about acknowledgement.

About saying, *“I see you. Your journey matters. Your work matters. Your story counts.”*

Here is what I know now.

Powerhouses are not born fearless. They are built through repeated choice.

The choice to keep going.
The choice to stand up again.
The choice to stop waiting for permission and start creating space.

If you are reading this and questioning your confidence, hear this clearly.

You do not need a crisis to qualify.
You do not need validation to lead.
You do not need to shrink to belong.

Confidence is not about being louder.
It is about being truer.

And when you live from that place, you do not just change your own life.

You change the rooms you walk into.

And sometimes, you build the room yourself.

That is power.

And if you have lived, lost, loved, rebuilt, shown up, or carried others with you along the way?

You are already a powerhouse.

You just needed reminding.



Photography by Jennifer Hilton

ELIZABETH MCQUILLAN

Elizabeth McQuillan is the founder of Flamingo Business and Flamingo Car Finance and is widely known as The Event Expert™. After leaving a fourteen-year teaching career, she built a multi-million-pound finance business during lockdown and went on to create one of the UK's most recognised women-led business event brands. Through strategic rooms, live experiences and meaningful connection, Elizabeth supports ambitious women to scale impact, visibility and commercial success without shrinking who they are. Her work centres on visibility, leadership, and the power of intentional rooms to change businesses and lives.

Instagram - @flamingobusiness_ | @flamingocarfinance

Remembering Your Fire Within

By Lisa-Marie Elkhadraou



“There comes a moment in almost every woman’s life when she looks in the mirror and doesn’t recognise who’s looking back.”

For me, that moment arrived quietly, several months after the birth of my first son. It wasn’t dramatic. No collapse. Just a single, honest second that cracked something open inside me. It wasn’t a breakdown. It was the beginning of a breakthrough.

It was around 3 a.m. The kind of quiet that hums through a house. My son had settled. My husband was asleep. The home felt warm and held. Everyone was taken care of, except me.

I shuffled down the hallway, the soft ache of my body reminding me I’d only just crossed the threshold into motherhood. My mind felt cotton-woolled. My eyes burned with exhaustion. I was a thousand tiny tasks on two legs.

I caught my reflection in the bathroom mirror without meaning to. Hair pulled back in a knot that felt like an apology. Eyes dulled by a fatigue I didn’t yet have words for.

“A woman who looked like she had been holding her breath for far too long.”

I whispered, *“Where did you go?”*

There were no tears. No cinematic moment. Just a quiet vacancy. Like opening the door to a familiar house and realising half the furniture is missing, but you can’t quite name what.

At the time, I was doing everything “right”. I had a growing business, clients I cared deeply about, a vision I believed in. I was learning how to be a

mother and running a company at the same time, living in a split screen. On one side, the nurturer. On the other, the founder. Both needed me. Both demanded me. And somewhere in trying to be everything, I misplaced myself.

“Motherhood didn’t break me. It initiated me. It stretched my heart into shapes I didn’t know were possible.”

It showed me a depth of love that expanded rather than divided. But alongside the beauty came something quieter and rarely spoken about. My sense of self began dissolving, not all at once, but fraction by fraction. One night feed. One nap time. One *“I’ll do it later.”*

By the time I looked up, I could do everything, but I couldn’t feel myself in any of it. I felt lost inside, like someone had put my fire out.

Years later, after building successful businesses and working closely with over a hundred women, particularly across the design and property world, I hear the same sentence whispered again and again, often with shame or quiet exhaustion:

“I feel like a failure. I’ve lost my fire.”

And every time, I see something else entirely.

I don’t see women who have failed.
I see women who are unrooted.

Women who want to stand tall like oak trees, grounded and expansive. Women carrying wisdom, care, and strength in equal measure. Women who have weathered storms: motherhood, business, loss, pressure, responsibility.



WHAT WOULD LISA DO?

They haven't been broken. They've been weathered.

When roots aren't tended, even the strongest tree begins to sway. Not because it lacks strength, but because it has been asked to hold too much for too long without nourishment.

This is what so many women are actually experiencing. Not a lack of confidence, but a loss of connection. A quiet drifting away from themselves.

In business, it shows up subtly. Things still work, but they no longer feel like home. Your voice softens. Your edges blur. Your energy drains faster than it used to. You keep going because you can, but something inside you is asking to be seen again.

Disconnection is not a dead end.
It's a doorway.

The night I stood in the bathroom didn't fix my life. It simply told the truth. And the truth was enough to begin again.

The return wasn't dramatic. It was devotional. Small choices, repeated gently. Creating space before opening my inbox. Saying no to what looked right on paper but felt wrong in my body. Letting go of roles, expectations, and versions of myself that no longer fit.

“Confidence doesn't return when you become someone new. It returns when you stop leaving yourself behind.”

If you're reading this and feeling something stir, let this be your permission to pause.

Here is the truth: your fire isn't gone. It's waiting, patient as dawn, for you to turn towards it.

So tonight, or tomorrow morning, when the house is quiet, meet your own gaze. Don't rush it. Don't overthink it. Just be there and ask:

Where have I been living from obligation instead of truth?

What part of me is ready to come back into the room?

Listen to the answer. Then say softly to yourself:

“I see myself again. I can do this. I am a super attractor to my desires. I remember my inner fire.”

This isn't an affirmation.
It's a remembering.

The morning after that mirror moment, I began a ritual. It felt awkward at first. But it saved me. Slowly, it became home.

I stood in front of the mirror, placed a hand on my heart, and looked into my own eyes. Not my tired skin. Not my hair. Just my eyes.

And I said

*“I see you.”
“You're still in there.”
“The fire is coming back.”*

Every day, I said it again. And little by little, I began to believe her. This woman in the mirror.

That's the doorway, and I invite you to step through.

If you feel called to do this work more deeply, to step away from the noise and return fully to yourself, from **18–21 May 2026** I am holding a four-day retreat in Ibiza called **Reset, Realign & Rise**. A space to reconnect, realign, and rise back into your identity personally and professionally. Not to fix anything, but to remember what was never lost.

Your fire is waiting.



Sarah Williams Photography

LISA-MARIE ELKHADRAOUI

Lisa-Marie Elkhadraoui is an entrepreneur, mentor, and founder working at the intersection of business strategy and soulful leadership. Having built and scaled multiple six- and seven-figure businesses across the interior design, property, and mentoring space, she now supports women to grow sustainable, profitable businesses without disconnecting from who they are becoming. Her work centres on clarity, confidence, and aligned decision-making, helping women remember and embody their inner fire.

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This Is My Body and It Goes Everywhere with Me

By Debbie Stevens



I can't leave it behind or tell it to go on ahead without me. It's permanently attached to my whole being. The funny thing is, I'm actually in charge of everything it does.

All I need to remember is to feed and water it, give it plenty of fresh air, dust it off, take it for a walk, love it unconditionally, and remember to breathe.

Scary thought, right?

I'm not the most confident person, but I'm stepping out of my comfort zone to share my story, and fingers crossed, I'm hoping to inspire you to be brave.

“This is my body and it goes everywhere with me.”

My Journey

Imagine you're a small child and your dad's in the Army, and every two years your family packs up all your belongings and moves to another town or country.

I was a quiet, shy child, and by my count, I went to about twelve different schools. I've probably been to every kind possible, infants, middle, primary, secondary, an all-girls school, and even a boarding school, for 42 days.

I was always the new kid on the block, having to catch up or sometimes repeat work. There are whole chunks of education I've completely missed out on.

At 15, we finally settled back in Worthing, West Sussex, and by that point I was completely “schooled out”. I was in another school uniform, all dressed in green, and didn't really have many career options to choose from. I was literally on

countdown to leave.

I remember leaving school on a Friday and starting work in a factory on Monday for £1 an hour, making big girls' pants for M&S. And you know what? I loved it.

I was part of a team, and I had to learn to sew at pace. Time, quality and quantity were my new best friends. The more we produced, the more we earned, and that teamwork felt amazing.

All of my life skills were starting to come together. I can make friends easily, I can earn my own money, and I know I can work on my own and as part of a team.

Reinvention

Fast forward. I'm 39, working part-time in a school, happily married with two young children, a loving husband and a dog. Everything was fine, but something was missing.

I'd lost my sense of me.

I needed a hobby, something for myself. I looked at the local colleges. I knew I didn't want to do cookery, pottery or flower arranging. I saw the reflexology course and remembered I'd had a taster session once and thought, that looks interesting.

Before I knew it, I'd enrolled in a reflexology course. All I needed was a notebook, pencil, a white tunic and myself.

It wasn't until I sat in that classroom that it suddenly hit me. What are you doing? You hated school. I quietened my thoughts and thought, what could possibly go wrong?

The tutor opened by explaining the course was equivalent to an NVQ or diploma and “not for a bored housewife looking for a hobby”. My brain

went into overdrive. What's an NVQ or diploma? I haven't even got a GCSE or any sciences. And how does she know I'm a bored housewife and need a hobby?

Then she asked us to stand up and say who we were and why we joined. One by one they stood up and said, "I'm a chiroprapist", "I'm a physiotherapist", "I'm an osteopath", and I want to add this onto my established business.

"My name is Debbie Stevens, and I'm that bored housewife. I'm here to learn a hobby."
Cue panic.

It was suddenly my turn to stand up. I felt sick. I wanted the floor to swallow me. I felt like that frightened little girl again, trying to fit in.

I'm not sure what happened next, but something sparked deep inside me. I took a deep breath, reached out to my frightened inner child, pulled

up my big girl pants, stood tall and said,

"My name is Debbie Stevens, and I'm that bored housewife. I'm here to learn a hobby."

That was it. My superpower was out. I felt like Wonder Woman in those big girl pants.

I completed the course and passed with 98%. I'm so used to failing, and I've never reached a mark like that, not even for talking.

On July 4th, I left my part-time job to follow my dream. I had my very own Independence Day. I've now been celebrating it for 21 years.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing

I live by the Five Ways to Wellbeing

Connect – Ask yourself how you're doing and engage with others.

Take Notice – Really listen to what's happening inside your body and around you.

Be Active – You don't have to get hot and sweaty





Claire Bond (A.K.A Bondy)
Photography By Bond

to be active. Just keep showing up and taking part.

Keep Learning – Trying something new can be really good fun. Did you know massaging the tops of your fingers can help stimulate blood flow to your brain?

Give – Give yourself a break and choose kindness.

Wellbeing is for every body, any age, any gender, any culture.

Today

I run an established wellbeing events business delivering:

Workplace wellbeing days

School wellbeing sessions for teachers and pupils

Women's pamper days, girls' nights and retreats
Workshops that remind people how to rest, reconnect and recharge.

Life has a funny way of testing how much we're willing to grow, but it also rewards us when we take that first brave step. No matter where you are on your journey, it's never too late to rediscover yourself, to start again, or to choose a little more kindness each day.

These simple yet powerful steps have guided me, and I hope they'll inspire you too.

My biggest lesson? You can do it alone, but it's much more fun when you work as a team.



Claire Bond (A.K.A Bondy)
Photography By Bond

DEBBIE STEVENS

Debbie Stevens is living proof that it's not too late to rewrite your story. Once a busy mum who felt stuck and unfulfilled, she chose her own Independence day - the moment she walked away from the safe and familiar, to follow her passion for wellbeing. With no qualification, just courage and determination, Debbie built a business that transforms lives through reflexology, wellbeing workshops and community projects in schools. Her mission is simple, but powerful: to inspire women to believe in themselves, to put their wellbeing first, and to know that they already have everything it takes to create the life they dream of.

Walk Your Way to Confidence

The Science of Movement for Women Everywhere

Award winning practitioner Victoria Jahkeline Salomon reveals why mastering your gait is the ultimate act of self love and the key to resilience and confidence for women worldwide.

On International Women's Day, we celebrate strength, resilience, and the ability to rise above adversity. For me, these qualities are not abstract concepts. They are lived experiences. My journey began in the shadow of trauma, navigating a childhood marked by profound loss and tragedy. Those early years taught me something vital. The traditional medical and psychotherapy systems often fall short in helping us truly inhabit our bodies and reclaim our lives.

"Healing isn't just about thinking differently. It's about moving differently."

I discovered that healing is not just about talking or thinking differently. It's about moving differently. Today, as an award winning practitioner who trains people across the globe, I teach women how to harness the incredible power of their bodies to transform their minds, their confidence, and their lives.

