

CONFIDENCE

ISSUE JUNE 2026
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THE AYVALIK ANTIDOTE

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**HUSTLE AND HEALTH
EAT LIKE YOU MEAN IT**
The woman running on empty is running out of time.

SARAH LLOYD

The visibility lies your body remembers every time you were told to shrink.

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Write book
Buy batteries
Run away
Food shop
Plan a retreat
Buy vaginal gel
Burn bra
Drive kids around like a taxi
Eat cake
Buy gin
Go on tour

JENNIFER DAVY'S TRUTH:

Nobody burns out louder than the woman everyone believes has it all together.

TOVA LEIGH

Unapologetic

How many times have you walked away from yourself to be accepted?

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**EDITOR**

Elif Köse

ADMIN

Emily James

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Md Shihab Mahmud

DESIGN

Beccy Hunt

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!

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 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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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:

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- 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 has been made possible through the support of our contributing experts, each of whom has invested in this edition to amplify women's voices and support independent publishing. All content is curated with integrity and aligned with our values and mission.

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



There is a word that kept returning to me as I read every piece in this issue.

Unleashed.

It came from Tova Leigh, whose interview opens these pages with the kind of laughter that makes you realise you have been holding your breath for years. She used it to describe what happens to women after 40, after the cuteness wears off, after the performing stops. After we finally stop shrinking ourselves to keep everyone else comfortable.

Unleashed.

I have been thinking about that word ever since. Because when I look at the women in this issue, the stories they are telling, the rooms they are building, the truths they are finally speaking out loud, that is the word I would use for all of them.

Yvonne, who walked onto a stage and told the story she had carried in silence for over twenty years, and found that other women had been carrying the same one. Juliette, who sat at a kitchen table with her ex-husband and chose structure over chaos, dignity over war. Jennifer, who names the burnout hiding behind high

performance with a precision that will make more than one reader put down the magazine and exhale. Achea, who reminds us that being between who we were and who we are becoming is not a failure, it is where the most important shifts happen.

This issue also celebrates something I believe in deeply. The power of what happens when women gather. Cecilia's account of International Women's Day in Brighton captures something I felt in that room and have struggled to fully articulate since, the way a space filled with the right intention can change the women inside it without a single instruction being given.

We have practical wisdom in these pages too. Taylor on the financial clarity that most women were never taught to seek. Michelle on dressing for the version of yourself you actually are, not the one you used to be. Lisa launching her new column on travel, freedom, and building a life that works harder for you. And Nat and Cat on nourishing your body as the foundation everything else stands on.

We close with hummus. My sister-in-law's recipe, from Antakya, light and cloud-like and made with ice-cold water and patience. Because sometimes the most radical thing we can do is slow down, sit at the table, and feed ourselves well.

This issue is, at its heart, about permission. Permission to tell the whole story. Permission to take up space. Permission to stop apologising. Permission to want more, feel more, ask for more, and stop treating your own life as something you will get around to eventually. You are the main character. You always were.

With love,

Elif Köse Editor-in-Chief

CONTENTS

JUNE

Articles

03 Editor's Welcome
- *Elif Köse*

04 Table of Contents

06 Life Is Too Short To Hold Back
- *Elif in conversation with Tova Leigh*
A bold and deeply honest conversation with Tova Leigh on what happens when women stop performing and start telling the truth. From motherhood and desire to ageing and identity, this piece explores the quiet liberation that comes when we release shame, reclaim our voice, and finally allow ourselves to be seen.

10 You're Not Behind, You're in a Liminal Space—Achea Redd
A powerful reframe for the phase no one prepares you for. This piece explores the quiet, often misunderstood space between who you were and who you are becoming, offering a grounded perspective on uncertainty, identity shifts, and the kind of confidence that forms without clear answers



Life Is Too Short To Hold Back
page 06



The Visibility Lie: Why Being Seen Isn't What You Think It Is
page 20

- 12 The Burnout No One Sees in High-Performing Women - Jennifer Davy**
An unfiltered look at the hidden burnout affecting high-performing women who appear to have it all together. Jennifer Davy explores the invisible emotional cost of constantly coping, over-functioning, and carrying impossible standards in silence — and why true recovery begins far deeper than rest.
- 16 Unapologetic: I Stopped Abandoning Myself (Without Turning My Ex Into the Enemy) - Juliette Karaman-van Schaardenburg**
From an ICU wake-up call to a seven-figure business, A powerful reframe on separation, self-respect, and emotional leadership, this piece challenges the idea that endings must become battlefields, showing how structure - not emotion - can transform the way we part, parent, and preserve connection.
- 20 The Visibility Lie: Why Being Seen Isn't What You Think It Is—Sarah Lloyd**
The advice to "just show up and post more" has never felt quite right for many women and there's a reason for that. Sarah Lloyd on why real visibility starts from the inside out.
- 22 Five Reasons You Keep Attracting Holiday Flings Instead of the Life Love Partner You Deserve -Rachel Mailer**
A powerful and honest exploration of modern dating, self-worth, and why so many successful women keep finding themselves in almost-love instead of aligned partnership. Rachel Mailer unpacks the emotional patterns, unconscious behaviours, and energetic shifts that transform dating from chasing chemistry into choosing clarity, boundaries, and lasting connection.

CONTENTS

Articles

24 **The Day I Stopped Saying Sorry** – *Yvonne Hector-John*

A deeply honest reflection on grief, identity, and the quiet courage it takes to stop apologising for a life that did not follow the expected path. Yvonne Hector-John gives voice to the unspoken experience of women who are childless not by choice, and reclaims the right to exist without explanation.

26 **From Hard Worker to High Performer, Why Nutrition Is The Missing Link** – *Hustle N Health*

From an ICU wake-up call to a seven-figure business, this is a powerful reframe on success for women 40+. Challenging decades of “eat less, do more,” it reveals why nutrition is the missing link between ambition, energy, and sustainable high performance.

30 **The Mid Year Audit : 5 Moves To Bullet Proof Your 2026**–*Taylor Smith*

In this sharp, funny and deeply honest piece, Taylor Smith explores the emotional reality behind women’s relationship with money, from “vague panic” spending to nervous-system safety, and shares five powerful shifts that can help women stop surviving financially and start building genuine security, clarity and self-trust.

32 **A Stylist’s Guide to Dressing With Ease** –*Michelle Barrett*

Award-winning stylist Michelle Barrett shares a refreshing approach to personal style that goes beyond trends and perfection. From TV and film sets to real women’s wardrobes, this practical and empowering guide explores how clarity, ease and intentional dressing can help you feel confident in the version of yourself you are today.



A Room That Didn’t Need to Be Told to Listen

page 44

36 **The Ayvalık Antidote: Why Ayşe Cömert is the Future of Conscious Luxury** –*Elif Köse*

From the runways of excess to the olive-scented calm of Ayvalık, Elif Köse sits down with designer Ayşe Cömert to explore conscious luxury, emotional craftsmanship, and why true elegance begins with integrity.

42 **Travel With Confidence** – *Lisa Francesca Nand*

In her new monthly column, travel journalist and entrepreneur Lisa Francesca Nand explores travel as more than escape. From solo adventures and family holidays to retreats, business opportunities and financial freedom, she invites women to see travel as a pathway to expansion, independence and a richer way of living.

44 **A Room That Didn’t Need to Be Told to Listen** - *Cecilia Grant*

50 **Mediterranean Tomato Tart** – *Hülya Erdal*

51 **The Air and The Fire: A Mid-Year Homecoming** – *Elif Köse*

*“Shame only lives in darkness.
The moment you speak it,
and someone says ‘me too,’
it loses its power.”*



Life Is Too Short To Hold Back

Elif in conversation with Tova Leigh

There are some women who make you laugh so hard you almost forget they've just told you the truth you've been avoiding for years.

Tova Leigh is one of those women.

A best-selling author, performer and digital creator with more than three million followers around the world, Tova has built a devoted audience by saying the things many women think but don't always dare say out loud. Motherhood. Marriage. Sex. Ageing. Desire. The secret, messy, hilarious and sometimes painful truths of womanhood.

I first discovered her through her reels, which I have since sent to countless women in my life. Some I've even sent to my husband, especially the now infamous one about not putting a turkey in the microwave and expecting a moist middle. I laughed until I cried, but beneath the humour was something frighteningly true.

So many women were never taught how to ask for what they want.

Not in relationships. Not in the bedroom. Not in life.

We were taught to be good. Easy. Nice. Cute. Pleasant. To keep the peace. To perform womanhood rather than truly inhabit it.

When I asked Tova what happened, why a whole generation of women learned to fake pleasure, silence desire and shrink themselves to keep everyone else comfortable, she laughed, but only because the truth is so huge.

"Where do we start?" she said.

For Tova, the answer begins with the way society teaches women that their value peaks early.

"There's this conspiracy theory," she told me, *"that women peak in their twenties. But actually, the older you get, the more in touch you are with who you are and what you want. And how convenient that just as women start waking up, society tells us we are irrelevant."*

Tova has just turned 50, but she says the real turning point came at 40.

She wrote about it in her first book, *Fcked at 40**, when she found herself asking a question so many women secretly ask but rarely admit: am I still desirable? Is this it? Is that part of me over?

"It wasn't really about wanting male attention," she said. *"It was more about wanting to feel a life force. Something in me had been switched off for a long time while I was having babies and raising children."*

For Tova, turning 40 brought a kind of liberation. She calls it the loss of "cuteness".

"When you're young, you're expected to be cute," she said. *"Cute gets you the guy. Cute gets you the job. Cute gets you the compliment. Then you get to 40 and you realise, I'm not cute anymore. And actually, how freeing is that?"*

It is a freedom many women recognise. The moment you stop softening your voice. Stop laughing when something is not funny. Stop pretending you are fine when you are not.

Tova even realised she had been using what she calls a "cute voice".

"I didn't even know I was doing it," she said. *"And then suddenly you hear yourself and think, this is what I actually sound like."*

There is a point, she says, when women stop performing. And often, that is the point at which society starts calling them difficult. Crazy. Too much.

But perhaps we are not too much. Perhaps we are finally enough of ourselves.

Tova's own journey into truth-telling began not with sex or desire, but motherhood. She started blogging at 40, at a time when, as she puts it, everyone around her seemed to be presenting perfect motherhood.

“We were taught to perform womanhood rather than truly inhabit it.”

She had three children in two years, including twins, and the glossy version of motherhood simply did not match her reality.

*“I loved my children fiercely,” she said, “but I also really wanted them to f*ck off quite often. I hated arts and crafts. I was bad at breastfeeding. I didn’t know how to bake. I wasn’t the picture-perfect mother from the magazines.”*

What she discovered was that once she told the truth, other women breathed out.

“Oh my God,” they said. “Me too.”

That has become the golden thread through all of Tova's work. She says the thing first, and other women feel less alone.

Comedy became the tool.

“You can say outrageous things when you’re being funny,” she said. “It starts the conversation. If you’re up at 3am with a baby who hasn’t slept, and you are leaking and exhausted and desperate, then you see something that makes you laugh at the situation, there is relief in that.”

Her children are older now, 12 and 14, and her work has evolved with her. These days, Tova speaks more about women after 40, female desire, sexuality and the refusal to disappear.

And yes, she does it with humour. But the humour is not there to make the subject smaller. It is there to make the shame smaller.

“Shame only lives in darkness,” Tova said. “When you shine a light on shame, it evaporates. If you say the thing you are most ashamed of out loud, and one person says, ‘Oh my God, me too,’ it’s done.”

That is why her work lands so powerfully. It is not just funny. It is healing.

She told me about touring last year and testing material that was even more outrageous than her online videos. Being in a room with women gave her wings. After one London show, women came up to her and told her how seen they felt. How relieved. How much truth there was beneath the comedy.

“Women were saying, they never let us talk about this,” she said. “But actually this is how I feel.”

Of course, not everyone responds well. Some people, often men, become defensive when Tova talks about women's pleasure and communication. But many men respond positively too.

“A lot of men say, this helped me understand something,” she said. “Or, I watched this with my partner and we had a conversation.”

And that, really, is the point. Not attack. Conversation.

Because if women do not talk about what they feel, need and want, how can anyone else know?

This is something I feel deeply in my own work with women. So many of us are busy serving, fixing, helping, holding. We become wives, mothers, carers, business owners, friends, organisers of everyone else's lives. We can forget to pause long enough to ask: what do I want?

Tova now runs women's retreats, and she says the women who come are incredibly brave.

“Taking time out of your busy life to do something for yourself is a big thing,” she said. “Leaving your family, spending the money, travelling. Ninety per cent of the women who come on my retreats book on the spur of the

*moment. It's a f*ck-it moment. And I love f*ck-it moments because they often lead to the best things."*

For Tova, five nights away from the roles and responsibilities of everyday life can be life-saving.

"Just to be you again," she said. "Not the wife, the mother, the carer, the to-do list. Just you. It is such a gift if you can give that to yourself."

Having run retreats myself, I know exactly what she means. I have seen women arrive one way and leave as someone lighter. Different posture. Softer face. Brighter eyes. As if, after years of holding everything together, they finally remember themselves.

Tova believes there is something especially powerful about women-only spaces. Some women arrive nervous, worried that groups of women will be catty or competitive.

"But that narrative has been pushed on women," she said. "When women get together and there are no men in the room, something else happens. Sisterhood. Friendship. Wisdom."

At the start of her retreats, Tova tells the women that the retreat is not really about her. It is about the circle. Every woman brings something. Different ages, backgrounds, stories and wisdom.

"I love the idea of generational wisdom," she said. "We are all there to learn from each other."

That image stayed with me: women in a circle. Not a hierarchy. Not one person above another. Just women sitting together, sharing truth.

In her latest book, *Good Girls Gossip*, Tova writes that if women can do only one thing, it should be this: sit in a circle with other women.

Simple. Ancient. Powerful.

When I asked Tova what lie about womanhood she has stopped believing, she paused. Not because there was no answer, but because there are too many.

"Women are lied to from the very beginning," she said. "But I suppose one of the biggest lies is that ageing is awful. That your best years are in your twenties. Honestly, life gets better."

She wants women to know that after 40 and 50, we are not going crazy.

"We are just unleashed," she said. That word feels exactly right.

Unleashed from cuteness. From apology. From shame. From the idea that our job is to carry everything quietly.

As our conversation came to an end, I asked Tova what she most wanted women to remember. Her answer was immediate.

"Life is too short to hold back. I've just celebrated my 50th birthday and it is still young, but you do have that moment of, gosh, this is half a century. There is more past than future. So let's go. This is your life. You are the main character."

And perhaps that is the message so many women need to hear.

You are not here to be easy.

You are not here to be cute.

You are not here to disappear.

You are here to live. To speak. To want. To ask. To gather your women. To laugh loudly at the truth. To stop holding back.

Because life is short.

And it gets so much better when we finally stop pretending.



TOVA LEIGH

Tova Leigh is a bestselling author, performer, and digital creator with over 3M followers worldwide. She champions gender equality and female empowerment through her books, retreats, live shows, and online content. Known for her honest, humorous content, Tova talks about motherhood, marriage, sex, and all things taboo with raw authenticity.

Instagram - [@tova_leigh](https://www.instagram.com/tova_leigh)
Website - www.tovaleigh.com

You're Not Behind, You're in a Liminal Space

By Achea Redd

Why the in-between phase of your life feels uncertain and why that doesn't mean something is wrong.

There is a phase of life that does not get named often enough. It is not the beginning. It is not the breakthrough. It is not the outcome. It is the space in between. The point where something has ended or is clearly ending but what comes next has not fully formed yet. There is a word for this.

Liminal. *THE Grey*

A liminal space is a threshold. You are no longer where you were. But you are not fully where you are going. And for many women, this is the phase that gets misunderstood the most. Because it does not look like progress. It looks like uncertainty.

Why Liminal Space Feels So Uncomfortable

Most of us are not taught how to exist in transition. We are taught how to start. We are taught how to achieve. We are taught how to complete. But we are not taught how to stay present when clarity is not available. So when life places us in a liminal space, the immediate reaction is often to interpret it as a problem. Something must be off. I should have this figured out by now. Why does everything feel unclear? This is especially true for women who are used to being capable. Used to solving. Used to moving forward with direction. Liminal space interrupts that pattern. There is no clear next step yet. And without that clarity, it can feel like you are falling behind.

You Are Not Behind, You Are Between

One of the most important reframes I offer women in this phase is this: You are not behind. You are between. Between identities. Between decisions. Between versions of your life. And that space is not empty. It is active. Even when it looks still on the outside.

What This Phase Actually Looks Like

Liminal space is not always obvious.

You may still be functioning in your daily life. Going to work. Handling responsibilities. Showing up for others. But internally, something has shifted. What used to feel aligned now feels off. What used to energise you now feels flat. What used to make sense now requires more effort than it should.

There may not be a clear alternative yet. Just the awareness that where you are no longer fully fits. This creates tension. Because the mind wants direction. And the body is asking for space.

The Nervous System Response to “In-Between”

There is also a physical component to this experience. The nervous system prefers predictability. It prefers knowing what is coming next. So when you enter a liminal space, where the future is not clearly defined, your system may interpret that as instability. This can show up as: overthinking, restlessness, the urge to make quick decisions, questioning



yourself more than usual.

These responses are not signs that you are incapable. They are signs that your system is adjusting to uncertainty. And adjustment takes time.

The Urge to Resolve It Quickly

One of the strongest impulses in liminal space is the need to get out of it. To decide something, to move forward, to regain a sense of control.

Not necessarily because the decision is aligned. But because it relieves the discomfort of not knowing. I see this often... Women choose prematurely, just to escape the uncertainty, returning to environments they have already outgrown, taking on commitments that don't fully fit, and forcing clarity that has not actually developed.

It makes sense. Liminal space is uncomfortable. But rushing it often leads right back to the same internal tension.

What Liminal Space Is Actually Doing

Even though it feels unproductive, liminal space is not passive. It is reorganizing.

It is where old identities loosen, outdated patterns become visible, new preferences begin to surface.

But this process is subtle. It does not announce itself clearly. It happens through small shifts: what you no longer tolerate, what you are less willing to carry, and what you quietly begin to want more of.

Clarity is forming. Just not all at once.

Confidence Without Clarity

We tend to associate confidence with knowing.

Knowing what you want. Knowing what to do.

Knowing where you are going. But liminal space asks for a different kind of confidence.

The confidence to remain steady without having all the answers. The confidence to say: *"I don't know yet and I'm not going to rush that."* This is not passive, disciplined, it requires restraint, and it requires self-trust.

Staying Connected to Yourself in the In-Between

The most important thing during this phase is not finding the answer.

It is staying connected to yourself.

This means paying attention to:

What drains you now that didn't before

What feels heavier than it should

What brings even a small sense of relief

These are not final answers. But they are signals. And over time, those signals begin to organise into clarity.

Redefining Progress

In liminal space, progress looks different. It is not always forward movement.

Sometimes it looks like not going back to what you've outgrown, not committing to what doesn't feel right, not forcing answers that are not ready.

This kind of progress is quiet. But it is significant.

Because it protects your alignment.

A Practical Way to Move Through It

If you find yourself in a liminal space, simplify your approach.

Instead of trying to figure out everything at once, focus on what is in front of you.

Notice one decision you are trying to force. Pause. Ask yourself:

Do I actually have enough clarity to decide this right now? Or am I trying to relieve discomfort?

If it is the second, allow yourself to wait. Then shift your focus. What feels aligned today? Not long-term.

Not five years from now. Today.

This is how clarity builds over time.

The Identity Shift That Happens Here

Liminal space often signals an identity shift the version of you that made past decisions is no longer fully aligned. But the next version of you has not fully taken shape yet.

This is why things feel uncertain. You are not lost, you are in transition. Transition is rarely linear.

Liminal space is not a failure. It is a threshold. You are not behind. You are between. Between who you were and who you are becoming.

And while that space can feel uncomfortable, it is also where the most important internal shifts happen.

Clarity will come. But it will not come from forcing decisions.

It comes from staying steady long enough for your internal direction to become clear and that is where confidence becomes real.

Not because everything is figured out, but because you trust yourself while it isn't.



ACHEA REDD

Achea Redd is an author, speaker, and certified mental health coach known for her raw honesty and fearless advocacy. After being diagnosed with Generalised Anxiety Disorder in 2016, Achea transformed her pain into purpose, founding Rooted with Redd Coaching, where she helps clients heal, reclaim their voice, and reconnect with the Divine within.

**Rooted with Redd Coaching: achearedd.com/rooted-with-redd
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Paid Partnership Feature

The Burnout No One Sees in High-Performing Women

By Jennifer Davy | Wellbeing Warrior



You would know if you were slowly burning out. Right? Because burnt out women can't function, but you are holding the whole thing together, so actually, you must be absolutely fine.

I have this kind of conversation with almost every high-performing woman I work with, and that's in over six years of coaching. But it is never at the beginning of our conversations because she is often times too busy telling me how 'fine' she is; a little tired perhaps, a little in need of a holiday but good overall. I know it is not true, but I also know she is not ready to admit it yet.

It is only when we dig deeper, and stop talking about her schedule, her achievements and the very impressive external life she has built that she notices how much bullsh*t she has been telling herself and everyone around her to hide the fact that she feels she is slowly but surely burning out. And at that point, she realises collapse is inevitable and no amount of scheduling will prevent that... if she keeps going the way she is.

The exhaustion, the resentment, the feeling of dread on a Sunday evening as a whole new week faces her and the loneliness is too much to hold for her.

She doesn't know how much longer she can continue like this, but nobody else knows. Everyone thinks she is doing great. They believe her performance. So I tell her that we - meaning all women trying to be everything and do everything - need to stop thinking this is fine and it is down to us to change that narrative for ourselves and our children.

The reason high-performing women miss it.

We have a very specific image of a burnt-out woman. She is not coping and things are falling apart around her. It can be hard to see ourselves in that image because of course that is not us. From the outside, things look great for us. So the idea that you could be burning out beneath all of that success

doesn't make sense. But here is what I know after years of working 1:1 with women. The more capable you are, the more brilliant you are at talking yourself out of how you really feel.

You can give a reason for everything you do, you can justify yourself so well that you could teach classes in it! You are bloody brilliant at it. You absorb what is truly happening for you and you figure out how you can manage going forward because that is always how you have been in this world. And so the cycle continues.

You may have learned at a very young age that women always find a way to keep the standard high, even running on empty. And the people around you, your workplace, your family, the life you've built keeps piling on, because why wouldn't it? You're clearly handling it. Until suddenly you're not.



Photography Jason Skeward



What it actually looks like.

You wake at 3am and your mind is already working. You get through the day on autopilot. Things that were normally fine now drive you crazy and you can't quite explain it, which makes you feel guilty. You have stopped doing the things that used to make you smile because there aren't enough hours in the day, and you honestly don't have the energy anyway. You're everywhere you need to be in body, but your mind and your spirit are not quite present in any of them.

The thing nobody tells you.

The exhaustion is real but it isn't the actual problem; it is a consequence of the problem. In every woman I have worked with, there is a belief running in the background and it is often completely hidden to her. It can sound like 'if I don't do it, who will?' or 'taking a break is nice, but just not possible for me right now.'

You picked them up in childhood, in school, in homes where you saw other women always 'doing', always the last to sit at the table, always picking things up, folding or tidying, driving from here to there.

Always, *always* doing. That is what you saw and that is what you learned women do. So you emulate that now and call it your role as a woman, but those beliefs are old: they belong to someone else and they are running the show.

More sleep, a holiday, a spa day, a new designer handbag will not change them. Even a new morning routine will feel good but won't really change anything long term for you.