From Trauma to Transformation

In the 1990s, I found myself on my knees in India, searching for answers beyond conventional medicine. That moment was the turning point. I immersed myself in alternative therapies, 12 step recovery programs, and the science of the body.

What I learned changed everything.

"Every pathology has a posture. And every personality has a pattern."

Our bodies tell the story of our minds. Chronic pain and mobility issues often mirror thought patterns and behaviours. You can see it in the way someone walks.



Their gait reveals whether they are a perfectionist, a helper, an achiever, or someone gripped by anxiety. But here's the good news. Just as these patterns show up in our movement, they can be changed through movement.

The Secret to Confidence Lies in Your Bones

If you want to shortcut the process of changing your mindset, start by transforming the way you move. Learn the mechanics of your bones and joints, and you'll unlock a new way of thinking. Your bones are the strongest part of your body. They will outlive your beating heart and your thinking mind. They are your internal scaffolding, the foundation of resilience and sustainability.

"Your bones are the strongest part of your body. They will outlive your beating heart and your thinking mind."

Walking is the most important movement your body performs. It's not just exercise. It's the blueprint for how every system in your body functions. When your gait is aligned, your body becomes a generator of energy rather than a consumer of it. This alignment doesn't just change your posture. It rewires your autonomic nervous system, alters your biochemistry, and creates a sense of ease and joy that radiates into every area of your life.

Why Women Need This Now

Women today juggle careers, families, and countless responsibilities. We strive to achieve, often pushing ourselves beyond our limits. But what if confidence didn't come from trying harder? What if it came from feeling grounded, powerful, and supported by your own body?

"Confidence doesn't come from trying harder. It comes from feeling grounded and supported by

your own body."

Learning correct alignment and gait is the ultimate act of self love. It's about connecting to your bones, understanding their relationship with gravity, and stacking your body so it works with you, not against you. This isn't about yoga, Pilates, or gym workouts, though those have their place. It's about mastering the foundational movement that influences everything else. Walking.

Seven Weeks to a New You

Through my global training programmes, I teach women how to reframe their bodies in just seven weeks. This process neutralises extreme behaviours, reduces chronic pain, and restores mobility. More importantly, it reprogrammes your nervous system so you feel calm, confident, and in control.

"When you align your body, you align your life."

Instead of striving and struggling, you begin to experience flow. Your relationships improve, your energy increases, and your external world starts to reflect the harmony you feel inside.

This International Women's Day, I invite you to take the most powerful step you'll ever take. Literally. Learn how to put one foot in front of the other with precision and purpose. Discover the strength of your bones, the elegance of your gait, and the confidence that comes from moving through life with alignment and grace.

"Your body is the most precious thing you own. Treat it as the incredible vehicle it is."

When you learn to steer it correctly, you don't just walk. You soar.



VICTORIA JAHKELINE

Founder and Creator of The Ixchel System

Victoria Jahkeline Salomon is the founder and creator of The Ixchel System, a pioneering methodology that realigns the body through bone and joint alignment to address chronic pain, emotional patterns, and long term wellbeing. With over 25 years specialising in bodywork and biomechanics, Victoria combines movement, posture, personality traits, and emotional awareness in an accessible, transformative approach. She is the author of the bestselling *Get Into Your Body* and an award winning educator, teaching and training practitioners internationally through a global Ixchel System community.

Unruled: What Building a Business Around Motherhood Taught Me About Power

By Samantha Hearne

For years, I believed success required availability. Not just competence or results, but constant presence, quick replies, flexible boundaries, uninterrupted attention. I thought being taken seriously in business meant being perpetually “on”.

That belief followed me quietly as I built my company, shaped by a lifetime of people pleasing and the early understanding that stability could disappear without warning. Growing up, I learned to anticipate others’ needs, and over functioning became a default mode. Ambition, I thought, meant proving yourself relentlessly.

Even then, something in me resisted the traditional blueprint. I didn’t quit my teaching career the moment my business began to thrive. I stayed for nearly two years, leading Year 13 and supporting 200 eighteen year olds while gradually growing my company. I experimented with reducing my hours, carving out Fridays off, and taking the final week of every month away from work, long before motherhood forced the issue. I was asking myself: why must success always come at the cost of exhaustion?

Then IVF arrived, and every uncertainty was magnified. Fertility treatment has a way of amplifying fear. The unknown stretches across your body, your calendar, and your sense of self. In my mind, I heard a familiar voice: this will cost you, in time, in momentum, in credibility.

As a self employed woman, there was no maternity leave, no sick pay, no backup if I had to step away. Would my clients tolerate

motherhood? Would they drift toward someone “more available”? The pressure to maintain an idealised professional persona was enormous.

Society sends a quiet, persistent message: you can have a meaningful career, or you can raise a family. Expecting both is greedy or naïve. But what if the rule itself is broken?

When my daughter was born, the anticipated fracture never arrived. Instead of division, I felt clarity. My priorities sharpened. My focus intensified. My working week shrank dramatically. I worked roughly one and a half days a week for her first 20 months. One and a half. On paper, it seemed impossible. In practice, it reshaped everything.

So what does one and a half days a week actually look like? I divided my work into highly focused blocks. Mondays were for strategy and client coaching, high impact one to one sessions that required focus but could be contained within a set window.



Wednesdays were devoted to content creation, planning, and essential administrative tasks. I batch wrote emails, scheduled calls weeks in advance, and automated as much as possible. Every task was evaluated: does this move the needle? Anything that didn't go away.

I learned to communicate boundaries upfront. Clients knew I was only available at specific times. I gave them clear expectations about response windows and delivery timelines. And here's the surprising part: it worked. Instead of clients leaving because I wasn't always on, the right ones stayed, and new clients who aligned with my values found me. They respected my time because they respected their own.

This new schedule also required a daily rhythm at home. Morning routines were sacred: breakfast, playtime, and reading before my work blocks began. Afternoons and evenings were devoted entirely to family. No checking emails in the background, no sneaky tasks while my daughter napped. I learned to be fully present in every moment, at work and at home.

A turning point came when my daughter caught a highly contagious childhood virus. Days blurred into sleepless nights, constant cuddling, and juggling medicine with a packed work schedule. My instinct was to apologise, overcompensate, and push through. Instead, I communicated honestly with clients, explaining that I would be less available for a short period. The response was overwhelming: empathy, understanding, and shared experiences of parenting challenges. No frustration, no judgement, just humanity.

That moment crystallised a truth I had long suspected: the business I had built was no longer sustained by overextension. It was sustained by alignment. Working fewer hours didn't reduce productivity. It concentrated it. Constraints forced decisions, cut indecision, and made me ruthless in prioritising what actually moved the needle.

Motherhood didn't dilute ambition. It disciplined it. It taught me to value my time as the rare, finite resource it is. To lead from intention, not exhaustion. To refuse the notion that success requires sacrifice at every turn. And the benefits didn't stop at my business. They permeated my life: calmer mornings, clearer priorities, and a relationship with my daughter that was fully present rather than fragmented by guilt and distraction.

Over time, I experimented further with my schedule. I learned that some weeks required flexibility, switching a day here or there if needed, sometimes squeezing in a short call during nap time. But the key was always planning, batching, and protecting the majority of my week for what mattered most. The result is a sustainable rhythm that allows me to be both fully present for my daughter and fully engaged in my business.

I want my daughter to grow up understanding that real power doesn't require self erasure. That ambition can coexist with presence. Those boundaries aren't barriers, they're foundations.

If I could speak to the woman I was before IVF, before motherhood, I'd tell her this: fear isn't a warning, it's an invitation. An invitation to stop measuring yourself against rules that were never designed for you. Motherhood didn't disrupt my business. It dismantled the myths holding it back.

Today, my work life balance is intentionally structured but flexible. I have a thriving business, meaningful client relationships, and time to nurture my family. Each week is designed around life, not around unrealistic external expectations.

What emerged from this journey is sturdier, more intentional, and more sustainable: a business shaped around a life, not the other way around. Unruled, not because it rejects structure, but because it refuses to obey expectations that no longer serve.

And that, I've learned, is where real power lives.



Photography by Bry Penney

SAMANTHA HEARNE

Teacher, Coach and Business Mentor

Samantha is a qualified teacher, coach and mentor specialising in supporting women to break into their next financial level through her trademarked frameworks, the Activation Triangle and the SCALE Business Method. A bestselling author and public speaker, she supports women in business to build sustainable wealth, helping £250k a year become the new baseline while creating businesses that support life, not consume it.

AI Didn't Find Your Brand Voice. It Flattened It.

By Fiona O'Sullivan



There's a moment most of us have had recently, usually somewhere between a coffee going cold and a thumb hovering mid-scroll, where it all starts to blur. Not because the content is bad, but because it's oddly interchangeable. Different brands, different founders, different promises, all delivered with the same polish and neutral tone. This is the strange paradox of the internet right now. We have more access to ideas, tools, and platforms than ever before. It is liberating, expansive, fertile ground for tenacious female founders like us. Yet the language shaping our businesses has never felt more uniform and, ironically, it's flattening rather than elevating brand potential. Everything sounds competent. Everything sounds professional. And in this sea of sameness, very little sounds like the voice of a real woman, with real lived experience, perspective, and something specific to say.

So, at what point did 'on brand' become bland?

Whenever the conversation turns to AI, the focus is almost always on speed. On how much faster we can move, how much easier it is to stay visible, how efficiently we can produce content without burning out. What we're far less comfortable talking about is what happens to creativity, authority, and identity when language is generated faster than it's considered.

I'm not an AI puritan. I'm more than happy to take the gains when it comes to time, efficiency, and system-building. But when it comes to brand voice, a more considered approach is essential. Use AI as a co-pilot to help you navigate blank page syndrome, or at the very end to tighten for accuracy and concision. That space in the middle, the thinking, the substance, the depth of what you're

actually saying, needs to be yours. If that depth is outsourced to ChatGPT, what's left isn't a voice at all.

AI hasn't stolen anyone's brand voice. What it has done is reveal how many founders were already communicating on autopilot. When speed becomes the priority, discernment quietly steps aside. Language becomes technically correct and polished, but emotionally hollow. It does its job, fills the space, and moves on without leaving an impression. And for a while, that feels fine. Until it doesn't.

The women who feel this most acutely are often the ones doing the most meaningful work. They've built businesses with depth and substance that add real value. They carry authority naturally in conversation, in rooms, in the way they make decisions. Yet when they look at their own websites or read their content back, there's a disconnect they can't quite ignore. The words don't hold the same weight they bring into a room. Their energy has been lost in translation and the message sounds polite where it should feel compelling.

So they edit. They refine. They rewrite again. They brief their team. They run their thinking through tools designed to help articulate what feels just out of reach. What comes back is coherent and rarely wrong. But it's also oddly generic. A beige version of something that was once sharper. Ok to publish, but not strong enough to lead. What often goes unspoken is how premium clients respond to this kind of language.

They don't opt out loudly. They don't question your credentials or ask for reassurance. They simply don't move. These women are intuitive and emotionally fluent. They are not looking to be convinced. They are looking to recognise themselves in the presence of someone who knows exactly who they are, what they stand for, and why their work matters. When that clarity is missing, even subtly, hesitation creeps in.

This is where storytelling becomes something far more serious than a stylistic choice. At this level, storytelling is not about anecdotes or clever hooks. It's about narrative authority. It's the ability to articulate the thinking behind the work with enough clarity and confidence that trust is built before a conversation ever begins. When storytelling is done properly, it carries the energy of conversion and shows up across platforms, teams, and moments of visibility without constant revision.

The women who will build the next era of premium brands will be doing more than consistent mediocrity dressed up as visibility. They'll be the most intentional. The ones who slow down long enough to decide what they actually want to say before deciding how often they say it. They'll understand that radical authenticity outperforms consistency, that meaning carries further than momentum, and that a brand voice is not decoration, but business IP.

Because 'on brand', at its best, was never meant to be a performance or a template. It was meant to be an invitation into a world. A way of being recognised before you were explained. A shorthand for trust, authority, and intent. When your words are truly yours, they don't need constant polishing. They do the work quietly, confidently, and consistently, even when you're not in the room.

This is the space The Write Field Brand Voice Boutique was created for. Not to generate more content, but to reclaim clarity through brand voice strategy. To help women with real depth behind their work articulate a voice that reflects their authority, carries their thinking, and stands apart. A brand that doesn't wait to be chosen.