The only action that has real impact is looking directly at those beliefs. Identifying them and asking yourself, is this actually true of who I am now? Or is this someone else's story that has been playing in the back of my mind?

What I want you to take from this.

You are a woman who has been very fu*kin' strong for a very long time, in a world that keeps asking you to do more of it, with very little consideration of what that is costing you.

The burnout beneath your success is not your fault. It was inevitable because that is what your belief system told you to do. How could you have done it any other way when you didn't know any different? Here's the good news; you absolutely can change it. By choosing to go deeper, by separating the lies you tell yourself from who you really are, you gain total control over it.

That is the work. It is the greatest gift you can ever give yourself.

With love,

Jennifer xoxo



JENNIFER DAVY

Jennifer Davy is an award-nominated women's empowerment coach, neuroscience-based life strategist, global speaker, and founder of Wellbeing Warrior®. With a background as a secondary school teacher for over 14 years, Jennifer combines neuroscience, personal development, and lived experience to help women break free from self-doubt, emotional overwhelm, and people-pleasing patterns.

www.wellbeingwarrior.ie
 IG [wellbeingwarrior](https://www.instagram.com/wellbeingwarrior).ie

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Unapologetic: I Stopped Abandoning Myself (Without Turning My Ex Into the Enemy)

By Juliette Karaman-van Schaardenburg

“The unapologetic move is not the leaving. The unapologetic move is refusing to abandon yourself while staying kind.”



My divorce lawyer looked at the document we had drawn up together, Karim and I sitting at our kitchen table, mapping out the end of our marriage in a way that did not resemble what she was used to seeing, and she paused, read it again, then looked up at me and said, “Can you give classes on how to do this? It would make my life so much easier,” and there was something in the way she said it that made it clear this was not about admiration, it was about how uncommon it is for two people to sit in the same room at the end of something and not try to win.

That was over fifteen years ago, and what surprises people is not the separation itself but what followed, because Karim is still my best friend, and last Christmas we were all together, his birthday, mine, the children’s, sitting around the same table without tension, without performance, without the invisible lines that so often divide families after a breakup, and our children grew up knowing that love did not leave when the marriage did, it simply changed its role, its expression, and the way it moved between us.

I know what you are thinking, because I hear it every week, and it usually sounds like this: good for you, but my situation is different, and I understand why that thought comes up, because it is easier to place this kind of story in a category that feels separate from your own reality than to consider that something about it might actually be available to you.

Right now, I am supporting five women through separation, all of them ambitious, all of them visible, all of them building something in the world that requires them to show up with clarity and strength, and every one of them has asked me the same question in their own way, which is not about logistics or legal process but about something much more confronting, which is how did you do it without the hatred, how did you move through something that carries so much potential for resentment without letting it define the relationship that followed.

The answer is not as composed as people might expect, because I did not arrive at that place through a single decision or a moment of emotional maturity, and I did not wake up one day feeling spacious and generous about the ending of my marriage, because there were things

in me that I had not yet understood, and those things were already present long before the separation itself.

I had spent years working with women who were carrying sexual trauma in their bodies, holding space for experiences that had never been given language, witnessing what happens when the body closes in response to something it cannot safely process, and I knew this work deeply through the women I supported, but what I had not fully acknowledged was that I was carrying my own version of that experience.

“When emotions take over, intention is not enough. Structure is what holds what feelings alone cannot.”

I know what it is to lie next to someone you love and feel your body shut down without being able to explain it, to feel a distance that does not match your intentions, to question yourself quietly while everything on the outside appears intact, and to live inside that confusion without the words to make sense of it, because when there is no language for what is happening inside you, it does not disappear, it shows up in the way you respond, in the way you withdraw, in the way simple.

What it costs to not understand your own internal experience is not just personal, it becomes relational, because without awareness, reactions take over, and once reactions take over, the space between two people becomes charged in ways that are difficult to repair.

So when people ask me how Karim and I did not end up in conflict, I am very clear that it was not because we were exceptionally kind or endlessly patient, because there were moments where neither of those things were available, but what held us was something far more reliable than intention alone.

It was structure.

Something defined, something agreed, something we could return to when emotions were not steady and clarity was not accessible.

One prompt.

Three responses.

That is the entire practice.

The prompt is simple and direct: tell me what you need me to know right now, and what matters here is not the wording itself but the agreement that one person speaks while the other listens without interruption, without correction, and without turning it into a dialogue before the expression has fully landed.

The responses are limited, and they are limited on purpose, because it is the limitation that creates safety.

The first response is thank you, which is not agreement and not validation, but simple acknowledgment, receiving what has been said without reacting to it or reshaping it.

The second response is clarify that, which is only used when something has not been fully understood, not as a way to challenge but as a way to genuinely understand what is being communicated.

The third response is summarise that, which requires you to reflect back what you heard so the other person knows they have been received, not interpreted, not analysed, but heard.

There is no defending, no fixing, no redirecting, no adding your own experience into the moment, no “but what about me,” because the moment you step outside of the structure, the conversation returns to the patterns that created the disconnection in the first place.

This practice did not appear overnight, it comes from twenty-seven years of work, beginning with my role as a SENCO, supporting children on the autism spectrum to recognise and name their emotions, to understand what was happening inside them and find ways to communicate it without becoming overwhelmed, and over time I refined this work across hundreds of couples and women, watching the same dynamics repeat when there is no container strong enough to hold what people are feeling.

When my own relationship reached the point where it could not continue



in the same way where it could not continue in the same way, this was the structure I returned to, not because I felt calm or clear, but because I knew that without it, we would default to reaction, and reaction would take us somewhere neither of us wanted to go, especially with children watching how we handled something that would shape their understanding of relationships for years to come.

What I am seeing more and more now is a pattern that is not being named openly, women whose lives have expanded, whose visibility has grown, whose internal world has shifted in ways that the relationship they are in was not built to hold, and this is not about blame or failure, it is about change that has not yet been understood.

The men in these situations are not villains, and it does not serve anyone to turn them into that, because many of them are willing, present, and trying, but they are often facing a version of their partner that no longer fits the structure they created together, and without the language or tools to navigate that shift, confusion becomes tension.

At the same time, the woman herself may not have full clarity either, she simply knows that something no longer feels aligned, that the way she has been existing is no longer sustainable, and without understanding that this is an internal shift, it can easily be projected outward as something the other person has done wrong.

This is where the idea of being unapologetic becomes real, because it is often misunderstood as something loud or confrontational, when in reality it is something much quieter and much more demanding, which is the refusal to abandon yourself while still choosing to treat the other

person with respect, especially when there are children involved who are learning from everything they see.

Because they are always learning, not just from what is said but from how it is said, from how conflict is handled, from how two people can move through something difficult without turning against each other, and that becomes part of how they understand love, separation, and connection.

If you want to try this, sit across from your ex, your partner, or even your child, use the prompt, tell me what you need me to know right now, set a timer for three minutes each, and commit to using only the three responses, even when it feels uncomfortable, even when there is something in you that wants to step outside of it, and watch what happens when the structure holds what emotions alone cannot.

Because what most people rely on in these moments is intention, and intention is not enough when emotions are high, structure is what carries you when intention is not accessible.

I stopped abandoning myself a long time ago, not through one decision but through repeated choices to stay present with what was true for me, even when it was uncomfortable, even when it required change, and I did not have to destroy my family to do it.

Neither do you.

If you cannot find your way through it on your own, reach out, because I have been in the places that feel impossible to navigate, and I know that with the right support, it is possible to move through this without losing yourself or the relationships that still matter.



JULIETTE KARAMAN-VAN SCHAARDENBURG

Juliette Karaman is a touch, intimacy, and relationship expert who helps ambitious women and the men who love them come back to themselves and each other. Host of The Scrumptious Woman podcast. 27+ years in practice across 20+ countries. Her Intimacy and Communication Cards come in a couples version and a family and friends version. Try 10 free prompts at <https://couplecards.netlify.app/free/friends/play>

www.feelfullyou.com
IG @juliettekaraman

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The Visibility Lie:

Why Being Seen Isn't What You Think It Is

By Sarah Lloyd

If you're a woman in business, you've probably absorbed some version of this story: "Success is simple. Just show up. Post more. Be visible."

The implication is clear: if you're not being seen enough, you are the problem. But for many women, that story doesn't land as motivation. It lands as pressure, shame, and quiet self-blame.

There's a lie at the heart of so much visibility advice. 'Being seen' is treated as a purely external act, when in reality it's an internal, relational, and nervous-system experience. Visibility is not just about who's looking at you. It's about whether you feel safe while you are being seen. Performative PR is over. We are searching for coherence and congruence. Embodied visibility is the way.

It Goes Deeper Than Strategy

Underneath the tactics, many women carry deeper questions: Is it safe to be fully myself here? What happens if I'm judged or attacked? Will this cost me relationships, respect, or opportunities?

These aren't hypothetical worries. I had an old boss who would "let" me sit in on new business meetings — I was the 'good girl' wheeled out, allowed to talk briefly before he'd tell the room: "What she means to say is this." Perhaps you've experienced being talked over in boardrooms, labelled "too emotional," or grown up in environments where being outspoken was punished.

So when a woman hesitates to go live or publish a bold opinion, it's rarely because she doesn't care enough. It's often because her body remembers what happened last time she stood out. "Just keep showing up" ignores that reality, equating hesitation with laziness rather than honouring it.

Your Nervous System Is the Gatekeeper

Most visibility conversations focus on strategy: know your niche, batch your content, post consistently. But that



assumes you can simply decide to be visible and your body will follow.

Your nervous system is the gatekeeper of your visibility. If it feels like standing under a harsh spotlight with no exits, your system will do what it's wired to do: freeze (overthink, never hit publish), fawn (soften your message to avoid backlash), flight (stay "busy behind the scenes"), or fight (push into burnout).

This isn't a mindset weakness. It's biology. Sustainable visibility asks a different question: how can I expand my capacity to be seen without overriding my system's need for safety? That might mean starting with smaller rooms, choosing less overwhelming formats while your capacity builds, or practising visibility in communities where you feel supported. When your body feels safer, visibility stops feeling like self-betrayal and starts to feel like self-expression.

The Myth of Constant Exposure

Another strand of the visibility lie is the expectation of constant exposure: show up every day, post on every platform, never let the algorithm forget you. But a life of uninterrupted exposure isn't visibility — it's exhaustion.

Healthy visibility includes rhythm: seasons of being public and outward-facing, followed by seasons of stepping back and refilling creatively. It also includes boundaries — parts of your life that are never up for public consumption. You don't owe your audience 24/7 access to your inner world. Privacy is not hiding. It's self-respect.

Why Visibility Hits Different for Women

Historically, women who took up space — politically, spiritually, creatively — paid a price. Those stories don't just live in history books; they sit in our nervous systems and family lines. So when you step forward with a strong voice and a visible brand, you are not just doing a marketing task. You are breaking a pattern. That's why internal resistance can feel disproportionate to the external act.

Many women also navigate a relentless duality: be visible, but not "too much." Be strong, but not intimidating. Be emotional, but not "unprofessional." Without awareness, visibility becomes a tightrope of perfectionism instead of a grounded expression of who you really are.

From Performance to Presence

True visibility isn't a performance; it's presence. Less "how do I appear flawless?" and more: "How can I be as honest and grounded as possible, while still feeling safe?" and "Where is my presence actually needed, versus where am I posting from fear or comparison?"

A more honest approach starts here:

Let safety be part of the strategy. Before you plan your content calendar, ask: where do I feel safest and most myself? Design from there.

Honour your seasons. You are not a machine. You don't lose your authority when you step back to breathe. You deepen it.

Stop pathologising your hesitation. Meet resistance with curiosity, not criticism. Your "visibility block" is often a wise part of you asking for reassurance, not a saboteur to crush.

Choose resonance over reach. Visibility doesn't mean being known by everyone; it means being truly felt by the right ones.

The Truth Beneath the Lie

The visibility lie says: "If you're not constantly out there, you're failing." A deeper truth: you are allowed to choose how, when, and with whom you're seen. Your pace, your boundaries, and your inner alignment are not obstacles to visibility — they are the foundation of it.

Being seen isn't about relentlessly pushing yourself into the spotlight. It's about building a life and business where you can stand in the light and actually stay with yourself. That kind of visibility may not always look the loudest. But it's the kind that lasts.



Photographer Abrar Sajjad

SARAH LLOYD

Sarah Lloyd is a storyteller and alchemist. She is also an award winning Global PR expert, author, mentor, Reiki Master, healer, speak and mum of two. In the media and PR business for 25 years, Sarah created ISPR in 2017 to embrace a more flexible way of BEing. ISPR has had the pleasure of serving Female Leaders, Entrepreneurs & Authors; mind, body & spirit businesses, festivals, and CEO's of innovative technology and health & wellbeing businesses.

www.iamsarahlloyd.com
sarah@iamsarahlloyd.com

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Five Reasons You Keep Attracting Holiday Flings Instead of the Life Love Partner You Deserve

By Rachel Mailer

For years, I thought attraction was enough.

If there was chemistry, if he was charming, if the conversation flowed and he seemed interested, I would let myself hope. I dated through the chaos of modern dating for years, using all of the apps - Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Plenty of Fish, blind dates, speed dating, even Zoom dates in lockdown. And more than once, I found myself caught in connections that felt exciting at first, but led nowhere meaningful.

On paper, it looked like I was putting myself out there. In reality, I was available for almost-love.

My turning point came after a date that left me feeling so uncomfortable, so deeply not myself, that I got on a bus in the wrong direction just to get away from him. I remember sitting there thinking, What am I doing? Not just in that moment, but in my dating life as a whole. When I finally got home and felt safe, I sat with myself and reflected on a deeper question: what energy was I projecting into the world that was attracting these types of Men? That moment changed everything.

Because I realised the goal was never to become more desirable. It was to become more discerning. To stop dating from hope, pressure, or a need for external validation, and start dating from feminine energy, self trust, clear boundaries, and the depth of my attachment theory training. You do not keep attracting holiday flings and situationships because you are not enough. You keep attracting them because you are in a way that leaves the door open to temporary Aree, and misaligned love.

Here are five reasons why.

1. You are prioritising chemistry over clarity

Chemistry is easy to mistake for compatibility, especially when you are craving connection. A spark can make you feel alive, chosen, and full of a possibility. But chemistry alone cannot tell you whether a man is emotionally available, aligned with your future, or capable of healthy love. That was one of the biggest lessons. Stop asking, Do you like him? And start asking, Does this man align with the life I want to build? That shift changes everything.

2. You are romanticising potential instead of honouring your standards

Many high-value career driven women lose their standards when they meet someone they really fancy. They call it being open-minded, but often it is fear of missing out on love. I had to learn this the hard way. I used to give too much weight to who a man could become, instead of paying attention to who he was right now. And that is exactly where situationships thrive. In this gap between reality and fantasy.

Your Life Love partner does not need to be imagined into suitability. He will clearly show you.



3. *You are listening to words more than actions*

A man can say all the right things and still be unavailable for the relationship you want and deserve. I used to overvalue the emotional intensity of a connection. If he seemed keen, said I was different, or made me feel special, I would hold onto that even when the consistency was missing. But intensity is not intention. Words do not build trust, actions do. The right man brings clarity and calm. He does not leave you decoding mixed signals and calling it romance.

4. *You are dating from scarcity instead of self-worth*

This one goes deep.

When you are afraid time is running out, and you can feel that clock ticking, and no one better is coming, it becomes much easier to tolerate crumbs. You accept less than you deserve because part of you is more afraid of losing the connection than losing yourself. What changed for me was learning to anchor into feminine energy in a way that was not performative, but embodied. Feminine energy is not about pretending to be soft, small, or endlessly available. It is about being deeply rooted in your worth. It is Queen energy. It is confidence. It is radiating boundaries without apology.

This is what makes you irresistible to the right partner - not your hobbies, not how accommodating you are, not how much you can prove you are a catch. By setting your Non-Negotiables and ensuring that all of your actions align perfectly with these.

5. *You are hoping for commitment instead of dating intentionally for it*

Hope is beautiful, but hope without standards will keep you stuck. I had to become intentional. I got clear on my why. I asked myself; what is it about a relationship that I want, which is why I'm going to put myself through this online dating process? I defined my Non-Negotiables and aligned every aspect of my life to accommodate having a partner within it. I stopped handing over emotional access to men who did not earn it. I paid attention to actions and I gave time for the man to reveal his true intention through using my *Spread Dating Method*.

And from that place, everything shifted. I met my partner in February 2022, not because I finally became more lovable, but because I finally stopped entertaining what was not aligned with the love I truly desired.

I used the very dating strategy I now teach through Rachel Mailer Coaching - getting clear on my why, defining my Non-Negotiables, leading with feminine energy in person and on my dating profile, honouring boundaries, and dating with intention. That is what led me to the relationship I had been calling in.

We got married on 21st October 2025, and I am living proof that when you date with intention, self-worth, and queen feminine energy, you stop settling for almost-love and make space for the real thing.

The shift

If this article is hitting a nerve, let it be an invitation, not a judgement.

You are not behind. You are not too much. You are not asking for too much. But you may need to raise the standard of what you are available for.

Ask yourself this:

Where in my dating life am I still choosing chemistry over clarity?

Where am I holding onto potential instead of truth?

What energy am I projecting into the world, and what is it calling in?

Where do I need stronger boundaries to honour the relationship I actually want?

Notice what happens when you stop chasing the spark and start choosing yourself.

An invitation to Step Into Your Sparkle

The love you desire is not found by abandoning yourself to keep someone interested. It is found when you embody the woman who knows her worth, honours her standards, and trust herself enough to walk away from what is not right.

You do not need to shrink, chase, or prove.

You need to return to your Queen Energy.

To your confidence.

To your boundaries.

To the part of you that already knows what kind of love you were made for.

And if you are ready to explore whether the energy you are projecting is magnetising your man or pushing him away, take my free Queen Energy Dating Quiz and Discover the shift you're dating life has been asking for.

Because this is not the end of your story.

It is the beginning of your love journey, the one that you'll be telling your family for years to come.



RACHEL MAILER

Rachel is a High-Value Dating Expert guiding ambitious, career-driven women to attract emotionally available protector-provider partners. Through refined dating strategy, unapologetic boundaries, and embodied feminine energy, she empowers women to call in aligned, lasting love that honours their success, standards, and sovereignty.

www.rachelmailercoaching.com
IG @rachelmailercoaching

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The Day I Stopped Saying Sorry

By *Yvonne Hector-John*



There was a moment, just before I walked on stage at an International Women's Day event in 2017, when I genuinely believed I was going to die. Not from the lights. Not from the audience. From the truth I was about to tell.

I was forty-five. I had been carrying two stories for over twenty years. The first: I had ended two pregnancies in my twenties - neither planned, neither in relationships that welcomed them. The second: when I finally tried for a baby in my early forties, my body did not cooperate, patting me on the back with words of encouragement - "keep trying."

I had told myself for years that one of these stories cancelled the other out. That having previously said no to motherhood, I had forfeited the right to grieve when motherhood quietly, finally, said no to me.

I stood backstage hyperventilating, convinced that the moment I named both stories aloud, every woman in that room would decide I deserved this. Somehow, I took a breath. I walked on. I opened my mouth. And I told my truth.

What happened next is the reason I am still here, still writing.

A woman came up to me afterwards and said, me too. Then another. Then another.

The truth, once spoken, made room for theirs. That was the day I stopped saying sorry for not becoming a mum.

Not in any complete way. Not for ever. Shame doesn't

dissolve on a stage. But something cracked open. Something I had been bracing against for over twenty years quietly let go.

Here is what I have come to understand about being a childless not by choice (CNBC) woman in a world that prefers the miracle baby ending. Our stories are not allowed to end where they actually end.

When I was diagnosed with unexplained infertility, the questions that followed were never about my grief. They were about my next move. Have you tried IVF? Have you considered adoption? Have you thought about using donor eggs or surrogacy? As though grief were a pothole on the road to motherhood, and the only acceptable thing to do with it was to drive faster.

I did not want to drive faster. I wanted to lie down on the road and cry.

But lying down was not in the script. The script demanded resolution. A baby. A breakthrough. A reframe. "Everything happens for a reason". "God knows best". "You'd have made a great mum" - well-meaning and yet devastating platitudes.

The script does not have a place for the woman whose IVF stopped at eleven rounds.

It does not have a place for the woman whose adoption fell through at the very last moment. It does not have a place for the woman whose partner did not arrive in time, or the woman, like me, whose body said no, or the woman who had to grieve a future she had once been ambivalent about.

So, we apologise.

We apologise for our grief, because it makes others uncomfortable. We apologise for our presence at baby showers, because we make the air heavier. We apologise for our absence at family gatherings, because we are that person who could not bear another round of “when’s it your turn?” We apologise to women with children, for not being one of them. We apologise to our partners for the baby we could not carry to term. We apologise to women without children, for not being further along the road than we are. We apologise, mostly, to ourselves - for taking up so much space with a loss the world refuses to call a loss.

In 2020, I had a hysterectomy. They told me my “diseased” womb had to come out - fibroids, adenomyosis, years of pain. In preparation for the surgery, I sat down and wrote a goodbye letter to my womb. I told her she had let me down. I told her I forgave her. I told her I was angry. I told her thank you. All truths being held at once. It was the first time I had let myself say all of those things in the same breath. The page held them. It did not ask me to choose.

I was forty-eight by then. I had written my book *Dreaming of a Life Unlived*. I had stood on stages apologetically telling my whole story, including the parts I had once been certain would make me unlovable. And still - even then - there were rooms I walked into bracing for the question: Do you have children? as the conversation turned to school runs and children’s milestones I couldn’t quite bear to hear. There were Mother’s Days and other family holidays I survived by hiding under the duvet. This is what I want women to know who are still in that bracing. You do not have to wait until you are healed to stop apologising.

Healing hasn’t got a finish line. I am not on the other side of grief, holding the door open for you to walk through to a place where it no longer hurts. I am on the road, like you, a few steps further along, looking back. I still feel the ache. I still notice the (sometimes unwelcoming) rooms I do not belong in. The grief did not end. My relationship to it changed.

What changed is this. I stopped treating my grief as evidence against me. I stopped treating my history as something I had to earn forgiveness for. I stopped asking the world to validate my loss before I was allowed to feel it.

And the most surprising thing happened. The shame, which had been so loud for so long, became quieter. Not gone. Quieter. She still shows up - but now I know what she is. She is the part of me that learned, somewhere along the way, that I was only allowed to grieve if my story ended with a baby in my arms.

It does not. And I am still here. And so are we. At another event, a fifty-year-old stood up and said, “I am childless...” and stopped halfway through the sentence because she had never said those words out loud before.

This is why I run Healing Hearts Circles. This is why I wrote the book. This is why I support women with the unrealised dreams of motherhood. This is why I keep telling the whole story, terminations and all. Because somewhere, right now, there is a woman who believes her story does not deserve to be told, who believes that she needs to apologise for not becoming a mum, for living a life away from the expected norm. And somewhere, right now, there is a room of women waiting for her to stop apologising.

So, I will leave you with the question I had to learn to ask myself, and the question I now ask the women who find their way to me:

What part of your story have you been waiting for permission to tell?

You do not need it. You never did. The permission was always yours.

You are not asking the world’s forgiveness for being here. You are not asking to be fixed. You are not the cautionary tale at the end of someone else’s miracle.

You are the story.

Own it.

Tell it.

And do not say sorry for any of it.



YVONNE HECTOR-JOHN

Yvonne Hector-John is the author of *Dreaming of a Life Unlived: Intimate Stories and Portraits of Women Without Children*, a psychodynamic therapist, and public speaker centring the lived experience of women who are childless not by choice. A graduate of the Gateway Women Plan B Mentorship Programme, she facilitates Reignite Weekends, is an ambassador for World Childless Week, and founded Healing Hearts Circles — creating rooms where women stop apologising.

www.findingmyplanb.com
IG @y.vonnej

From Hard Worker to High Performer, Why Nutrition Is The Missing Link.