Because the goal is never to sound like everyone else.

It's to sound like yourself, at your highest level.



Anneli Marinovich Photography

FIONA O'SULLIVAN

Fiona O'Sullivan is a brand voice and storytelling strategist and the founder of **The Write Field Brand Voice Boutique**. She helps visionary founders craft authentic, high-impact messaging that builds authority, attracts aligned opportunities, and drives sustainable growth. With over 20 years' experience in leadership, coaching, and copywriting, Fiona is known for her strategic clarity, creative precision, and people-first approach.

Hopefull Handbags and WE Believe Are Redefining Empowerment

By Aisling Louise Owens Nash

When business and purpose meet, confidence isn't just found, it's rediscovered and rebuilt.

What if confidence wasn't something you searched for in the mirror, but something you built, one choice at a time?

At the heart of **WE Believe: Scale Without the Spiral**, taking place this February at Dublin's iconic Croke Park, one partnership stands as proof that confidence and community can rebuild more than a business. They can rebuild lives.

That partnership is with **Hopefull Handbags Global**, a non-profit dedicated to empowering survivors of domestic abuse to reclaim independence and rebuild sustainable, joy-filled futures.

As Executive Director of Hopefull Handbags Global and President of Hopefull Handbags Ireland, I've witnessed first-hand the transformative power of combining compassion with action. When women are given the tools, resources, and belief they need, they don't just recover, they rise.

When attendees walk through the doors of WE Believe, they're not just attending another business event. They're entering a space that believes in



whole growth, financially, emotionally, and socially.

This year's theme, **Scale Without the Spiral**, invites entrepreneurs to redefine success. Not as more hustle, but as expansion with harmony. Every speaker, story, and session is designed to remind us that growth doesn't have to come at the cost of wellbeing.

“When women are given the tools, resources, and belief they need, they don't just recover, they rise.”

And that's where Hopefull Handbags shines.

Born from compassion and courage, the organisation fills donated handbags with essentials and handwritten notes of hope for women and children rebuilding their lives after abuse. But the mission doesn't stop at survival. It's about restoration. Through coaching, resources, and global collaboration, Hopefull Handbags supports survivors in creating empowered, sustainable futures.

Our partnership with WE Believe bridges two worlds: business and social impact. When attendees contribute, through donations, sponsorships, or volunteering, they're not just giving money or time. They're investing in confidence, courage, and community. They're saying yes to a ripple of hope that begins in the room and extends far beyond it.

Real leadership doesn't just happen on stage. It happens when we rise ourselves and then lift others with us.

At WE Believe, we gather not to compete, but to collaborate. We exchange stories of resilience, lessons in leadership, and strategies for scaling businesses that serve both profit and purpose. Together, we create a shared reminder: when women rise, we all rise.

So maybe confidence isn't something we find. Maybe it's something we choose, again and again. In how we show up. In how we lead. In how we love.

If you're reading this and wondering where to start, here is your invitation:

Support Hopefull Handbags Global. Donate a bag. Sponsor a project. Share the story. Join the movement. Attend **WE Believe: Scale Without the Spiral** this February and experience transformation through connection.

Ask yourself: *Where can I lead with more compassion, in my business, my home, or my community?*

WE Believe is more than an event. It's a movement that invites every woman to arrive as she is and leave with more than she imagined possible.

When we scale with purpose, we don't spiral. We soar.



Photography by Sanda Semeika

AISLING OWENS NASH

Aisling Louise Owens Nash is the Executive Director of Hopefull Handbags Global and President of Hopefull Handbags Ireland. She is also the creator of the WE Believe event series, supporting women in business to lower stress, strengthen systems, and scale with purpose, compassion, and community at the centre.

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I Thought I Had to Earn My Worth

By Taylor Smith

I spent most of my life believing I had to earn my place, my worth and my confidence, and it nearly broke me.

I grew up in poverty, raised by a single mum with three kids, doing the absolute best she could. To me, she was and still is superwoman. She held everything together with grit, humour and love. But even with that love, I learned early that nothing would be handed to me. If I wanted more, I'd have to work for it.

So I did.

I worked hard at school, hard in my career, hard in life. But no matter how much I achieved, there was always this quiet feeling underneath it all. That I'm not quite good enough. If I just pushed a bit more, proved myself a bit harder, maybe then I'd finally feel worthy.

That belief followed me everywhere. Even into a relationship that slowly became controlling and violent. I stayed longer than I should have, but when I finally left, I didn't feel brave. I felt broken and ashamed. It almost felt like something in me must have been wrong to allow it in the first place.

But again, I did what I'd always done. I pushed on.

I buried myself in work and ended up building an amazing career. Finance Director of three companies, I helped grow one to £400 million in sales. I was trusted, respected and successful by every external measure.

And still, that feeling lingered.

So then I started my own business, and I lost my baby.



That loss cracked something open in me. I didn't just grieve my baby, I grieved the version of me who believed that if you do everything "right", life will work out just like you planned. I felt like a failure all over again, and I felt like I had let my baby down.

To put it bluntly, I felt like shit.

And this is going to sound cliché, but in the midst of my whole world crumbling, at least that's what it felt like, I stumbled across a webinar. Nothing dramatic, just one moment where a well known guru spoke about looking inward instead of constantly trying to prove outwardly. Something in me rolled its eyes, and something else quietly listened.

Because deep, deep down, there was the tiniest flicker of light. A tiny voice.

It didn't say *"you've got this"* or *"don't worry, everything is going to be okay"*.

It said, *"just keep going"*.

So I did. One step at a time.

And it's only when I started really taking the time to look inwards that a shift happened for me.

I realised I had spent my whole life believing my worth was something I had to earn, whether that was through suffering, success or survival. That if I just worked harder, endured more, achieved bigger things, I'd finally start feeling like I was enough.

But that belief, that confidence, didn't come from doing more.

It came from remembering who I was before the world taught me to doubt her.

I wasn't broken, behind or failing.

I was rebuilding. I was shedding layers that no longer fit.

Now, here's the part I really want you to hear.

Maybe you are in a low season right now. And if you are, please give yourself lots of love, go gently and keep going, my lovely.

Or maybe you're not in a low season.

Maybe your life looks fine on the outside. Maybe things are working. Maybe you're stable and successful.

And yet, something in you is restless. That quiet knowing that there's more for you.

If that's you, let me say this clearly and unapologetically. Bloody go for it.

Stop waiting for permission. Stop dimming your desire because it feels inconvenient or scary. Stop telling yourself you should be grateful for what you already have.

You're allowed to want more and honour where you are. And you're allowed to give this next chapter everything you have.

Today, I want you to ask yourself this. If I fully trusted myself, what would I move towards instead of talking myself out of it?

Notice what shifts when you stop shrinking the vision to match your comfort and start expanding your courage to meet it.

You don't need to have it all figured out or to feel ready.

You just need to listen to that inner pull and take one step at a time.

Because whether you're rebuilding or reaching higher, that tiny light inside you is not accidental.

You are here because you are meant for something big. Not someday. Not when you're ready. Now.

This is the moment you decide to rise, claim it, and go all in on who you already are.



TAYLOR SMITH

Strategic Profit Consultant

Taylor Smith is a strategic profit consultant supporting ambitious coaches and consultants to build predictable, sustainable businesses while working less. Through her work, she helps women simplify their strategy, strengthen their confidence and turn hard work into scalable profit. Taylor's approach combines practical systems with deep belief in women's innate power, supporting them to build businesses and lives that feel aligned, expansive and fulfilling.

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Imagine Living in a World Where Mums Are Encouraged to Be Ambitious

By Hayley Keeber



Imagine living in a world where mums are encouraged to be ambitious. To live a life of purpose, outside of being 'just a mum'. Now imagine women were taught to have successful businesses but with a lifestyle first approach, rather than hustle and sacrifice every hour of the day.

When I became a mum at 22 and a single mum at 23, everyone around me had an opinion.

"You have ruined your life."

"You're always going to struggle."

"What if no one wants to take on a woman and child?"

At no point did anyone say, *"This is going to be the most epic journey."*

No encouragement, just negative beliefs passed down through generations of society's expectations.

Looking back now, I can't blame them, because it's what they have been told.

Well, I've never been one to follow the rules.

My response was simple. Let me show you how it's done.

Over the next few years, I held down a 60 plus hour a week job in recruitment, paying a mortgage, nursery fees, bills and everything else that comes with everyday expenses.

Sure, I got praise for it, but I knew something was missing.

Time.

I was constantly sacrificing time with my daughter because I felt like I had to prove I wasn't a failure.

I was earning great money, but none of that meant anything because I missed all the major milestones, her first word, her first steps. And the guilt was eating me up.

That all changed when I was asked to stay late one day by my employer. I worked an extra five hours unpaid. The next day was my daughter's sports day. I asked to leave 30 minutes early so I could attend it, and the

answer was no. I had to take it as holiday.

That was the wake up call I needed.

I knew life didn't need to be this way.

So I went on a journey to discover what I actually wanted to do.

During that time, I met my now husband, got married, suffered an ectopic pregnancy and experienced three years of infertility.

So when I finally had my little boy in 2021, I knew I wasn't going to repeat the same mistakes.

That took me on my journey to now.

I know society isn't set up to support and encourage ambitious mums. It's built to keep her playing small. But I also know, because I'm living proof, that women can be amazing mothers and exceptional business owners without having to miss the major milestones. I've done it. Not just for me, but for my clients too.

The truth is, mums make the most amazing business owners. Your children are your biggest driving force. To show them what's possible in a world that can sometimes feel like only those who tick all the boxes succeed.

But too often it can feel like a barrier to entry, because women are taught that in order to be successful you have to work 100 hour weeks, sacrifice every family gathering and show up on social media every second of the day.

So you start the business, you get amazing clients, and then you start to resent it. Not because you're not great at what you do, but because it isn't set up to support your lifestyle first in a simple way.

That's the game changer.

Ask yourself this. Have you ever felt like being a mum has held you back from building your business?

If the answer is yes, then I want you to know, you get to have it all. Not either or, only and.

You're THAT Mum.



HAYLEY KEEBER

Business Simplification Strategist and Founder of She's THAT Mum

Hayley Keeber is a business simplification strategist and the founder of the She's THAT Mum movement. After leaving a demanding recruitment career, she built a six figure business while raising young children, proving that women do not have to choose between motherhood and success. Hayley supports ambitious mums to simplify their strategy, systemise their businesses and build scalable, lifestyle first success rooted in presence, impact and legacy.

Dear Louise

I am writing to you from your future self. A strong woman with an inner child, you. Innocent yet knowing. Humble and confident. Creative and funny.

Forget any worries you have right now because they will not mean anything in the future.

I want you to see that you are so beautiful, so kind, so caring. Everyone you meet through life will be touched by your presence.

You give out an amazing warmth. You are competent, clever and precious.

There may be people who try to put you down, belittle you, make fun of you. Remember this. They are people who are hurting and don't know how to respond to an angel like you. Don't forget that people who are hurt, hurt others. You can rise above this and keep your steady course.

Follow your intuition. You know this. You are wise. You will see through life that some choices are hard, some are easy. You can see that some choices are made in haste. Take a breath. Pause. Get quiet and listen for a softer, kind voice that will nudge you in the right direction.

Don't listen to those thoughts that give you unkind words. About your looks, your weight, your intellect, your abilities. Those thoughts are just trying to protect you, but they are like old records playing old songs. They are keeping you stuck. Ignore them and they will slowly disappear.

Live from a place of love, fun, kindness, creativity, confidence and abundance. You are innate health. You come from the Universe and you are one with everything. Notice the coincidences, synchronicities, opportunities and invitations to create more abundance. You come from love, goodness and wonder. Let your imagination soar. Believe you are worthy and blessed.

I want to thank you for being you. I have arrived in the future with amazing experiences, opportunities and a love for nature and people. Because of you. One hundred per cent you have shaped me.

I am so proud of you. You have touched so many people's lives for the better. You have held space for so many people with your grace and patience. You are truly loved by those with you now, and those who are yet to come.

Take these words and go boldly into your life. You can never be broken or lost. Look within to that quiet space between the thoughts. I will meet you there.

With love,
Louise

Louise Cavell

Coach and Space Holder

Louise Cavell is a coach supporting individuals to reconnect with their inner wisdom, self compassion and intuitive guidance. Through her work, she creates gentle, reflective spaces that help people quiet the noise of self doubt and return to a deeper sense of trust, clarity and inner peace. Her approach is rooted in presence, kindness and the belief that no one is broken, only remembering who they are.

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What I Wish My Younger Self Had Been Told

By Lara Bowen



My grandparents kept a framed copy of *Desiderata* in their downstairs loo. It was impossible to avoid. I read it so often I memorised it long before I truly understood its wisdom. It became my North Star - a lesson, long before life tested me, that gentleness, courage, and perspective matter.

If I could sit beside my younger self, I would underline the guidance of this text with these notes from our life experience:

There is no single right way. No tidy blueprint. No perfect path. Your life won't be one epic painting but a tapestry, a collage, a photo album of stories - luminous, unfinished, sometimes messy, sometimes radiant. All of them will matter. Some will end abruptly. Some will change you forever. None will be wasted. Treat each moment with quiet attention, and let the small, steady choices shape your journey - *"go placidly amid the noise and haste."*

You will reinvent yourself more times than you expect. Don't cling to a version of yourself just because you invested time in her. Beginning again is not a collapse. It is courage. We are not mayflies - here and gone in an instant. We are creatures of seasons, shedding skins, returning in new forms. Expect reinvention, and meet each version of yourself with kindness.

Confidence will not arrive like lightning. It grows because you act, because you speak while shaking, because you say yes before you feel ready. Courage isn't the absence of fear - it's movement despite it. You are stronger than you know, but be gentle with yourself along the way.

When people hurt you, because they will, pause before you make their behaviour about you. Most of the time, they are not acting to you, but from themselves. You get to choose whether you carry it, or set it down and walk forward unburdened. This is a life-long lesson.

Remember this: you do not stand alone. You carry the women who came before you - ancestors, mothers, grandmothers, the quiet builders and bold rebels. Their courage lives in your body. You are their continuation and evolution. Embrace this reality.

Build your castle. Trust your instincts - your gut often knows before logic catches up. Stay awake to synchronicity. When the world offers a 'what a coincidence' moment, recognise it for what it is: a sign you are walking your right path and that "the Universe is unfolding as it should."

But most importantly: "With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy."
— Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata* (1927)

Lara Bowen

Lara Bowen is a contemporary painter based in Brighton & Hove, known for vibrant, semi-abstract floral works exploring memory, light, and emotion. A multidisciplinary artist and gallery founder, she exhibits widely across the UK and is completing an MFA at Brighton University.

Some Wisdom Learned

by Pamela Kingsland

You are the storyteller of your life, with the power to change your reality.

Across my 40 years as a businesswoman, including 25 years as a Registered Psychologist and Master Executive Coach, I've had the privilege of coaching thousands of individuals on their unique life journeys. Through this work, one lesson has stood out above all others: the extraordinary power of language.

Since humans first began to use words, language has had the ability to enchant us or wound us. Words are never just descriptors; they carry emotional weight shaped by our personal histories. Take the word home. For some it evokes comfort, for others it carries pain. The same word, two entirely different emotional realities.

A second lesson is that our 'reality' isn't fixed or universal. It is a personal mirage shaped by the stories we tell ourselves and the language we use to describe who we are, the people around us, and the events we experience. The words we choose create a mental 'frame' that influences not only how we see ourselves but how we interpret the world.

"Words create worlds."

If we describe ourselves as unworthy, unconfident, or incapable, we begin to live as if those descriptions are true. Our internal narrative becomes a self fulfilling prophecy.

The good news is this. You are the storyteller of your life. With that realisation comes power and agency. Through reframing, consciously challenging and reshaping the stories you tell yourself, you can change your reality. You can choose language that lifts you, steadies you, and nourishes you.

Reframing takes practice, and it can be especially powerful when supported by a coach or therapist. But once learned, it becomes a lifelong tool. I use it every day, noticing the stories I'm telling myself and asking:

Is this story kind?
Is it helpful?
Is it measured?
Is there another way to see this?

A simple example. Instead of *"I failed"*, a reframed version might be *"I learned something important that will help me next time"*. The event hasn't changed, but the meaning has, and so does your emotional response.

Understanding that reality is constructed, and that you have the ability to shape your own story, is one of the most empowering wisdoms I can offer. It opens the door to change, recovery, and possibility.

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response."
Viktor E. Frankl

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." Wayne Dyer

Pamela Kingsland

Registered Psychologist and Master Executive Coach

Pamela Kingsland is a Registered Psychologist and Master Executive Coach with over 25 years of experience supporting individuals and leaders to reshape their internal narratives and create meaningful change. Her work centres on the power of language, reframing and personal agency as foundations for confidence, resilience and wellbeing.

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How to Rewire Your Second Act

by Alison Cork

My message to all midlife women is this. There is no beginning, middle or end to fulfilling your true potential.

Midlife can bring many challenges of self doubt, change, lack of confidence and sense of loss, especially for women.

But in truth, these challenges are simply a continuum of our ongoing journey of self improvement, albeit one we need to respond to in midlife with a different set of solutions.

What I discovered only well into my 50s is that it is never too late to make a change, and that your health is the number one key driver to all the other things you might wish for yourself, a sense of joy, calm, energy for life, good relationships with friends and family, fulfilment of ambition, the list goes on.

Good health is a privilege, not a given, and we must earn it. So my message would be to prioritise your food, movement, sleep and sense of purpose, all key drivers of a strong mindset and body.

It took me a long time properly to appreciate this, but the minute I did, life opened up opportunities I could only have dreamed of, a new book, a new career in wellness, a new business launch and the knowledge that there is so so much more to come.

Own your wellbeing and you own your future.

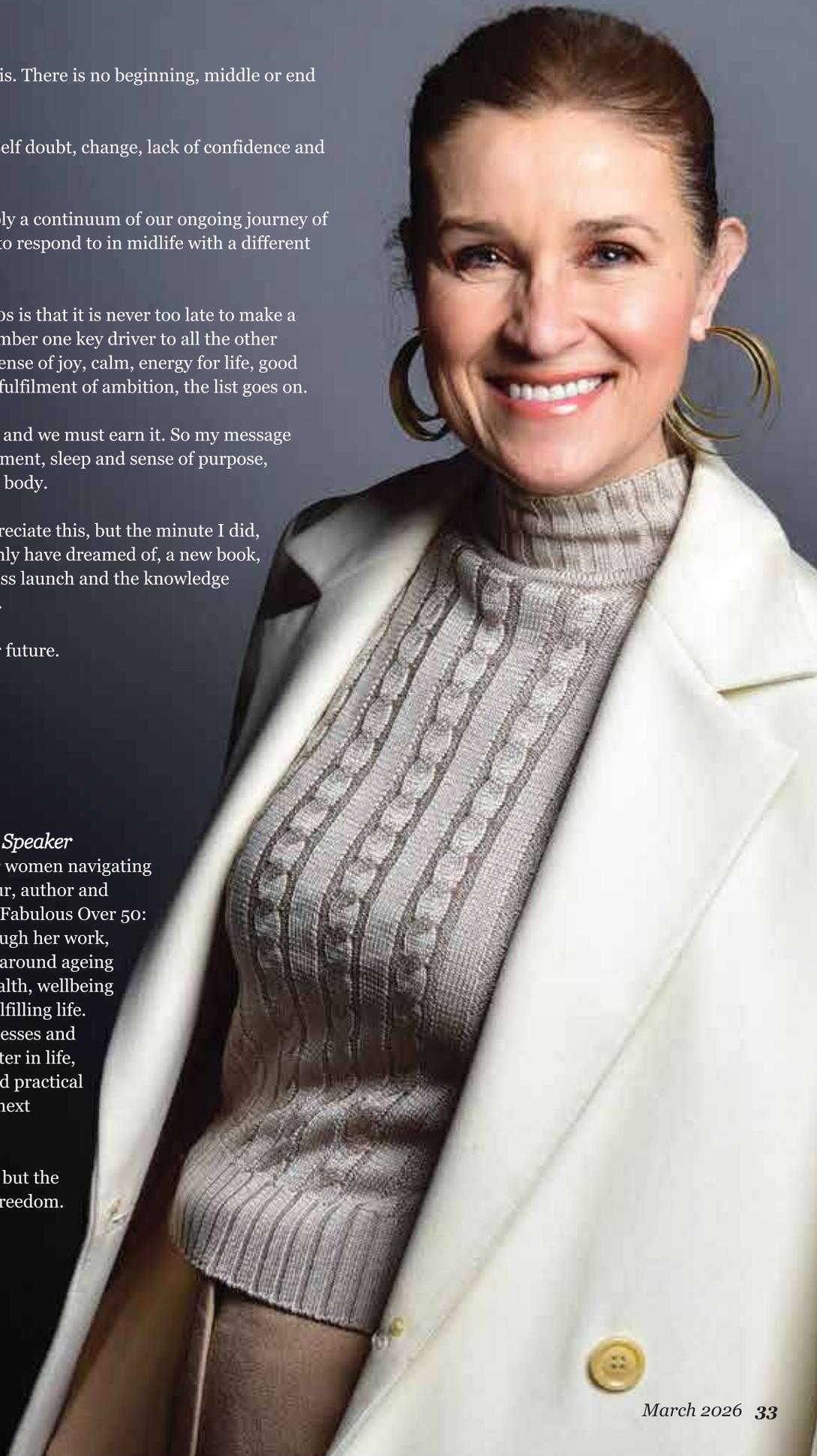
Alison Cork MBE

Author, Wellness Entrepreneur and Speaker

Alison Cork MBE is a leading voice for women navigating reinvention in midlife. An entrepreneur, author and broadcaster, she is the author of *Fit & Fabulous Over 50: How to Rewire Your Second Act*. Through her work, Alison challenges outdated narratives around ageing and empowers women to prioritise health, wellbeing and purpose as the foundation for a fulfilling life. Having built multiple successful businesses and transitioned into the wellness space later in life, she brings lived experience, insight and practical wisdom to women ready to own their next chapter.

She believes wellbeing is not optional, but the gateway to long term confidence and freedom.

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“The true marker of a civilised society is how we care for our most vulnerable.”

By Kirsty Lawton

My name is Kirsty Lawton. I studied at Brighton and Sussex Medical School and, after fourteen years as a resident doctor, including working on the frontline during the Covid-19 pandemic while raising two beautiful children, I qualified as a consultant physician in geriatric medicine. I love my work as an NHS consultant in an acute trust. I believe that the true marker of a civilised society is how we care for our most vulnerable, and this belief is the North Star that guides my work.

After the pandemic, I trained as a yoga teacher. This journey taught me invaluable tools for listening to my body and, through yoga, meditation, and breathwork, I was able to navigate and overcome significant personal challenges.

I am deeply fascinated by the human experience, the mind, body, and soul, and what it truly takes to heal and live life in its most authentic expression. I have learned the importance of caring deeply, but also of caring wisely.

What I would tell my younger self is this: do not abandon yourself. Growth and evolution are essential and often painful, but always worth it. Love should never cost you your peace or your mental health. Shoot for the moon and even if you miss, you will end up amongst the stars.

Be confident without arrogance, kind without sacrificing your boundaries, and loving without losing yourself. Give yourself permission to choose yourself and protect your peace fiercely. Let go. Let others be who they are, and allow yourself to shine through disappointment with self-respect intact. Be kind, be wise, and be awake. Trust the process of unfolding. Listen to the inner voice that exists to protect you. Ask the universe for support, and it will come.

Kirsty Lawton

Kirsty Lawton is a consultant physician in geriatric medicine working within the NHS. With over fourteen years' experience as a doctor, including frontline work during the Covid-19 pandemic, her approach is guided by compassion, integrity and a deep belief in caring wisely as well as deeply. Alongside medicine, Kirsty is a trained yoga teacher and integrates yoga, meditation and breathwork into her own life and understanding of wellbeing, believing true confidence begins with self-trust, boundaries and inner listening.

I started my own company at 42, and it was the first time in my life I felt real clarity about who I was and what I stood for.

Until then, like many women, my life had been shaped by responsibility. I had raised two daughters, mostly as a single parent. I had given my energy, time and care to others for years, without ever really stopping to ask myself what mattered to me, what I believed in, or how I wanted to show up in the world. I knew I valued ethics, justice and fairness, but those values had never quite had a place to be expressed.

When I finally paused and listened, the answer surprised me with its simplicity. I wanted to live an ethical life. One where people were treated with dignity, where the planet was respected, and where exploitation had no place. I also happened to love chocolate. So I built a business where purpose and joy came together.