How eating for abundance is now the unapologetic standard for women 35+

By Natalie Guyan and Catherine Lynch



“When pressure and struggle feel like achievement, you’re not building yourself, you’re breaking yourself.”

It was 3 days before my daughter's 5th birthday, I didn't know if I would make it.

I'd been admitted to ICU and was in isolation.

As I stared at my reflection in my phone's camera, my body hooked up to tubes and wires, I knew something had to change.

Have you ever had a moment in life where you come face to face with yourself, knowing you were literally hanging off a cliff with your health, business or finances, there I was with all 3.

I had to make a conscious choice.

My body couldn't keep up with my ambition.

What I didn't know then and what I know now is this, and it's something we see with the high achieving women we work with.

How we do one thing is how we do everything. The same woman who wears achievement as a badge of honour will set her standards in all areas so high that sometimes her superpowers are also her kryptonite.

The desire to achieve, to succeed, to do more, will also subconsciously seek out the most heart racing workout to burn maximum calories paired with the latest diet to get the most dramatic results.

Struggle becomes confused as safety, your nervous system and subconscious learn to seek pain as validation, when pressure and struggle feel like achievement, you're not building yourself, you're breaking yourself down. On the surface it can feel like "discipline".

We've learned that we must sacrifice in order to be successful. Over time your psyche becomes that of a woman who is an expert at seeking out the uphill battles that proves her worth by overcoming them.

However, the difference with high performance isn't how many hours you work, or the struggles you face, it's the self mastery of how you align and manage your energy. To break glass ceilings without ending up in burnout.

Knowing your worth isn't about your stripe balance, your title or how much you can endure. It's about actively choosing standards from a place of knowing you have nothing to prove, that you deserve to thrive,

that you are enough, and recognising that those choices start with how you show up and nourish yourself.

THE MYTHS WE WERE TOLD:

If you've been around since before the 1980s, you've been sold the same lies about health.

Eat less. Move more. Low fat is healthy. If it isn't hard, it isn't worth it.

For women over 40, this messaging hasn't just been unhelpful. It's been actively destructive.

“Your body is not separate from your success. It is the asset everything else is built on.”

We work with women who have been dieting since their early teens. Some since childhood. Women who have wasted years to calorie restriction, to overexercising, to earning and un-earning their food, and who get to their 40s with slowing metabolisms, worsening hormonal symptoms, brain fog, exhaustion, and a growing frustration that no matter what they do, nothing seems to work the way it used to.

So they do more, *try harder*, eat even less.

The fatigue and lack of energy impacts everything from their body to their confidence to their cognitive ability to their performance in business. Because ambition needs fuel and we simply cannot run on empty.

And this is the big lesson in all of this.

I came out of that hospital bed and changed everything.

From running and slogging through bootcamps on zero calories, low carb and no fat, to eating in abundance and training for strength. Not only did I recover, but I went on to build a seven figure business off of the back of the unapologetic confidence that came from working smarter with an energy first mentality.

Here's what I learned, and what Catherine, our Certified Hormone Specialist and Behavioural Psychology Coach, and I reinforce with every single client we work with:

Top performers don't separate their health from their success. They use it as leverage. Your ideal high-ticket client invests in who you are being, your energy, your presence, your capacity to deliver on your promises.

And if you're running on empty, they feel it. Your body is not separate from your success. It's the foundation of it.

Because a well fuelled, unapologetic woman, is a dangerous woman.

WHAT YOUR BODY IS ACTUALLY DOING:

When you chronically restrict calories on top of the high cortisol load of running a business, a family, and a life, your body fights back.

Elevated cortisol can cause an increase in weight. Particularly around the middle. And in perimenopause, with declining levels of estrogen and progesterone, this effect is amplified.

Calorie restriction itself is a physiological stressor. Dieting further increases cortisol, which can accelerate muscle loss, slows metabolism, impairs cognitive function and disrupts the hormonal balance that women navigating perimenopause are already working hard to maintain.

In short, it depletes the very energy that your business and your life run on.

HERE'S THE FIX

For decades, dietary fat was the villain. The logic seemed reasonable enough. Fat has nine calories per gram, more than twice the amount of protein or carbohydrates, so slash the fat to slash the calories. Calorie deficit equals fat loss.

What that guidance missed entirely is that fat is not just a calorie source. It is the raw material from which your hormones are made.

Estrogen. Progesterone. Testosterone. Your sex hormones cannot be manufactured in your body without dietary fat. And as women move through perimenopause, already navigating a drop in these hormones, a low-fat diet is quite literally the opposite of what you need.

You'll also find it harder to lose body fat, because without adequate fat intake and metabolic flexibility, the body becomes carb-dependent, insulin sensitivity drops, and appetite becomes harder to regulate.



TRY THIS INSTEAD

1. Eat fat to supercharge your mood

Olive oil, avocado, oily fish, eggs, nuts, seeds. Fats support hormone production, reduce inflammation, improve brain function, and teach your body to use fat as fuel.

2. Protein at each meal.

Protein stabilises blood sugar, eliminates cravings, and provides zinc and iron that support testosterone production in women over 40 essential for lean muscle mass.

3. Eat breakfast.

Cortisol peaks first thing in the morning. Running on coffee and adrenaline until midday keeps your body in full stress mode. Eating within an hour of waking signals to your brain and nervous system, there is enough. We're safe.

4. Time your carbohydrates.

Complex carbohydrates around training and in the evening support sleep, recovery, and hormonal regulation. For perimenopausal women, eliminating them entirely can actively worsen the very symptoms you're trying to fix.

5. Do the identity work

Nutrition knowledge is not what most women are missing. What they are missing is the identity work that makes the knowledge connect on a deep emotional and subconscious level.

The most powerful thing a high-achieving woman can do for her health is decide, from a place of genuine self-knowledge, that she deserves to be fuelled. That nourishment is not a reward. Choosing the more supportive path is not weakness, it's high performance.

THE TRANSFORMATION

The shift from hard worker to high performer isn't about doing less.

It's about energy management, knowing when to push and when to pull back, not once in a blue moon, but intentionally and strategically, regulating your body and nervous system daily, with nourishment your body thrives on.

What it comes down to is this:

Your health and your body is the asset from which everything else flows.

A high performer knows that. And she fuels accordingly.

Hustle 'N' Health is an online Health, Hormones & High Performance coaching business for ambitious, high-achieving women 40+ who want time-saving strategies to strengthen their bodies, minds, and businesses to elevate both health and wealth.

Co-founded by Natalie Guyan, a TEDx speaker, MNU Nutritionist, Master Personal Trainer, and Behaviour Change Specialist with 21+ years in business, and Catherine Lynch, B.A., M.A., a Certified Hormone Specialist, Behavioural Psychology Coach, and former professional athlete.

Together, they deliver whole-woman coaching for those ready to shift from hard worker to high performer.

FREE: The Hustle 'N' Health Nutrition & Supplements Guide for Women 40+ scan the QR code.



Photography Gold Fish

HUSTLE N HEALTH

Nat & Cat are partners in business and life, together they're on a mission to inspire and empower as many women as possible to fuel their ambition and live without limitations using the power of nutrition and strength training.

www.hustlenhealth.com
IG @hustle_n_health

Paid Partnership Feature

The Mid Year Audit : 5 Moves To Bullet Proof Your 2026

By Taylor Smith

There's a very specific kind of delusion women enter around mid-year, and it usually starts somewhere between panic-booking a summer holiday you absolutely could have waited another three weeks to book, buying the "cute little bits" in HomeSense that somehow total £74, and saying things like, "Right. From September, I'm really sorting my finances out." September, apparently, is where all our future stability lives.

The financial equivalent of eating chips off your child's plate and declaring you "haven't really had lunch."

But I think that's why mid-year wealth audits matter so much. Not because we need another finance podcast hosted by a man who thinks joy is irresponsible spending, but because halfway through the year is usually where the fantasy falls away and the truth taps us on the shoulder. You can hold entire households, businesses and relationships together while secretly hoping no unexpected expense arrives before payday.

Women carry so much invisible responsibility that we often mistake survival for stability. So this isn't really just about money. It's about confidence, power, self-trust, and becoming the kind of woman who stops abandoning herself every time the numbers feel uncomfortable. Because wealth isn't just about what's in your account. It's about how safe, capable and calm you feel in your own life.

So here are the five moves I genuinely believe can bulletproof your 2026 emotionally, mentally and financially. Because honestly? I'm no longer interested in looking like I've got it together. I'd quite like to actually have it together.

1. Audit What Your Money Is Actually Funding

Most women know roughly what they earn, but far fewer know what their money is building. That was the uncomfortable realisation I had halfway through this year because when I actually sat down and looked properly (not through the haze of "I'm sure it's fine"), I realised a huge amount of my spending wasn't funding peace, freedom or future stability. It was funding recovery. Recovery from stress, exhaustion and carrying too much.

Nothing humbles you faster than checking your direct debits and discovering you're still paying for an app you downloaded during a hormonal identity crisis in 2023.

And no, Susan, the oat latte probably isn't the issue. But lifestyle creep is real, and emotional spending has a way of disguising itself as "treating yourself," especially when you've spent most of your life being the one who holds everything together.

The real shift happens when you stop asking, "Can I afford this?" and start asking, "What is this habit funding long term?" Because your spending habits are either building freedom or keeping you stuck. Most women never pause long enough to notice which one they're creating. That's the audit (said with love).

2. Know Your Number (The One That Actually Changes Your Life)

I think one of the biggest reasons women feel financially anxious is because so many of us are operating inside vague panic. We want more money, more security, more ease, more freedom, but very few women have actually sat down and worked out the number that would genuinely change their life.

And no, I'm not talking about fantasy millionaire money. I'm talking about real-life safety money. The number where your nervous system relaxes a little and you exhale. Maybe it's your freedom number, emergency fund number, or simply the number that helps your nervous system exhale. Whatever number it is, you need to know it.

I remember hearing this sentence during a live event: "You cannot build financial confidence around vague panic."

Once you know your numbers, everything becomes less emotionally loaded.

Women are taught to survive financially, not understand financially. There's a difference. I also think many women secretly fear looking at the numbers because they worry the numbers will confirm their worst fears about themselves; that they're behind. But avoidance is expensive, both financially and emotionally. And weirdly, the women I know who feel most powerful with money are not always the richest women. They're the women who know exactly where they stand.

3. Build an Emergency Fund Bigger Than Your Pride

I used to think resilience meant being able to "figure things out."

Women are exceptional at figuring things out, but somewhere along the way we confused self-rescue with strength. Too many women are functioning as their own bailout plan.

But true financial confidence isn't constantly rescuing yourself from emergencies, it's preparing for them. Nothing changed my confidence more than knowing an unexpected bill wouldn't emotionally take me out for three business days. That kind of peace is deeply underrated because emergency savings aren't just money sitting there. They're breathing room, options, self-trust and nervous system safety.

The internet glamorises chaos, not quiet financial stability.

But honestly? That's the real grown-woman stuff. Not panic, not adrenaline, not pretending everything's fine because you're "good under pressure." Of course you're good under pressure. Most women are. That doesn't mean you should have to live there permanently.

4. Increase Your Income Before You Reduce Your Joy

I need women to hear me when I say this: you cannot budget your way into the life you secretly want if your income stays emotionally capped.

Women are constantly told to spend less and shrink more when, in reality, many don't actually have an overspending problem. What they struggle with is under-earning, undercharging, visibility and confidence.

Some women are trying to create luxury-level emotional safety on survival-level income while still apologising for wanting more. That's not empowerment, that's exhaustion with good branding.

And yes, financial responsibility matters. But there comes a point where the conversation has to become, "How do I earn more?" not just, "How do I deprive myself better?" That might mean raising your prices, negotiating your salary or finally putting yourself forward.