I created a chocolate brand for women, rooted in high quality cacao ingredients and healthier chocolate, sourced directly and ethically from small scale farmers in Ecuador and Peru. That search for purpose took me further than I could have imagined. I travelled through Latin America with my father, met farming cooperatives, and made chocolate the traditional way in the Amazon rainforest. I watched something I had built with intention reach shelves at John Lewis, Holland and Barrett, Asda and Whole Foods Market,

eventually growing to over a thousand listings with retailers across the UK, Europe, the USA, Asia and the Middle East.

What mattered just as much as growth was how we worked. I built a team largely made up of women. We had flexible hours, trust, laughter and support. The business faced constant challenges. Sales ebbed and flowed, logistics were relentless, and money was often tight. But I never cut corners. My purpose to create an environment where people were valued never wavered.

When Covid and Brexit eventually brought that chapter to an end, I learned something vital. Purpose does not disappear when a role or business ends. It lives in you. I carried it with me into sustainability work, and I bring it into every role I take on.

What I want other women to know is this. It is never too late to ask who you are. Your values matter. People and Planet matter. And when you live in alignment with what you believe, even the hardest chapters carry meaning.

Galia Orme

Galia Orme is a founder and sustainability advocate led by compassion, connection, and ethical values. She built an internationally recognised chocolate brand rooted in fair sourcing and dignity for people and the planet. Today, she carries that same purpose into sustainability-led work and conscious leadership.

Message to my younger self

Show up as yourself and step up when the sh*t hits the fan. If you do those two things, you won't go too far wrong. Although be warned, they'll be plenty of people who'll try and throw you off course. Just stay true to who you are, what you feel is right. And trust your instincts. You have a strong connection and intuition so when you get that sense of "knowing", follow it. It's one of your many superpowers.

You'll have fun uncovering all your talents and abilities, as you try more things and become more courageous. Just know that it's better to have tried and failed, and learned, than never to have tried. That goes for pretty much everything. And be your own best friend sweetheart because when push comes to shove, for an only child, that's all you've got, kid.

What would I do differently now?

I'd have stronger boundaries and be a little more cynical about people's motivations – particularly the opposite sex! You can always look for the best in others but don't let that cloud the reality. You don't need male attention that isn't healthy. Understanding you're worth more than that is a Game-changer.

My big WHY – why work matters

The world's in a mess. And I think one of the reasons it's in a mess is that we're out of balance.

Whenever anything is out of balance there's a problem. There seems to be a dominance of masculine energy, some of which is pretty toxic. Now we need masculine energy just as we need the feminine – but there needs to be a balance. It's time for women to step into positions where they can have more impact. My work is to be part of a movement that empowers women to achieve greater influence and exert the kind of power we need in this world. And that's the soft power of compassion, collaboration, inclusivity, trust and bold vulnerability.

Purpose, mission, words of wisdom

Here to encourage women to find their voice to say what they think and ask for what they want. My book covers 50 Pearls of Wisdom to help women navigate life's ups and downs. Some of the topics I cover are becoming more comfortable with discomfort, turning failure to your advantage, learning how to meditate, how to be smarter at work and how to deal with on-line dating among many others.

By Susie Hall, The Sassy Godmother.

Susie Hall

Susie Hall is a straight-talking mentor known for her warmth, humour, and lived wisdom. She offers honest guidance without judgment or quick fixes, supporting women to navigate life with courage, clarity, and self-trust on their own terms, and in their own time.

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Sassy Godmother's Pearls of Wisdom: 50 inspiring ways to navigate your life is due for release in February 2026:

<https://mybook.to/SassyGodmother>

I Was 33 When Cuddle Therapy Called My Name

By Reka Kocsis

It was 2019, and I was lead steward at one of the many interesting events I had the chance to experience. I was travelling, doing well, enjoying work in the event industry, but something inside me knew this was not my calling.

At the time, my private life was teaching me a quiet but uncomfortable truth. I was giving too much in my relationships. I wanted to help, to be there for them physically. But it didn't feel right anymore, so I started asking myself deeper questions.

How can I support them without losing myself?
How can physical presence be healing without crossing boundaries?

And in that thought process, the answer landed. Cuddle therapy. This spark ignited a sacred fire inside me. A fire that is still burning.

Like for many, my dream grew slowly. Covid immediately gave me a reason to slow down, but after the lockdowns I continued working in the event industry while quietly feeding my inner fire. Then, towards the end of 2023, I finally moved to Brighton to step into my calling. And with that, my introduction proudly changed to *"My name is Reka and I am a cuddle therapist. Welcome to my space."*

I grew up in a large, traditional Christian family, where love existed, but nurturing, individual attention often did not. I never felt truly seen or appreciated in that godly environment. And why I do my work is to help people not to feel like that.

My mission is simple, yet profound. I aim to help people feel heard, held and healed, the sacred trinity of H's that also form Hungarian Hug Haven, through the power of one of our basic human needs, touch.

My work weaves in with The Witch & The Magician Holistic Wellbeing, which also gives home to Alex Wholeness and Neemology, our Ayurvedic supplement. This product is the embodiment of our mission, healing through the inner wisdom of our body, mind and soul.

I want to leave you this wisdom.

Your inner voice is the most sacred part of you. She is your truth and power. And it is vital that you honour and listen to her, because the inevitable changes in your life cannot happen without her.

May you find your inner voice and ignite your fire. May you have the wisdom to keep them loud and burning.

Reka Kocsis

Cuddle Therapist and Founder of Hungarian Hug Haven

Reka is a cuddle therapist and holistic wellbeing practitioner based in Brighton. Her work centres on the healing power of safe, consensual touch, supporting people to feel heard, held and seen. Through Hungarian Hug Haven and her work with The Witch & The Magician Holistic Wellbeing, she creates spaces rooted in presence, boundaries and embodied care. Her approach is informed by lived experience, deep listening and a belief in the body's innate wisdom to heal.

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Claire Gray, has built her life and business around a simple but powerful philosophy: life is short, be authentic, and don't wait for permission to follow what lights you up.

In her former life, Claire was a hardworking, qualified accountant, clocking long hours in a corporate role while quietly sensing there had to be something more colourful, creative and joy-fuelled waiting for her. That inner knowing became impossible to ignore after the sudden death of her father at just 64, a loss that arrived like a lightning bolt reminder that the mythical "right time" rarely exists.

With her dad's voice echoing in her mind "*What's the worst that could happen?*" Claire made a bold leap and bought a countryside property with an eye-watering mortgage. Brooklands Barn was born. Sensible?

Debatable. Life-changing? Absolutely. Today, it stands as a thriving retreat venue, home and creative sanctuary, in the heart of West Sussex.

But the biggest inner shift came a few months later. Still stuck in an unhealthy relationship, Claire answered a Metro advert declaring, "*Take your hands off the steering wheel and say Fxxx it!*" It spoke straight to her soul. She booked onto the Fxxx It Retreat in Italy and there discovered transformational breathwork along with her now-husband, author Simon M Gray. Breathwork, authenticity and a soulmate? Not a bad week away.

Today, Claire's life and business philosophy centres on following your heart, letting life flow and staying open to opportunity. She believes magic happens when values-led humans come together with honesty, curiosity and kindness. A shining example is her partnership with transformational confidence coach Elif Köse. What began as a shared passion for breathwork has grown into workshops and retreats at Brooklands Barn, gently supporting women to breathe, grow, laugh and cry and ultimately step into their true selves.

Claire's creative passion has always been art, inspired by her father's own unfulfilled talent. Through coaching and a timely nudge from a close friend, she found her way back to the canvas and launched Brooklands Creatives'

Art Studio, now hosting joyful, expressive workshops, retreats and exhibitions for local artists. Today, Brooklands Barn is far more than a house. It's a sanctuary for creativity and heartfelt connection, a place where retreat leaders, artists, coaches and conscious business owners come together to create meaningful experiences rooted in authenticity, joy and courage. Because when life whispers, Claire listens. And when it calls for bold action, she answers with a fearless, joyful "*Fxxx it*".

If you're a retreat leader, creative soul or conscious business owner looking for a venue with heart, Brooklands Barn might be your place. Claire and her husband Simon are now launching their own Couples Retreats called "Reignite".

Claire Gray

Claire Gray is the founder of Brooklands Barn, a retreat venue and creative sanctuary in West Sussex. A former accountant, Claire followed an inner call to build a life rooted in authenticity, creativity, and connection. Through retreats, breathwork, and the arts, she creates spaces where people reconnect with themselves and what truly matters.

For more information visit
www.brooklandsbarn.co.uk



Investing in Yourself and in Each Other

By Dr Yildiz Tugba Kara



If there are two things I would like every woman reading these pages to take with her, they are these: invest in yourself relentlessly, and never underestimate the power of women supporting women.

I share this not as abstract advice, but as lived experience.

Today, I work as a strategy and business development consultant, with a background in international trade that I have intentionally expanded to include sustainable business management. That combination did not happen by chance. It was a conscious decision to keep evolving as the world, markets and expectations changed.

Five years ago, I had to recreate my career from scratch.

When we moved to London in the middle of the pandemic, everything familiar disappeared overnight. Before that, my career had moved across different sectors. I started as a civil servant, then worked in an NGO, and later moved into the private sector back in Istanbul. Each step built experience, confidence and professional identity. But relocating to the UK during such an uncertain time meant starting again, no established network, no profile, no shortcuts.

I became an entrepreneur out of necessity. I founded my own company, bootstrapped it, and slowly rebuilt, relationship by relationship, project by project. What carried me through was a deep belief that I was still my biggest asset. Titles can change. Contexts shift. But your ability to learn, adapt and grow travels with you.

That is why investing in yourself matters so much. Especially today. Technology is transforming every profession, and staying curious about digital tools, data, AI and sustainability is not about keeping up with trends. It is about staying relevant, confident and empowered.

My second lesson is equally personal. You do not have to do this alone.

At times, the weight of personal responsibilities, professional pressure and global uncertainty can feel overwhelming. It is easy to believe you are the only one struggling. You are not.

Joining women's networks changed my perspective. When I attended Confidence by Elif, even just once, I was deeply moved by the honesty and resilience of the women in the room. Their success did not come from being "super powerful", but from persistence, one step forward, sometimes two steps back, and the courage to keep going.

These two principles carried me through reinvention. I am certain they can support you too.

Dr Yildiz Tugba Kara

Founder and Managing Director, Society 5.0 Institute London

Dr Yildiz Tugba Kara is a strategy and business development consultant with a background in international trade and sustainable business management. She is the founder and Managing Director of Society 5.0 Institute London, where her work focuses on helping organisations and individuals navigate transformation at the intersection of technology, sustainability and human centred leadership. Drawing on cross sector experience and lived reinvention, she supports purposeful growth through adaptability, continuous learning and collaboration.

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Reclaiming the Sovereign Within

By Lit Eziefula

By the time a woman seeks support around an unhealthy relationship, she is rarely weak. More often, she is tired, tired of second guessing her intuition, tired of carrying emotional weight that was never hers, tired of being told to “understand” behaviour that erodes her sense of self. I know this landscape intimately, as a therapist and also as an empowered woman who chooses to grow from within rather than contort herself to survive dysfunctional relating.

I founded The Sovereign Within as a bespoke private therapy consultancy for people who desire real change, especially those disentangling from toxic or narcissistic relationship dynamics. Sovereignty, to me, is not dominance or detachment. It is self leadership. It is the quiet, embodied knowing of where your boundaries are and the courage to honour them without apology.

Unhealthy relationships thrive on confusion and self doubt. Narcissistic patterns, in particular, feed on our empathy while dismissing our needs. The work, then, is not to “fix” the other person, but to stop buying the nonsense that keeps us small. Healing begins when we come back into a relationship with ourselves, our nervous system, our values, our truth.

My approach integrates evidence based therapies such as EMDR, which gently processes trauma stored in the body, alongside regulation techniques such as Yoga Nidra, a deeply restorative practice that recalibrates the nervous system and reconnects clients to inner safety. Through bespoke one to one therapy and professionally held meetings in circle, we dissolve isolation and reclaim collective wisdom. Accountability check ins and experiential training modules provide the structure needed to translate insight into lasting change, so boundaries are not just understood, but lived.

Authority, in my experience, is not about hierarchy; it is about embodiment. I don't teach from theory alone. I guide from 18 years of clinical experience, professional training, and a deep respect for each person's innate capacity to heal. Growth from within is not loud, but it is unmistakably powerful.

If something in these words resonates, consider this your gentle invitation to connect with me and reclaim the sovereign within you. You are not broken. You are becoming. And you do not have to do it alone. The Sovereign Within exists to support those ready to step out of survival mode and into self trust, clarity, and calm confidence, one grounded boundary at a time.

Lit Eziefula

Lit Eziefula of The Sovereign Within, has over 18 years clinical experience supporting individuals to heal from unhealthy, toxic and narcissistic relationship dynamics. She is the founder of The Sovereign Within, a bespoke private therapy consultancy rooted in self leadership, embodiment and nervous system regulation. Integrating evidence-based modalities including EMDR and Yoga Nidra, Lit supports clients to reclaim boundaries, rebuild self trust and move from survival into grounded confidence. Her work is trauma informed, relational and deeply respectful of each person's innate capacity to heal.

She believes true authority begins with embodied self trust.

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Show Up Like a Showgirl

By Nicole Louise Geddes

There's a particular feeling you get when you walk into a From dancing in the mirror with a hairbrush microphone to a professional career as a dancer, singer and circus performer, I grew up in showbiz. Confidence wasn't something I waited to feel, it was something I practised. I was taught through the performing arts to stand tall, breathe through nerves, take up space and trust myself. The stage always felt safe. Under the bright lights I was allowed to be exactly who I was and be unapologetically me.

Unfortunately, on the other side of the stage door and outside of my showbiz world, this was not always the case. Like so many women, I was told to stop showing off. Made to be quieter. Less visible. More palatable. It was a tough realisation in my adult life to find out the world didn't always celebrate boldness, ambition or a loud sense of self. I no longer felt safe to be seen and, without realising it, the confidence I had taken for granted began to slowly slip away.

It was the moment I pivoted. I pivoted from performing into entrepreneurship. That's when the confidence I had relied on disappeared overnight, just when I needed it the most, when I was staring into the unknown. Suddenly, without the permission of the applause, the sense of belonging to a cast, and the shiny sequin costumes to dazzle in, I questioned who I was. What was my worth without the stage? I see now that it wasn't confidence I lost, it was the environment that allowed it to thrive.

Luckily, I realised early in my business building journey that confidence is always within you. But for confidence to thrive and shine, it needs community. It grows in safe spaces, surrounded by people who remind you who you are, cheer you on and celebrate your successes and superpowers.

That realisation is why I created PerformerPreneur®, a business and community supporting performers, past and present, to pivot and explore what's next with confidence. My work matters because for performers to evolve, to grow and to find their next spotlight, they need their confidence to withstand uncertainty and take the first step. Confidence doesn't grow in isolation. It grows in community. When you are surrounded by people who cheer you on, celebrate your courage and remind you who you are on the days you forget, showing up becomes possible again.

So here's my message to you. Confidence needs to be nurtured. Find your people, because with every positive reinforcement, connection and conversation your confidence will grow. When it feels safe to once again show up like a showgirl, you will know you are in the right circle, space, spotlight and the right community. Then, and only then, you will stop hiding and confidently shine again in the spotlights of your life.

Nicole Louise Geddes

Founder, PerformerPreneur

Nicole Louise Geddes is the founder of PerformerPreneur, supporting performers and creatives to build sustainable, confident careers beyond the stage. Drawing on lived experience and industry insight, she helps artists translate their talent into aligned businesses, visibility, and income, without losing their creative identity.

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Coming Home to Self

By Nadine Benjamin

At the height of my career, I was living every artist's dream, one of the UK's top sopranos and among only fifty Certified High Performance Coaches worldwide who had been practising for over ten years. Yet, one night while performing Mimi in *La Bohème* at the English National Opera, I could no longer breathe. Behind the glamour, my body was in crisis. Soon after, I found myself in hospital for eight weeks with Long Covid, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, POTS and health anxiety, my world suddenly stilled.

Back home, I could barely move. The woman who once commanded stages was now staring at the same wall, day after day. And yet, somewhere deep within, I knew I had the tools. I drew upon twenty five years of coaching and spiritual study. My wall became my altar, covered in post it notes with reminders of truth, love and possibility. Each word became a lifeline, a way to re-pattern my thoughts and return to faith.

I revisited my metaphysical ministry training, writing when I had strength, praying when I did not. Friendships that had spanned decades became sacred mirrors of love. I understood that healing wasn't a race to reclaim the old self, but an invitation to embody a fuller, wiser one.

After seventeen months of surrender, I came home, to peace, to purpose, to the Divine within. My voice and my business are being reborn. Trinity Mind Coaching will launch in April 2026, integrating high performance with spirituality and self leadership, blending divine feminine softness with grounded masculine presence.

For every woman who has achieved success yet feels the quiet pull to come home to herself, know that your rebirth begins in stillness. Power and tenderness coexist beautifully when we lead from spirit.

Nadine Benjamin MBE

Conscious Creative Spiritual Leader - Soprano, Certified High Performance Coach and Metaphysical Minister

Nadine Benjamin is an internationally recognised soprano, coach and mentor whose work bridges performance, leadership and spiritual embodiment. With a career spanning opera, coaching and personal transformation, she supports women to lead from purpose, presence and inner truth. Nadine is the founder of Trinity Mind Coaching, launching in 2026, where she integrates high performance with spirituality and self leadership.



Dear 27 year old Me

I know right now you feel like the world has ended and there's nowhere to go. But what if I told you this darkness becomes your greatest gift?

Your whole life you didn't feel like you belonged anywhere. You've felt too much, which made you shrink. Over and over you were told you were ugly, too sensitive, too much, too full of yourself. That's why you started to believe it.

But here's what they didn't tell you. This pivotal moment, standing here not wanting to be here anymore, is a milestone that changes everything forever. It will give you the biggest strength and empathy for others.

You learn your sensitivity isn't weakness but your superpower. You learn that everything you've been told to hide is exactly what the world needs to see. To be a roadmap to activate and move people.

Over the next ten years, you'll go through a transformation that gives you full permission to wear your heart on your sleeve and live with your heart open. You inspire thousands of women globally.

Your sensitivity becomes your biggest strength. It helps you read people, supports them in cutting through limiting beliefs, and empowers them to speak up and tell their stories in ways that make them undeniable in their work. It helps them heal and show up in their truth.

You go on to build a global company that supports women worldwide with a platform celebrating wealth and visibility.

You meet incredible people along the way who clap when you win.

So you can absolutely trust me when I say it gets better. You can believe you are worthy of love and success.

Don't sweat the bad days. Better ones are coming. When people treat you badly, it's a reflection of them, not you.

Your voice matters.
Laura

Laura Beddoe Collins***Founder of Soul Speaks***

Laura Beddoe Collins is the founder of Soul Speaks, a globally recognised platform supporting women leaders to build standout brands, position themselves as credible experts and create scalable income through signature talks and digital offers. Her work centres on helping women transform sensitivity into authority, voice into visibility, and lived experience into meaningful impact. Through storytelling, embodiment and strategic positioning, Laura supports women to speak with clarity, lead with confidence and build businesses rooted in authenticity and purpose.

Confidence Isn't Loud. Sometimes It's Held

By Hansa Raja

For a long time, I thought confidence belonged to other people, the ones who were bold, outspoken, and seemed certain in every room. That wasn't my experience.

My confidence was forged in quieter, harder spaces: being a single parent with three children, parenting a child struggling with their mental health, navigating complex systems, advocating endlessly, and trying to hold my own life together. In those moments, confidence wasn't about appearing strong. It was about showing up, even when everything felt overwhelming.

There were times when my voice felt diminished. Not because I lacked insight or strength, but because constantly explaining and pushing can wear anyone down. I didn't feel confident. I felt drained.

"True confidence doesn't need to be loud. Sometimes it's simply the courage to show up, be vulnerable and be seen."

What changed everything was being seen, heard, and understood. Sitting with other parents and carers who "got it" without explanation reminded me that my experience mattered, that my voice was valid. Confidence, I realised, isn't always loud. Sometimes it's quiet, patient, and relational. It grows when we are believed, supported, trusted and seen.

That understanding now shapes both my charity work and consultancy practice. Through founding Holding Space, an award winning charity, and working with organisations on parent and carer support and changing workplace culture, I see how confidence and resilience are deeply connected to the environments we inhabit. Workplaces and communities that nurture psychological safety, compassion and trust allow people to show up fully. When those elements are missing, confidence can't survive no matter how capable someone is.

Being the face of confidence doesn't mean having all the answers. For me, it means standing in what I know, leading with integrity, and trusting the value of lived experience. It means showing up as you are, even when that feels vulnerable, and allowing support from others and from communities to strengthen you.

If you're a parent reading this and quietly wondering if it's just you, I want you to know it isn't. I've been there, feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and unsure where to turn while trying to support a child who is struggling. For a long time, I carried that weight alone.

That is why I founded Holding Space, a safe space for parents to connect, to be heard, seen and understood, without any judgement. It's also why I created The Parent Lounge, an online community to come together, chat, cry, laugh, breathe and just be yourself. You don't need to have the right words. You don't need to be the perfect parent. You are amazing. You are unique. You are valued.

Hansa Raja

Hansa Raja is the founder of Holding Space, an award winning mental health charity, and a consultant specialising in workplace culture change. Drawing on lived experience and professional leadership, she supports individuals and organisations to create environments where confidence, resilience and authenticity can flourish.

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A Letter Written Across Time

My dear,

I know how carefully you are holding yourself together. How much energy it takes to appear capable, composed and certain, while inside you are constantly measuring, adjusting, trying to be “right”. You think this effort is strength. You think it is what adulthood, success and responsibility require.

It isn't.

You learned early how to build a self that could function. One that could adapt, achieve and keep going. One shaped by what was expected, admired or rewarded. It helped you survive. You did it brilliantly, but no one told you how heavy it would become to carry a life from the outside in.

There will come a moment, frightening and unavoidable, when that structure can no longer be maintained. It will feel like failure. The truth is you cannot continue living as someone you constructed.

That moment will feel like loss. Like undoing. Like standing without ground beneath you.

But stay.

At a moment when you feel most unsure, you will meet people who recognise what is unfolding in you. What appears as the end will be a pause. What feels like emptiness will be space.

You will notice that when effort falls away, you are still here. When thoughts loosen their grip, something steadier remains. You will discover that peace does not arrive through control, and confidence does not grow through force. They emerge when you stop resisting your own experience.

One day, you will recognise this same moment in others. You will meet people standing where you once stood, believing they are broken, behind or damaged by life. People who think they must repair themselves before they can rest. And because you have been here, you will not rush them forward or try to fix them.

You will sit with yourself and with them.
You will listen beneath words, beneath fear.
You will leave space so something truer can emerge.

This is confidence living in you quietly, without performance. This is peace guiding you, without needing proof. Your life will begin to feel like it belongs to you, and others will feel safer in your presence too.

So when the weight feels unbearable, remember this. Nothing is going wrong. Something is being revealed.

You are not falling apart.
You are falling inward.
And that is where you will recognise home.

With love,
Anastasia Dobrovolschi

Anastasia Dobrovolschi

Anastasia Dobrovolschi is a guide and space holder supporting individuals through moments of inner transition, identity shift and deep self recognition. Her work centres on presence, listening beneath language and allowing truth to emerge without force. Through her writing and one to one work, Anastasia supports people to move from self control into self trust, and from performance into embodied peace.

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The Freedom Revolution

By Penina Shepherd

We are taught to be careful, to be sensible and responsible. To wait until we feel ready and are certain we will succeed. Somewhere along the way, many of us learn to trade freedom for security and passion for approval. What I realise now is that freedom is something we choose, and it often feels uncomfortable before it feels empowering.

This is what I call *The Freedom Revolution*, a book I published that became an Amazon best seller on publication.

I have worked with top 100 law firms and climbed the career ladder, but I was unsatisfied. I knew things could be done differently. For me, freedom came when my work stopped being something I fitted into and started becoming an extension of who I am. I led with purpose, values and passion, and money followed. I call this being a free entrepreneur. It means accepting emotional, financial and reputational risk in exchange for alignment, something far more valuable. There will be highs and lows, but the return on investment is freedom.