Every financial leap I've made arrived with nausea,

not confidence. It was usually more like, "Right then. I'm going to do it before I overthink myself into a different personality."

And yes, bold moves can fail, but hesitation has a cost too. Every year women postpone themselves waiting to feel "ready" is another year spent watching other people build lives they secretly want. This ends now.

5. Learn One Financial Skill Your Future Self Will Thank You For

I think many women carry shame around money, not because they're incapable, but because they were never taught. Investing sounds intimidating, pensions sound boring, tax feels overwhelming, and stocks feel "not for people like me." So what do we do? We outsource, avoid and detach.

But confidence comes from competence, and competence comes with practice. You don't need to become a finance expert overnight, you just need to refuse to stay disconnected from your own future.

Imagine how different women would feel if they understood compound interest, pensions, ISAs, investing and debt well enough to make confident decisions. That knowledge changes your relationship with yourself.

Financial literacy is self-trust.

And maybe bulletproofing your 2026 isn't about becoming a completely different woman. Maybe it's finally trusting the woman you already are enough to take her seriously.

Because maybe the real flex isn't looking like you have it all together. Maybe it's becoming the woman who no longer abandons herself every time the numbers make her uncomfortable.

If reading this has made you realise you're tired of operating in "vague panic" when it comes to your finances, maybe this is your sign to stop trying to figure it all out alone.

Taylor Smith FCCA is a financial strategist and the founder of Taylor Smith & Co., a modern consultancy helping women build clarity, confidence and long-term financial security in a way that feels empowering, approachable and completely free from shame or intimidating finance jargon.



TAYLOR SMITH

Taylor Smith is the founder of Taylor Smith & Co., a modern accountancy and financial advisory firm helping women create clarity, confidence and long-term financial security without shame, overwhelm or intimidating jargon. Known for her honest, relatable and emotionally intelligent approach to money, Taylor combines strategic financial guidance with real conversations about self-worth, visibility and financial empowerment. Through her work, she helps women stop operating from survival mode and start building wealth from a place of calm, capability and self-trust.

If you're ready to feel more secure in your business, money and future, I'd love to invite you to book a 20min Discovery Call with me or come and say hello over on Instagram at @taylorsmithandco www.taylorsmithandco.com

A Stylist's Guide to Dressing With Ease

By Michelle Barrett

“Confidence is not something you can buy. It comes from feeling comfortable in your own skin and shopping intentionally.”



If you've ever stood in front of a wardrobe full of clothes and still felt like you had nothing to wear, you're in the right place. My work is not about chasing trends or dressing to please anyone else. It's about clarity, ease and learning how to dress for now.

I've spent my entire working life around clothes, fit and visual storytelling. For 25 years, I built my career as a stylist in TV and film. I worked behind the scenes creating characters through wardrobe, shaping how someone is perceived in a single glance and solving practical problems fast. Over the years I've been fortunate to work with well known names including Emma Thompson, Katy Perry, Jim Broadbent and Aaron Taylor Johnson. People sometimes assume that working with celebrities must be all glamour.

The reality is mostly problem solving. You have a brief, a body, a budget, a time limit and a camera that picks up every detail. You learn how fabric behaves, how colour reads in different light and how a cut can either support someone or fight them. But the biggest lesson from all those years on set was never about perfection. It was about something that matters far more than any label: confidence is not something you can buy. It comes from feeling comfortable in your own skin and shopping intentionally. When you feel like yourself, you move differently. You speak differently. You take up space without apologising. Your wardrobe becomes a tool, not a daily negotiation.

Why wardrobes stop working

There are different stages in a woman's life when her wardrobe can feel out of sync with who she is. Style often stops feeling straightforward. Bodies change. Lifestyles change. Energy changes. Sometimes it's menopause. Sometimes it's returning to work after years away. Sometimes it's a divorce, a bereavement, a move, having a child or simply the quiet realisation that you've been dressing on autopilot for too long.

I hear the same phrases again and again.

"I don't know what suits me anymore."

"I feel invisible."

"I don't want to look frumpy."

"I used to have style and now I've lost it."

"My body has changed and nothing works anymore."



If you've ever thought any of those things, please know this: you haven't lost your style. You've just outgrown your old formula. When we're younger, we can often get away with outfits that don't really fit our lifestyle or our body. We can buy for a fantasy version of ourselves because we haven't yet learned what actually works. Later, the gap between what you own and what you wear becomes impossible to ignore. You end up with a wardrobe full of clothes but nothing to wear. Not because you need more, but because you need a better system.

What I took from TV and film styling

Working in TV and film taught me how quickly clothes communicate. On camera, everything is amplified. A neckline can change the entire mood of a character. A colour can make someone look powerful, tired, fresh or approachable. A fabric can move beautifully or cling in all the wrong ways. The biggest lesson was never about perfection. It was about intention. A costume is not just a costume. It is a decision that supports the story. Your wardrobe can do exactly the same.

You don't need to dress like anyone else. You don't need to dress for the algorithm or the imaginary critic in your head. You need to dress for your life, your body and your taste. When your days are full, your mental load is high and your calendar is relentless, your wardrobe should not be another source of friction. It should make mornings easier and help you feel ready.

My approach: Clarity, Plan, Ease

1) First, we get **clarity**. That might mean identifying your best colours so you stop buying pieces that drain you, understanding your proportions so you can choose cuts that feel balanced and confident, or defining your personal style and becoming brave enough to embrace it. Without clarity, shopping becomes expensive guesswork. You buy things that never quite become favourites, keep pieces because they were expensive rather than useful, and repeat the same safe outfit even when it isn't really you.



2) Next, we build **a plan**. Not one that requires a whole new wardrobe, but one that makes what you already own work harder. We look at what you wear, what you avoid and why, and identify the gaps that are stopping outfits from coming together. Often it's not the big pieces that are missing. It's the supporting cast: the right shoes, the right cut, the right jacket length that makes everything else look better and feel more intentional.

3) Finally, we make it with **ease**. Style should not be another job. That's why I love capsule thinking. Not minimalism for its own sake, but reducing decision fatigue and creating outfits that repeat beautifully. When you have fewer pieces that genuinely work together, you wear more of what you own and stop wasting money. A great wardrobe isn't the biggest wardrobe. It's the most coherent one.

“You do not need to become someone else to have style. You need clarity on what works for you now and a simple plan you can repeat.”

How I work

I work with women online and in person from all over the world. I also share weekly style content on YouTube every Sunday, plus short videos on Instagram throughout the week, all practical, realistic and focused on helping you understand why something feels wrong and how to fix it. Sometimes it's as simple as changing the neckline. Sometimes it's learning that the colour you keep buying is the one that makes you look tired.



MICHELLE BARRETT

Michelle Barrett is a multi-award-winning stylist and costume designer with a 26-year portfolio spanning film, TV, and global music tours. A respected voice in the industry, her advice has been featured in *The Metro*, *Independent*, *The Guardian*, and *The Huffington Post* alongside guest appearances on the BBC and Ch4. Through her online platform, *Capsule Closet Stylist*, she empowers women to ditch the "fast fashion" cycle in favor of sustainable, curated style that supports their real lives.

If you need help with style or your wardrobe, you can call 07353864672, or book in for a FREE discovery call with me www.capsuleclosetstylist.com/book-a-call/

Clothes are tied to identity. They hold memories. They can remind you of a version of yourself you miss, or help you step into the version you're becoming. That is why my work is never just about flattering. Flattering is useful, but it's not the whole story. The real question is always: how do you feel when you put it on?

A quick wardrobe edit you can start today

Here's a simple way to begin, without turning it into an all-day project.

Step 1: Choose one category. Pick one only: trousers, knitwear, blazers, dresses, shoes. Set a timer for 20 minutes. Editing works best in small, focused bursts.

Step 2: Use the three-pile method. Sort everything into Yes (you wear it, it fits your life), Maybe (potential but something's off), or No (doesn't fit, doesn't suit, you avoid it). Your first instinct is usually right.

Step 3: Fix the Maybe pile. For each Maybe, ask: what would need to change for me to wear this next week? If you can't name the fix in one sentence, it's a No.

Step 4: Build one outfit to repeat. From your Yes pile, put together one outfit that feels like you. Take a photo on your phone. That becomes your starting point for next time you think you have nothing to wear.

Step 5: Write a specific shopping list. Not "new tops" but "a cream silk shirt with a structured collar" or "a black loafer I can walk all day in." That's how you stop shopping randomly and start building a wardrobe that truly supports you.

I'm so glad you're here. Let's make getting dressed feel good again.

The Ayvalık Antidote: Why Ayşe Cömert is the Future of Conscious Luxury

By Elif Köse, Editor-in-Chief

I have spent two decades in the eye of the fashion storm. I have stood in the frantic wings of the Grand Palais in Paris and beneath the industrial lights of London Fashion Week, watching collections fly past in a blur of tulle and ego. I know the "hollow" feeling that often follows a standing ovation, the realisation that we are often just producing more *noise*.

Then, I returned to the quiet, olive-scented air of Ayvalık. Here, I found a fellow woman, Ayşe Cömert, doing something radical. She isn't just making clothes; she is staging an insurrection against the "fast" world. As the founder of **TAU Design**, Ayşe is proving that the most luxurious thing a woman can wear is a clear conscience and a piece of clothing that actually has a pulse.

In this exclusive sit-down for *Confidence Magazine*, we strip away the marketing jargon to find the heart of a brand that is redefining Turkish craftsmanship for a global, compassionate stage.

The Epiphany: Beyond the "Object"

Elif: *Your work feels deeply intentional. Can you take us back to the moment you realised you didn't want to create "just another fashion brand"? What shifted for you?*

Ayşe Cömert: It was a realisation born of exhaustion, not physical, but spiritual. I looked at the sheer volume of "stuff" being produced and felt a profound disconnect. As fashion became something consumed faster and faster, it lost its humanity. I didn't want to add to the noise; I wanted to create a signal.



The turning point was realising that design is not only about looking "beautiful" or "stylish." That is a surface-level pursuit. I wanted to create pieces that feel more alive, more emotional, and more connected to real life. That is exactly where TAU Design was born. I wanted every piece to carry a soul, a story, and a purpose. I wanted what I create to touch something meaningful and leave a positive impact. That's why, especially within my animal-themed collections, I began bringing together aesthetics and social responsibility. True luxury is no longer hidden in the price tag, but in the meaning.

The Psychology of the Silhouette

Elif: *As someone who designs for women, how do you see the relationship between what we wear and how we feel within ourselves? Where does fashion support confidence and where does it fall short?*

Ayşe: I believe a woman doesn't only want to "look good" in what she wears. She also wants to feel like herself. This is where the industry often fails us; it tries to give us a costume rather than a skin. Fashion falls short when it demands we change ourselves to fit the garment.







For me, design has an emotional impact. It can help a woman express herself and support her confidence, but only if the piece feels "right" intuitively. True elegance lies in pieces where comfort, grace, and character exist together. A piece of clothing shouldn't be a mask; it should be an invitation to carry yourself with more authenticity and reflect what is within.

Editor: *Your pieces feel very different from high street fashion. What is unique about your fabrics and the way you create each collection?*

Ayşe: My process is entirely tactile and intuitive. I don't want to simply follow what's trending; trends are the enemy of longevity. For me, how a piece feels is just as important as how it looks. This is why I choose every detail, from the fabric



selection to the colour tones, from the texture to the way it moves, based on how it makes me *feel*.

I love pieces that preserve their character even years later. Instead of creating something that feels like "fast fashion," I want my designs to feel personal and soulful. Every collection takes shape around a specific emotion. Sometimes it's inspired by a feeling of femininity, sometimes by a story, and sometimes by a living being in need of protection. It's about creating an atmosphere.

The Woman Behind the Loom

Editor: *For those discovering you for the first time, who is Ayşe Cömert beyond the brand, and what experiences shaped the path that led you to create TAU?*

Ayşe: Beyond the identity of the brand, I see myself as someone deeply connected to emotion, aesthetics, and meaningful details. Ever since I was little, I've been an incurable dreamer, someone you could probably describe as romantic, but also someone who values authenticity in everything.