Fear, of course, always has an opinion. Fear has the best lawyers. It presents well reasoned arguments explaining why now is not the time or why someone else is better equipped. Fear paralyses because it sounds so convincing. But everything I have ever truly wanted has lived on the other side of it. Fear is not a stop sign. It is a doorway.

In a world that rewards sameness, freedom often comes from standing out. In business, that can be as simple and as radical as doing something because it feels right. I believed the way legal services were delivered needed to be transformed, and Acumen Law embraces just that. We built a firm without hierarchy or dress codes, with approachable and accessible lawyers. These decisions do not always require investment, just courage. They are the decisions that make competitors pause and say, "Do they really do that?"

Many of us hesitate because we feel like imposters, waiting until we are perfect before we begin. But perfectionism is not about excellence. It is only a delay. "Fake it till you make it" was never about deception. It is about silencing the voices of doubt long enough to let confidence grow. Acting as if your creative work belongs in the world until you believe it, because it does.

Freedom is not found by avoiding discomfort. It is found by choosing alignment again and again, even when it feels uncertain. Especially when it feels uncertain.

Penina Shepherd

Founder, CEO and Commercial Solicitor

Penina Shepherd is the founder and CEO of Acumen Law, a multi award winning commercial law firm recognised by the Financial Times as one of the Top 50 most innovative law firms in the UK and Europe. A commercial solicitor since 1996, Penina has advised businesses across company, commercial, intellectual property, data and compliance matters, and has worked with top 100 UK law firms as a partner and head of department. She is also the author of the best selling book *The Freedom Revolution* and a sought after keynote speaker, known for challenging conventional thinking around leadership, entrepreneurship and freedom in business.

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What if you spiralled in the right direction?

By Fiona O'Sullivan

If I could offer one piece of wisdom to my younger self, it would be this: what if you let yourself spiral, but this time, in the direction of possibility?

So many women are experts at overthinking what could go wrong. We replay conversations, delay decisions, second guess our instincts, and talk ourselves out of opportunities before they've even had a chance to take shape. What we forget is that the same imagination we use to catastrophise can be used to create momentum.

What if the follow up email you've been avoiding became a six month project with a fully aligned client? What if outsourcing the task you quietly dread gave you back space, headspace, and confidence?

What if the idea you've saved in your notes app is the one that changes everything?

What if you trusted yourself enough to ask for the opportunity you actually want?

My work exists because capable women are too often caught in the weeds of their businesses, expending energy on tasks that dull their brilliance instead of amplifying it.

Over the years through teaching, education leadership, coaching, copywriting and brand consultancy I've learned this: confidence is an inside job and it often requires investment.

That's why the work I do matters. Through copywriting, brand consultancy, and mentoring, I help women articulate what they already know deep down: that their work is valuable, their perspective is needed, and their voice deserves to be heard clearly. When women are properly advised, positioned with intention, and supported strategically, everything shifts. Pricing aligns. Opportunities open. Decision making becomes calmer, cleaner, more assured.

Confidence isn't about being the loudest person in the room. It's about knowing who you are, what you offer, and communicating it with conviction.

So if you're going to spiral, spiral forward.
Spiral into alignment.

Into possibility.

Into believing that things might not just work out, but work out better than you imagined.

Fiona O'Sullivan

Founder, The Write Field Brand Voice Boutique

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As this publication comes out on International Women's Day, I wanted to share a little about my experiences of working in the Violence Against Women and Girls sector.

I accidentally stumbled into this field of work 20 years ago through joining a well-established domestic abuse charity in the South East, as a specialist children's and family wellbeing practitioner. I was in my early twenties and had just moved to the South East after spending time travelling. In this time, I have managed projects, developed & designed children's and refuge services.

I have had the privilege of working with the most inspirational and strong women fighting for the rights of women and girls. We had the honour of being allowed to join women at the most vulnerable time of their lives and walked alongside them, offering support to re shape their lives and the lives of their children for a brighter future, living without fear.

Anyone can experience domestic abuse, it doesn't matter who you are, where you live, how educated you are or how much money is in the bank. It's a really common misconception that domestic abuse is physical abuse and you would be able to see the signs of that relationship. Domestic abuse follows a pattern of power and control, incorporating elements of physical, coercive, emotional, psychological and financial control over you. Its important to note that you might not realise that you're in an abusive relationship until its too late.

I have recently moved into specialist services working predominantly with children and families. However, I am still committed to supporting the agenda of Violence Against Women and Girls due to my experiences of the extreme situations of women around the world who experience domestic abuse. The Office of National Statistics records that in the UK 1.6 women are killed a week and 3 in 10 women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.

It is extremely difficult to leave an abusive relationship, for more ways that I can explain in this small article. It is important to understand that you are at your most risk when you leave an abusive relationship and need support from others to keep yourself-safe. I have added information of national supporting agencies to the article.

Marie Friend

www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

womensaid.org.uk

refuge.org.uk



If I Could Speak to My Younger Self

By May Chunladecha

If I could speak to my younger self, I would tell her this: you are stronger than you think, and kindness is not weakness.

When I came to the UK from Thailand, I carried big dreams but also fear, self doubt, and the quiet pressure many women know well, to work harder, stay grateful, and not take up too much space. For a long time, I believed success meant endurance. I now know it means alignment.

If I could do anything differently, I would have trusted myself sooner. I would have rested without guilt. I would have believed that caring deeply for people, for community, for wellbeing could be a strength, not a compromise.

My “why” has always been simple: to help people feel better in their bodies, calmer in their minds, and more connected to themselves. That is why Little Jasmine Therapies & Spa exists. It was never just about treatments. It was about creating a safe, nurturing space for our guests, for our team, and for the wider community.

Eighteen years on, as a multi award winning business, my work matters because wellbeing matters. Especially for women. We carry so much, families, businesses, expectations, emotional labour, often without pause or recognition. I want other women to know that looking after yourself is not indulgent. It is essential.

My purpose is to lead with compassion, fairness, and integrity. To create opportunities, not hierarchies. To pay people properly, treat them with respect, and build a business that gives back. Through Little Jasmine, we support charities, nourish our team, and try every day to live our values, not just talk about them.

If there is one message I would leave with other women, it is this: listen to your inner voice. Choose work that aligns with your values. Be brave enough to slow down. And remember your softness can be your greatest power.

With warmth,
May Chunladecha

May Chunladecha

Co Founder and Director, Little Jasmine Therapies & Spa
May Chunladecha is the co founder and director of Little Jasmine Therapies & Spa, an award winning wellbeing business based in Brighton and Hove. With over 18 years of experience, May leads with compassion, integrity and community at the heart of her work, creating nurturing spaces that support wellbeing for guests, teams and the wider community.

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When Crisis Calls, We Answer

Two women rewriting the rules in crisis management

By Otibho Edeke Agbareh & Natalie Fairchild

There's a particular feeling you get when you walk into a room and realise you're the only woman there. Again. It's not fear. We've both stood in the wreckage of disasters, coordinated responses to terror attacks, and held the hands of grieving families. We know what fear is. This is something else. It's the weight of knowing that your voice will be questioned more, your expertise doubted longer, your compassion mistaken for weakness.

Between us, we've spent over two decades in crisis management. Aviation disasters, humanitarian emergencies, mass fatality incidents, pandemics. We've worked everywhere from Grenfell Tower to war zones, from boardrooms in Geneva to makeshift family assistance centres in Poland. And here's what we learned: the industry desperately needs us, even when it doesn't always want to admit it.

The gap isn't just about gender, though that's certainly part of it. It's about how crisis management has been approached. Transactional, mechanical, often missing the very human heart of what a crisis actually is. When families are searching for loved ones, when communities are fractured, when everything feels like it's falling apart, they don't need another consultant with a binder full of protocols. They need someone who understands that crisis response is as much about humanity as it is about logistics.

That's why we're building CrisisDNA. Not because we want to play in a space that wasn't built for us, but because we're tired of watching organisations pay astronomical fees for

crisis support that leaves them stranded when disaster actually strikes. We're creating a platform that matches real expertise with organisations that need it, powered by technology but grounded in genuine care. We believe crisis preparedness should be accessible to everyone, not just a luxury for multinationals with endless budgets.

To the women reading this who work in fields where you're outnumbered, outspoken against, or simply overlooked: your perspective isn't just valuable. It's essential. The empathy you bring isn't weakness. The questions you ask that others don't? Those are the ones that save lives. The fact that you care deeply doesn't make you less professional. It makes you irreplaceable.

We're not here to fit into the old systems. We're here to build something better. And we can't do it alone. Whether you're a crisis professional tired of being sidelined, an expert with knowledge to share, or someone who simply believes that the people responding to our worst moments should reflect the diversity of those experiencing them, there's a place for you in this.

This International Women's Day, we're not asking for a seat at the table. We're building our own table, and we're saving seats for every woman who's been told she's too much, not enough, or doesn't quite fit. Because the truth is, when crisis calls, it doesn't check your credentials or your gender. It just needs someone who'll answer. And we're done waiting for permission to do exactly that.

Join us. The world needs what you bring to it.



Otibho Edeke Agbareh and Natalie Fairchild are internationally recognised crisis management and humanitarian response specialists with extensive experience across aviation disasters, terror attacks, mass fatality incidents and complex humanitarian crises. Otibho brings global leadership in family assistance and identification, serving as a UN ICAO certified expert and Working Group member, with a career spanning clinical frontline care, humanitarian leadership and doctoral research on families of missing persons. Natalie contributes deep operational and strategic expertise across UN classified organisations, public contingency planning, humanitarian response and crisis consultancy, with a strong focus on enhancing humanitarian assistance through innovation and technology. Together, they co founded CrisisDNA to advance compassionate, effective and resilient crisis preparedness and response worldwide

Website: www.CrisisDNA.com

The Midlife Women's Health Hack No One Is Talking About

By midlife, many women quietly assume this is it.
Desire has softened. Sensation feels distant. Intimacy becomes effortful.

We're told it's hormones, stress, or age. We're offered Pilates, date nights, toys, or mindset work. Helpful, perhaps, but not transformative.

What most women are experiencing has very little to do with libido.
It has everything to do with how much the body has carried.

Our bodies have been entered, examined, medicated, pushed, and expected to cope.
We were taught how babies are made, but not how birth, miscarriage, leaving toxic relationships, or perimenopause change the nervous system.

Many of us have experienced "routine" procedures squeezed into lunch hours. Pain minimised, cervixes bruised, only to return to boardrooms and meetings as if nothing happened. After all, we need to be strong women.

We learned to hold ourselves together.
And in doing so, we learned to hold ourselves tight. And this is the issue that even daily Yoga won't help. We have to go deeper.

Over time holding our body tight dulls the sensation. Desire quietens. Pleasure is replaced with the word busy. Touch begins to feel functional, rushed and touch from loved ones feels over stimulating.

This isn't failure.
It's your body's intelligence.

A body that doesn't feel met stops opening. It contracts, not to make life harder, but to stay safe. The body is wise.

And yet, instead of being taught how to listen to this wisdom, women are taught to override it. To push through. To perform connection. To fake pleasure out of kindness. To make it easier for everyone else.

By midlife, many women are successful yet exhausted from living above their bodies rather than within them.

This is the piece of women's health we are not talking about. The erotic nervous system, the part of us that governs safety, sensation, pleasure, and intimacy.

When this system is met slowly, relationally, without agenda, something profound happens. Sensation returns. Desire reorganises itself. Not because we forced it, but because the body finally feels allowed.

This is the work I've devoted my life to.
Not learning new techniques. Not mindset. Not fixing.
But restoration.

When a woman inhabits her body again, her life changes. She begins to live from a place that feels rooted, spacious, and true and everything in her life feels to flow more easily.

If reading this stirs something within you, knowing that you don't have words for, it isn't a coincidence.
This is your body's way of saying "Let's Go!"

And when women return home, not just individually, but collectively, the world shifts.
Let's make the ground vibrate together.

Love ya,
Emma x

Emma Fullwood

Emma began her journey as a pelvic floor specialist and personal trainer. By listening deeply to women, she recognised that modern women's health was missing a deeper, sacred connection to feminine wisdom and embodied power. This insight inspired her to support women to reclaim desire, deepen sensation and live fully embodied lives. This work is her legacy.

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When Survival Becomes Identity

How childhood roles quietly shape the way women lead, love and build businesses

By Geraldine Crane

Identity is everything when running your own business, yet much of our identity is formed in childhood and quietly shapes the rest of our lives.