Everything I experience as a woman, a mother, and a creator is directly reflected in what I design. I draw inspiration from real life, emotions,

nature, and the invisible connection people build with the things they wear. TAU was born both from my own journey and from my experience.

The Radical Act of Slowness

Editor: In a fast-fashion world, you've chosen a slower, more intentional approach. What has that decision required from you and why is it non-negotiable?

Ayşe: Today, everything is consumed so quickly, not just fashion, but emotions, ideas, and even human relationships. This decision required me to step out of the "race." I believe design should exist in a calmer and more meaningful place against the rush of time.

Truly valuable things can only be created with care. "Less, but with more character and longevity" is my mantra. As consumption accelerates, both people and the world become more exhausted. Slowness is my way of protecting the integrity of the work and the sanity of the creator.

The Soul of the Brand: Animal Advocacy

Editor: Your brand supports animal rescue initiatives. Can you share where this connection comes from and what impact you hope to create through your collections?

Ayşe: My perspective is this: today, we see the world becoming a harsher and more insensitive place. But I believe the opposite can also grow, love and compassion. I truly believe that even touching a single living being can create an impact far greater than it seems. Because I think we are all connected to one another by invisible threads. One for all, and all for one.

This is exactly why social responsibility holds such an important place within TAU Design. If I can create even the smallest difference, if I can add even a pinch of salt to the soup—that alone makes me happy. Sensitivity and compassion are no longer a choice; they are a responsibility.

The "Modern Heritage" Woman

Editor: Who is the woman you design for today and what do you want her to feel when she wears your pieces?

Ayşe: She is a woman who values her own narrative more than the external noise. She is conscious, she is empathetic, and she is tired of the disposable. I want her to feel a sense of "coming home" when she wears TAU. I want her to feel that she isn't just wearing a garment, but a commitment to a kinder, more beautiful world.

Editor: What do you think the fashion industry is getting wrong right now, especially when it comes to sustainability and conscious design?

Ayşe: The industry often treats sustainability as a "trend" or a marketing checklist. They look for "green" fabrics but maintain the same "fast" pace of production. That is a contradiction. You cannot have sustainable fashion if you are still encouraging people to buy something new every week. True sustainability starts with the mindset

of the designer and the consumer it starts with valuing the "soul" of the garment enough to keep it for a decade.

Editor: You're representing Turkish craftsmanship in a modern way. What does it mean to you to carry that identity, and what kind of legacy do you want to build through your work?

Ayşe: Carrying the identity of Turkish craftsmanship is a profound honour. We have a heritage of handwork and textile mastery that is second to none. My goal is to carry this into a modern, minimalist context. I want the legacy of TAU to be one of "Timeless Consciousness." I want to prove that a brand from a small village like Ayvalık can speak to the heart of the global fashion industry by simply being more human.

As an editor who has seen it all, from the grit of the pattern-cutting room to the glamour of the front row, I can tell you that Ayşe Cömert is the real deal. In my years on the world's stages, I rarely met designers who were willing to sacrifice "growth" for "depth."

Ayşe is doing exactly that.

The big media outlets are looking for the "Next Big Thing." Usually, they look for a new shape or a new celebrity face. But I believe the "Next Big Thing" is actually a feeling. It's the feeling of wearing something that didn't hurt the world. It's the feeling of Turkish silk against the skin and a rescue dog's gratitude in the soul.

If we want to save fashion, we need to stop looking at the catwalks and start looking at the creators like Ayşe, who are weaving purpose into every single thread.



AYŞE CÖMERT

Ayşe Cömert is the founder and creative force behind TAU Design, a conscious luxury fashion brand rooted in the coastal soul of Ayvalık, Turkey. Known for blending timeless Turkish craftsmanship with modern minimalism, her work explores the intersection of elegance, emotional connection, and social responsibility. Through intentionally designed collections and advocacy for animal rescue initiatives, Ayşe is redefining what luxury means for a new generation of conscious women, proving that fashion can be both beautiful and deeply humane.

Follow the Journey For a glimpse into the slow-fashion movement, the textures of Ayvalık, and the souls behind the seams, follow Ayşe's journey online. **IG: @taubaysecmert**

Paid Partnership Feature

Travel With Confidence

By Lisa Francesca Nand

Designing a Life of Travel, Wealth & Freedom

Hi, I'm Lisa, travel journalist, entrepreneur and single mum. A huge welcome to my new column in which we'll be talking about something we all love. Travel! Not only where to go and how to go there but always how important travel is for the heart and soul and increasingly for business.

In my 20 years as a travel expert, interviewing over 200 celebrities, politicians, entrepreneurs, and people excelling in their fields about their life stories through travel, I've become fascinated by the psychology of travel. Why we're drawn to it, why it changes us. That instinct to look beyond the next horizon is deeply human, it's what kept us alive for millennia. Today, for those of us fortunate enough to live in a non-conflict world and safe world, that same curiosity has evolved into something more: a desire for expansion, for perspective, for reconnecting with who we are beyond our everyday roles.

Solo-female travel, time away with the family, with friends or partners, business travel, attending retreats, creating our own retreats... all of these have become such significant parts of our lives. And really, who doesn't absolutely love a holiday?!

Following the Pull of Adventure

My own personal need to look over the next horizon started young, terrifying my parents by disappearing on my bike age just 5 for hours on all sorts of adventures around my suburban Northern English neighbourhood. My Dad, himself having arrived from Fiji in 1960, and my Wirral-born mum also felt the urge, and when I was just 7 years old we moved to Malaga in Spain. It was a different place back in those days, a little wild, free, and my brother and I very much had a magical childhood, running around on beaches and dunes and attending what was, on reflection, a laid-back school with over 20 different nationalities of children all learning in English and Spanish.



That curiosity also drew me to move to Brighton age just 16 in 1990, wide-eyed and open to adventure, at a time when the town had a slightly edgier vibe. I remember being thrilled by my first winter there, badly dressed for the cold in my 1960s sheepskin jacket and cowboy boots, under-aged drinking in back-street pubs with characters who were straight out of a Krays movie. England excited me and still does; the fact that popular music, popular culture, cool fashion is made here. I love that!

When Travel Isn't Enough on Its Own

My love for travel and adventure has taken me across continents, onto television screens and radio shows and into stories I never could have imagined. I've been incredibly lucky to make travel such a huge part of what I do. I haven't had a conventional job since 2003 when I gave up a role in corporate events and films to train as a journalist. Effectively I have been an entrepreneur since way back then, but it wasn't until I got divorced when I realised I really needed to focus on the money.

Travel industry professionals get treated really well. After all, we have an element power with our words and our reviews. They want us to have the best of times! But like in many industries the pay has been steadily declining and you can't pay the mortgage with luxury perks, nice as they are, so like many of us I had a mid-life pivot and in 2024 added the business side of travel to my repertoire.

I have also now shared the business with over 120 people, some of them using the product (travel agency software) for their own travel benefits, some for booking for other people, some for organising retreats and events and others to sell the business to others and make referral fees.

What Time-Freedom and Financial Freedom Really Give Us

As well as more freedom and money what I love most about the mid-life entrepreneurial pivot is the women who become our new network. Women who are not afraid to say that yes we are making our careers and businesses about helping other women succeed (because we really are), however we are also not afraid to say YES I also want to earn f*ck loads of money!

Because financial freedom, for a woman, perhaps most powerfully gives us the ability to walk away from situations that don't serve us, whether in work, relationships, or life. It gives us those all-important choices. And when we as women step into that kind of independence, it creates a ripple effect, expanding what feels possible not just for us, but for our family and for other women watching us rise. And if it also gives us the freedom to work from anywhere, whether that's so we can still be at the school gates or whether that's working from the beach in Costa Rica, that's a very powerful thing.

A New Way to Think About Travel

This column is about more than just beautiful destinations, it's about how women are redefining travel as a tool for wealth, independence and time freedom.

From learning how to earn from your own holidays, to integrating travel into your business, booking for others, or even creating your own retreats and experiences, we'll explore both the mindset and the practicalities behind travelling smarter. Alongside the inspiration, I'll be sharing real-world insights, strategies, and opportunities that are emerging in this space right now.

If you're curious about how travel could work harder for you financially, professionally, or personally come and be part of the conversation. Reach out, connect, and let's explore what's possible together. I can't wait to be on this journey with you.



LISA FRANCESCA NAND

Travel expert on TV and radio, journalist since 2004, and single mum to two boys. Lisa's deep industry knowledge and passion for freedom led her to create Travel With Confidence.





Celebration



Connection



Inspiration



Joy

Photography by Charlotte Rebecca

A Room That Didn't Need to Be Told to Listen

By Cecilia Grant

There are events you attend out of interest, obligation, or curiosity and then there are events that gently, almost unexpectedly, become a marker in your year, something you reference long after the doors have closed because of how they made you feel, how they shifted something internal, how they reminded you of a version of yourself you may have momentarily forgotten. International Women's Day 8th March 2026 at The Grand Hotel in Brighton was unmistakably one of those rare experiences, and what unfolded inside that room was not simply an event, but a carefully orchestrated emotional journey that blended art, leadership, truth, and connection in a way that very few spaces manage to achieve.

From the moment guests arrived, the atmosphere felt intentional rather than accidental. The voice of Maia Orme carried gently through the room, not demanding attention, but inviting presence. It felt as though the room itself was preparing its guests for something deeper.

And then, without instruction, without an announcement, without even the need for an emcee to guide the transition everything changed.

The room fell silent.
Not gradually. Almost instantly.

It was as if something unseen had called everyone into stillness at the same time.

And at that moment, Nadine Benjamin began to sing.

To describe her as simply a performer would not do justice to her presence. A world-renowned, award-winning soprano, honoured with an MBE, her voice did not just fill the room, it *transformed* it. As *Ave Maria* unfolded, something remarkable happened. Women rose, almost instinctively, and moved toward their



Photography by Charlotte Rebecca

seats. No one needed direction. No one hesitated. They simply followed the feeling.

It felt less like being seated... and more like being *guided into place*. As though each person was being welcomed not just into the room, but into the exact moment they were meant to be part of.

Guests later spoke of goosebumps that stayed long after the final note, of tears they hadn't expected, of a thought that kept returning: "*What if I hadn't come?*" "*I could have missed this*" "*This moment on its own is priceless*" That opening did more than begin the day, it anchored it. It created a sense of belonging, of certainty, of being exactly where you needed to be.

And then, just as the room settled into that depth, the energy shifted; boldly,

unapologetically, and in a way that only Elif Köse could orchestrate.

The sound of Turkish drums broke through the stillness, followed by an explosion of movement and colour as ten belly dancers of incredible women entered the space. The shift was electric. Smiles spread instantly across the room, a mixture of surprise, joy, and complete surrender to the unexpected.

It was playful. It was bold. It was slightly shocking to be honest to most of us yet entirely brilliant.

Led by the Brighton Belly Dance group, the performance built in rhythm and energy until, just as the audience thought they had seen it all, the music rose again. And then, another entrance.

Mr. Özgen stepped onto the stage.

A world-renowned male belly dancer, his presence was both captivating and disarming, challenging expectations while commanding admiration. The room responded instantly with laughter, applause, and a sense of wonder that is rarely felt in traditional business environments. Honestly, how often do you hear a soprano sing Ave Maria then get a Belly dancing on the stage, then someone tell you how to run your business in a more profitable way?

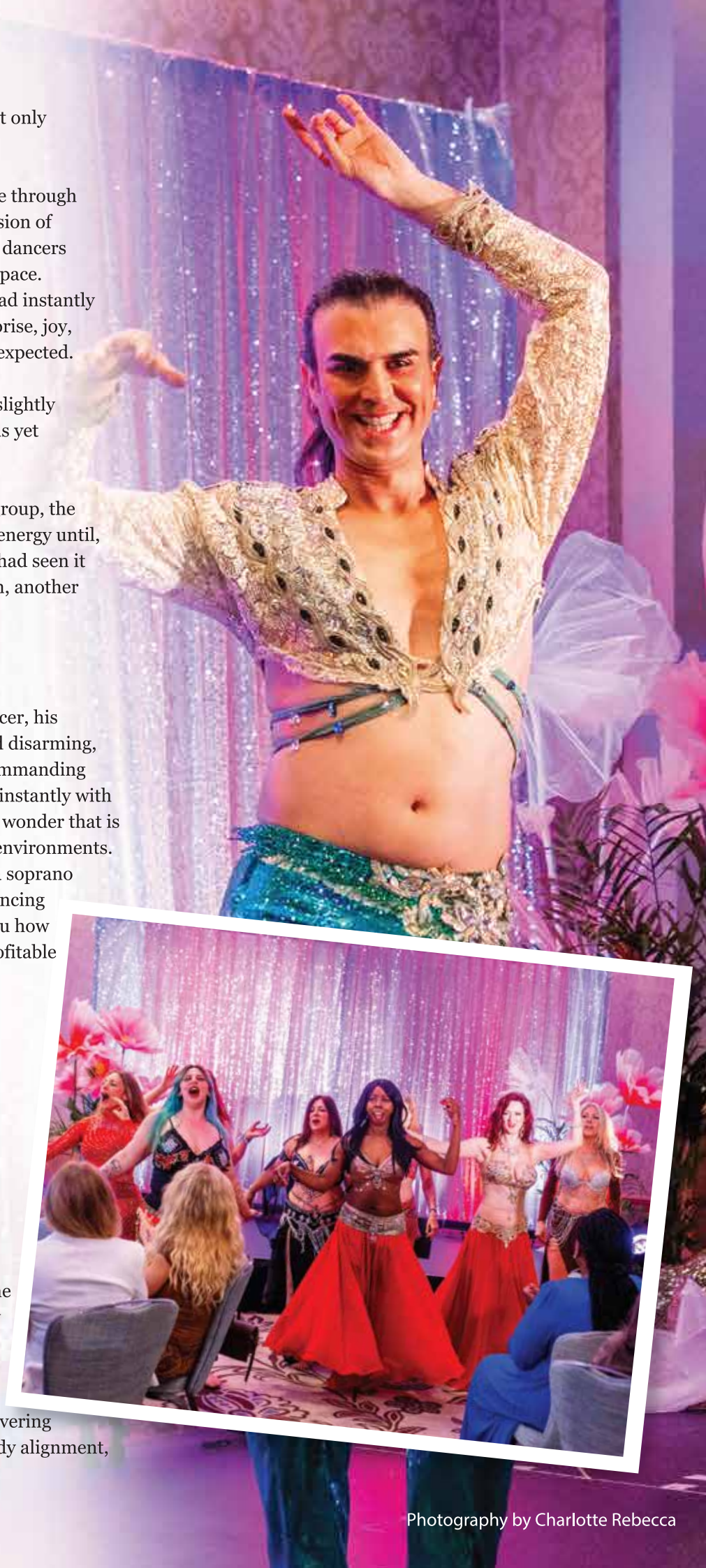
Because this was the moment it became undeniable:

This was not a conference.

This was an experience.

And what followed ensured that the depth matched the spectacle.

As the keynote speakers took to the stage, the room moved seamlessly from joy into substance. Conversations were not surface-level. They were real, grounded, and deeply relevant, covering self-trust, financial expansion, body alignment,



and the intentional building of a life and business that reflects truth rather than expectation.

The panel discussion brought everything into focus with a theme that resonated deeply across the room:

Reclaiming Their Power: Voice, Visibility & Self-Trust in a Woman's Life

And at the centre of it all, one question landed with weight:

Who are you when you stop becoming who you were taught to be?

It was not a question designed for applause. It was a question designed for honesty.

Holding the room with both structure and spontaneity was Lou Featherstone, whose presence as emcee added a layer that is difficult to manufacture. Hilarious, bold, and refreshingly real, her delivery broke through any remaining tension in the room. Her humour—unfiltered, unexpected, and at times provocative, did something powerful: it made confidence feel human.

She didn't just guide the day.

She *freed* the room.

Women relaxed. Laughed. Opened.

And in doing so, they connected not just with each other, but with themselves.

Beyond the stage, something equally important was unfolding. The so-called “in-between” moments became some of the most valuable. Even as the lunch queue stretched longer than expected, there was no frustration, only conversation. Women used the time to connect, to share, to listen. There was no sense of competition, no urgency to perform. Just genuine engagement.

It was a room that felt safe.

And that is not accidental.

At the centre of it all stood Elif Köse grounded, present, and entirely in her own embodiment.

There was something almost ceremonial in her presence, regal yet accessible, powerful yet deeply connected. Her opening words did not land with force, but with flow—moving through the room in a way that allowed each woman to receive them fully.

She spoke of love.

Of compassion.

Of presence.

And more importantly, she *embodied* them.

There was no disconnect between message and being.

And that is what made it land.

The impact of the day extended beyond inspiration. It translated into action, into





connection, into contribution. A total of £185 was raised for The PMDD Project, through the sale of Elif's own wardrobe pieces and designs, a gesture that reflected the heart of the event: giving, supporting, and showing up for something bigger than oneself.

What became clear by the end of the day was that this room had done something rare.

It has changed so many people. Decisions are made in that room, women rose.

Women left differently to how they arrived for sure; clearer, more connected, more certain.

And that is not something you can manufacture.

Looking ahead, the momentum is already undeniable. International Women's Day 8th March 2027 is in motion, with some of the speakers already confirmed including Rachel Mailer, Jennifer Davy, Juliette Karaman-van Schaardenburg, and Lit Eziefula.

And just when it felt as though the day had reached its natural close—when conversations had softened, connections had been made, and the room had already given more than most events ever could—there was one final moment that reminded everyone exactly where they were.

Because Elif Köse does not believe in quiet endings.

She stepped forward, took the microphone, and with a knowing smile asked the room, *"Did you really think this would end with a quiet goodbye?"*

Of course, it didn't.

Because this day was never designed to be ordinary.

It had been rich, rich in art, in culture, in leadership, in business, and in emotional depth—and what followed was a continuation of that philosophy in its most embodied form. As the music rose once more, Latin dancers filled the space in a final, breathtaking display of movement and expression, led by Martha, whose presence brought elegance, power, and celebration together in a way that felt like the perfect closing note.

Feathers, rhythm, colour, precision, it was a performance that did not simply entertain, but *elevated* the energy of the entire room one last time.

And yet, even that was not the end.

Because for those who were not quite ready to leave, those who recognised that something special was still unfolding, the experience continued. Guests were invited into a private space, where DJ Seval carried the energy forward, transforming the close of the event into something far more intimate and alive. Music, movement, and connection took over, and for many, the day extended well into the evening, with guests staying until six, dancing freely, unapologetically, and fully present.

It was, in many ways, the perfect reflection of what the entire day had represented.

This is how women lead.

This is how women gather.

This is how business, connection, and expression can coexist, without separation, without compromise.

And perhaps that was the greatest takeaway of all. Not just that the event was exceptional.

But it showed, in real time, what is possible when vision is executed without dilution.

When leadership is rooted in truth.
When experience is designed with intention.

When women are given a space where they do not have to shrink, perform, or apologise.

They don't just attend.
They expand.

And that is something no one in that room will forget.

And if 2026 is anything to go by, this will not simply be an event to attend.

It will be a room you choose to be in.

A room where decisions are made.

Where connections are formed.
Where something within you shifts.

For those who understand the value of being in the right environment, surrounded by the right people, this is not a decision to delay.

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Because some rooms ask for your attention.
And some rooms remind you who you are.



Mediterranean Tomato Tart

There is something very special when the days get longer and the summer emerges through the wintery curtain of grey. Not least the feeling of lightness within us. Where good days and natural glow ups become our norm. In food the summer months bring fresh produce, full of flavour and vivid hues. And my favourite... well it has to be tomatoes. Available in an array of colours, they are sweet and perfect eaten raw or cooked. Try this deliciously simple tomato tart, great for picnics and lunch.

Ingredients:

For the shortcrust pastry:

250g plain flour, plus extra for rolling
Pinch of Salt
125g butter
1 large egg - yolk only
50ml water - you may need more or less

For the filling:

2-3 tbsp creme fraiche - full fat or half fat is fine
300g cherry or baby plum tomatoes - halved
1 sprig fresh thyme, leaves only
Generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil
Little sea salt and cracked pepper for seasoning
Fresh basil leaves to serve

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas mark 4.

- Make the pastry - add salt to the flour then rub the cold butter into it until it resembles fine breadcrumbs.
- Add the egg yolk and mix in with a butter knife.
- Make a well in the centre and add the water, half to start, and start drawing the flour in from the sides, but not all at once. Using your hand, squeeze the flour together, with the water, to form a dough. Add
- more water as needed, drawing more of the flour in



Hülya Erdal

Hülya 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.

until your dough is firm but not dry. Wrap in clingfilm and chill for 10 minutes.

- Roll out the pastry to the thickness of a pound coin, or 1cm.
- Line a 8 to 9 inch tart tin with the pastry, allowing it to drape over the sides and then use your rolling pin to cut the pastry by rolling it across the top of the tin.
- Using your index finger, press the pastry on the inside of the tin, into the grooves for the fluted pattern.
- Spread the creme fraiche on the base of the pastry.
- Mix together the chopped tomatoes, herbs, olive oil and seasoning, and top the creme fraiche in the pastry case.
- Bake in a preheated oven for up to 45 minutes until pastry is cooked and the tomatoes are slightly charred and softened.
- Cool for about 20 minutes, decorate with basil leaves before slicing and eating with a fresh salad.



Connect with her at hulya@therecipeforlife.com
Website: www.therecipeforlife.com
Instagram: www.instagram.com/madebythechef
www.instagram.com/therecipeforlife
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/hulyaerdal

The Air and The Fire: A Mid-Year Homecoming

If there is one thing I hope stays with you as you read this issue, it is a feeling of permission. The kind of permission that does not come from an external source, but from the knowing and recognition of your own soul. A sense of coming home to the truth that you are allowed to be whole.

On March 8th, during our flagship event, I witnessed what happens when a woman stops performing and starts inhabiting her power and Cecilia articulated it so well.

We began in a space of sacred, expansive **Air**—a moment of stillness so profound it felt like a collective exhale. But moments later, we became **Fire**. Through the thrum of the drums and the fierce, grounded movement of the dance, the room ignited.

In that transition, a truth was made manifest: We are not meant to choose between our softness and our strength. We are the stillness and the storm. We are the prayer and the dance. We are the Air and the Fire.

This issue is an invitation to audit how you are carrying those elements in your own life.

So much of what we are taught about success asks for a hardening. It asks us to override our instincts, to ignore our exhaustion, and to mistake survival for stability.

But as you move through these pages, you will find a different narrative. We are shedding the masks of "performing fine" and exposing the "invisible burnout" that haunts so many high-achieving women. We are returning to the intelligence that lives beneath the effort.

As we reach this mid-year threshold, I invite you to read slowly. To notice where your Fire has been dimmed by expectation, and where your Air has been thinned by the noise of the world.

This magazine is not just a publication; it is a living archive. It is a record of our refusal to shrink or disappear. It is here to remind you that you do not need to become someone else to be successful; you simply need to stop abandoning the woman you already are.

I want to hear from you. This is a community built on the truth of our lived experiences. As you sit with these articles, tell me: What stirs within you? What are the areas of your life where you need more clarity, more support, or more fire? What do you want to see reflected in these pages as we move forward together?

The second half of your year begins the moment you decide to take your own evolution seriously. Write to me, share your journey, and let us continue to build this room together.

With love and compassion,

Elif Köse
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

EXHALE

For the woman who has mastered
holding everything together
and is finally ready to feel
herself again.



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