At twelve years old, a huge part of my identity was being the “good daughter.” Despite my mother’s chaotic mental health and emotional outbursts, I adored her. She was the centre of my world. But she became very ill, and I became her carer. Feeling I could no longer be a child, I became the fixer, the responsible one, the strong one. I held space for her trauma, self-harm and suicidal ideation, believing, *“If I don’t do it, no one else will.”*

“The identities that once kept us safe can quietly become the ones that keep us stuck.”

I didn’t dare let her down or say no, for fear of rejection, being labelled a “bad carer,” or triggering a meltdown and her hurting herself.

It’s no wonder anxiety took hold. I had my first breakdown at nineteen, and many after that.

I was thirty-seven when becoming a mother myself, training in domestic abuse recovery and accessing counselling allowed me to see how harmful that relationship was. But as I tried to find my own identity, the emotional abuse and manipulation worsened, and I was left with no choice but to cut contact.

Yet I carried those survival identities into my business.

I felt responsible for every client’s results, undercharged, over-gave, and believed I had to be the best to be worthy of success. I was exhausted.

Thankfully, my mum gave me one gift: spirituality.

At nineteen, I met a spiritual teacher who helped me connect with an incredible source of love and guidance, my Spirit Guides.

“I carried survival identities into my business and called it responsibility, until exhaustion told the truth.”

Later, through spiritual hypnotherapy, this connection deepened as they helped me bring safety and love to my inner child and shift those survival identities. Spirit showed me who I truly was: inherently worthy, loved, and allowed to prioritise my peace.

That journey is now my work.

I support ambitious women to recognise and shift the identities that once kept them safe but now keep them stuck, so they can lead their businesses from sovereignty, not survival.

If there is one thing I hope to offer you, it is permission: to prioritise your peace, and to be who you know, deep within, you truly are.



Photography by Kate Campbell

GERALDINE CRANE

Mother Wound Mentor & Soul Sovereignty Coach

Geraldine supports ambitious women to release survival-based identities formed in childhood and lead their businesses from self-trust, peace and inner authority. Her work blends trauma-informed awareness with spiritual insight, guiding women back to sovereignty rather than self-sacrifice.

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“When stress or unresolved trauma is present, the brain often responds louder. When you understand this loop, you realise you hold more power than you realise. Change the input, and the output can change.”



You Are Not Broken

By Clare Cullen

After 24 years of hands-on bodywork to help “fix” people, I have learnt that you are not broken. This knowledge did not come only from clinical practice, but from living in my own body.

I became a mother at 20, driven to prove myself by collecting qualifications, seeking just a little more external validation to feel enough. Running marathons and endurance cycling events, even on day one of my menstrual cycle, chasing medals, momentum and approval.

I navigated three peaceful births and motherhood alongside building a chiropractic career, eventually becoming president of a large teaching organisation.

People often asked how I did it all. I never thought what I was doing was exceptional. My mum would quietly say I was hard on myself, but I did not yet know another way.

Through years of yoga, breathwork and menstrual cycle awareness taught by Red School, I began to listen inwardly. Your body speaks a language long before pain appears.

Sensations, tension, emotions and shifts in energy are part of that vocabulary. Yet many women learn to listen only when the language becomes loud, through pain, diagnosis or exhaustion.

Interoception, the information sensed from within the body, is constantly sent as input to the brain. The brain responds with outputs designed to protect you. Those

outputs may look like pain, fatigue, anxiety, hormonal disruption or emotional overwhelm. Symptoms are not failures, but protective responses shaped by your environment and experiences via your nervous system.

Monthly cycles and life transitions, from puberty through fertility, pregnancy, motherhood, perimenopause and menopause, dramatically change interoceptive input.

When stress or unresolved trauma is present, the brain often responds louder. When you understand this loop, you realise you hold more power than you realise. Change the input, and the output can change.

Developing interoceptive awareness requires slowing down. For me, rest was an unfamiliar concept. Yet answering that call to rest was profoundly healing. A regulated nervous system listens differently.

The wisdom I want you to carry is this. Your body is not broken. It is wise.

When you learn its language and honour your cycles, you can change how your brain responds, and how you experience your life and health.



CLARE CULLEN

Trauma Informed Chiropractor and Women's Health Practitioner

Clare Cullen is a trauma informed chiropractor with over 24 years of clinical experience supporting women's health and nervous system regulation. As the founder of Ewell Chiropractic, her work integrates chiropractic care with interoceptive awareness, breathwork and cycle literacy to support women in understanding their bodies' innate intelligence. Clare's approach is grounded in the belief that symptoms are protective responses, not failures, and that healing begins when women learn to listen to their bodies with compassion and awareness.

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Confidence Isn't Something You Build. It's Something You Remember.

By Jacqueline Hollows



The moment you stop trying to fix yourself is the moment your confidence begins.

Most women I work with don't see it that way. They assume they need to be braver, clearer, more consistent, more certain. They look for confidence as something to acquire.

I've been there. Every year I tried to be a better person. Tried to compete. Tried to fix the many things I thought were wrong with me. Until I found my truth in the most unexpected place.

A prison.

I'd been inspired to walk away from my career in IT and build a programme to help inmates uncover their wellbeing. One sunny day I was sat in the group room inside the prison, listening to women talk about who they thought they were.

Sunlight crept through the iron bars at the window. I could see birds atop the barbed wire outside.

I could see clearly that the women were talking about who they believed they had become because of their worst moments, not who they really were.

Wendy, dirty blond hair, sad blue eyes, sat with her head in her hands. She spoke about her past as if it were a life sentence in itself. Every sentence began with “someone like me”, someone broken, dangerous, beyond repair.

And yet, as she spoke, what I saw was humanity. Humour. Insight. Care.

That moment cracked something open in me. If she wasn't her crime. If she wasn't her past. Then maybe I wasn't my trauma either.

That work, sitting with people society had written off, taught me something no personal development book ever could. When you strip away labels, mistakes and stories, what remains is not damage. It's wisdom.

That understanding changed how I saw myself, and it changed how I work with women.

For years, I've met extraordinary women doing meaningful work who were stuck. Women with impact, experience and depth, yet second guessing themselves constantly. Giving generously. Hesitating to be seen. Working hard but feeling disconnected from their own power.

They weren't lacking confidence.

They were identifying with stories that weren't true.

I recognised it because I'd lived it.

I'd followed the rules, when I understood them. I'd learned the frameworks. I'd kept pushing, even when something inside me felt flattened and tired. Outwardly, things looked fine. Inwardly, I was overriding my own knowing.

What changed everything wasn't another strategy. It was realising that confidence doesn't come from fixing

yourself, it comes from remembering who you are beneath the noise.

That's why I created Impact Activator.

Not as another programme telling women who to be, but as a space to strip things back. To quieten the pressure. To reconnect with clarity that already exists. To share what I'd learned and teach through insight, connection and clarity. And then, to support women to act from that place in the real world.

I've seen what happens when women stop believing they need to earn their worth. They move. They decide. They speak. They activate. They are powerful beyond words.

The prison work showed me this truth early on. We are not our worst moments. We are not our past. And we are not the stories we repeat under pressure.

If you're reading this and feeling tired, overlooked or lost, let me say this clearly.

You are not broken.
You are not behind.
And you do not need fixing.

Your confidence isn't missing. It's buried under noise, expectation and misunderstanding.

The world doesn't need you tougher or louder.
It needs you anchored.
It needs you aligned.
It needs the work only you are here to do.

And that begins not by becoming someone new, but by remembering who you've always been.

With love and activation,
Jacqueline (Mama J) Hollows



JACQUELINE (MAMA J) HOLLOWS

Founder of Impact Activator

Jacqueline Hollows is a facilitator, mentor and community builder supporting women to reconnect with their innate confidence, clarity and self trust. After leaving a career in IT, she worked within the prison system delivering wellbeing programmes, an experience that profoundly shaped her understanding of identity, worth and transformation. Through Impact Activator, Jacqueline creates spaces where women strip away conditioning, release false narratives and activate their voice, power and purpose from within.

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Community: **Impact Activator Free Community**

Biber Dolması

Turkish Stuffed Peppers with Wholegrain Rice

Cooking is the ultimate confidence test, right? When we follow a recipe and make a new dish, often it's fuelled with fear and failure, even before we've bought the first ingredient! Often an analogy for life's challenges - attempting new things, starting a new job, making new friends can feel daunting at first, mostly because we're caught up on outcomes.

Cooking isn't about perfection. As you fill each pepper by hand, allow yourself to slow down and let go of the need to get it "right." Confidence is quietly built through trust, patience, and presence in the process.

This is a deliciously simple dish traditionally made with white long-grain rice. Wholegrain rice makes it just as tasty, more nourishing, and more filling.

Ingredients (serves 6)

2 each of red, green, and yellow bell peppers
500g wholegrain rice, washed until the water runs clear
A handful of mint leaves, finely chopped
Juice of 2 lemons
Extra virgin olive oil
1 or 2 firm red tomatoes, diced with seeds removed
2 tbsp tomato paste
Approx. 1 litre vegetable stock, a little for the mixture and the rest for cooking
Salt and pepper, to taste

Method

In a large bowl, mix the washed rice together with the chopped mint, lemon juice, 1 to 2 tbsp olive oil, diced tomatoes, and tomato paste. Add only just enough stock to make a slightly wet but not runny mixture that you can use to stuff the peppers.

Cut the tops off the peppers and remove the seeds. Stuff each pepper, leaving half a centimetre gap from the top to allow the rice to expand while cooking.



Hulya Erdal

Hulya Erdal is a professional chef, culinary educator, and self-discovery coach guiding women to reconnect with their authentic self through the power of cooking. Through her work, she uses food as a practical and soulful tool for self-trust, reflection, and personal transformation.

As you fill each pepper, ask yourself: *Where in my life am I holding back because I'm too attached to the outcome?*

Place the tops back on the peppers. Drizzle olive oil into the base of a large pan, enough to hold the peppers upright and close together. Pack the peppers in and pour in the stock, enough to reach two-thirds of the way up the peppers. Simmer gently on a low heat with the lid on until the rice is cooked.

Lift the peppers carefully from the pot using two spoons and transfer to a serving plate. Serve with Turkish or Greek-style yoghurt.

Chef's tip: This mixture can also be used to fill hollowed courgettes or aubergines.

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What We Carry Forward

*Confidence, not as something to prove.
but as something to come home to*

If there is one thing I hope stays with you after closing this issue, it is a feeling rather than a thought. A sense of recognition, remembering. You know the kind that will not demand action from you, but shifts how you stand inside yourself and that confirmation of knowing you are enough.

This issue was created as an act of gratitude for the women whose lives, courage, and persistence shaped the freedoms we now move within, often without noticing how hard-won they were. And for the women reading these pages now, navigating their own becoming, sometimes with certainty, sometimes with exhaustion, often with far more strength than they give themselves credit for.

What lives here is not instruction, it is wisdom offered from the real women without force. They shared their lived experience without agenda. Their voices that speak from the body, not the performance of confidence, but the felt sense of it. Again and again, what emerges is the same truth in each woman expressed in many forms is this: confidence is not something we build by hardening ourselves, it grows when we learn to feel safe inside who we are.

So much of what women are taught about success asks for separation. From rest. From softness. From instinct. From the body itself. From othering in everything we do and say. Who has blonde hair, who has fake nails, who chooses to get botox, them and you, them and us!

Yet what I see reflected in these pages is something very different. **A returning.**

To self-trust. To compassion. To the intelligence that lives beneath effort and explanation. To a way of leading, creating, and living that does not require leaving parts of ourselves behind.

When a woman feels at home in her body, her voice settles. Her choices clarify. Her presence speaks before she does. Women need compassion to feel passionate about work, relationships, business, friendship... and it comes from feeling safe being who we are and who we are surrounded with. Community where you feel safe to be you, seen, supported, inspired.

That is the confidence I care about. Not the kind that demands attention, but the kind that holds it quietly. Not the kind that competes, but the kind that creates space. Not the kind that performs strength, but the kind that knows when to soften and when to stand firm.

If this issue offers anything, let it be permission. To slow where you have been rushing. To listen where you have been overriding yourself. To lead from integrity rather than expectation. To remember that you are not behind, broken, or lacking. You are becoming, in your own time, in your own way. May these pages meet you where you are and remind you of what you already carry.

With love and compassion,

Elif Köse

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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