

WOMEN INSPIRING WOMEN FOR GOOD!

# W2W

WOMEN 2 WOMEN  
MICHIGAN MAGAZINE

Growth & Potential

**Phoenix  
Transform**  
Emily Cowen's Story

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**A Season  
for Growth**  
Debra Loader



**Deria Brown**  
Growth Means Success

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Debra K. Collins  
Publisher

Mimi Matthews  
Editor

Dear friends,

We are back after a year long hiatus. Like many of you, we have navigated many changes in our lives. We are excited to once again bring you heart-centered articles written by our amazing writers! Women 2 Women Michigan strives to be The Women's Resource for all things women. Featuring positive women doing outstanding things with their lives and inspiring us to do the same.

Women 2 Women is focused on growth as we look ahead to the future. We are shifting from a bi-monthly publication to a monthly publication. We are adding new features and expanding our Digital presence as well. "She Means Business" will become a regular column as we look to highlight women in our own community. Please, send your recommendations our way!

Debuting in June: "Living the Dream" is a feature that will focus on just that...women that are creating the lives that they decided they were going to have. How inspiring is it to know that there are women deciding their future and making it happen?

To create the life of your dreams, we must take the time to listen to our hearts. What is calling us to invest more time? Is it art, music, physical activity, soulful retreats, business family, travel? Think of the possibilities! What is your heart's desire? Let's do more of that...everyday! Let's make this the best year ever!

"Our aspirations are our possibilities." -Samuel Johnson

With love,  
Debra & Mimi

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**W2W**

Women *Inspiring*  
Women *for Good!*

**Our Mission:**

Women2Women Michigan was created to connect women with women for good to encourage, support, have fun, do business and provide links for women's resources.

**DO YOU KNOW A MICHIGAN WOMAN WE SHOULD FEATURE?**

Submit your stories online at [w2wmichigan.com](http://w2wmichigan.com). Article guidelines are under the magazine tab.

**WHY ADVERTISE WITH US?**

Women make the majority of purchasing decisions. They buy goods and services for their homes, gardens, businesses, entertainment, health and nutrition, the list is endless. They want to be informed and connected in their communities. Event-driven marketing makes education fun and rewarding. You can reach these women in a heartwarming environment at Women2Women Michigan events and through our magazine.

**READERSHIP & DISTRIBUTION**

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Women2Women Michigan is inspiring women for good, for fun, for encouragement, and for support. We publish a monthly magazine filled with great information for Michigan women. Our goal is to provide our readership with inspiring articles that motivate and empower.

We are an event-driven business that produces weekend getaways, expos, shopping trips, network nights, seminars, workshops, road trips, retreats, and other event marketing.

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# W2W



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**“You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.”**

~ Les Brown





# Deria Brown *Making It Happen*

We'd like to introduce you to Deria Brown, an amazing business woman. Deria is the owner of Glam Boutique in Flint ([facebook.com/shopglamnow](https://facebook.com/shopglamnow)), and the founder of an international club for girls called Sparkle Pink ([sparklepink.org](https://sparklepink.org)). If you were to shadow her for a day you might fall exhausted into bed at night! This lady accomplishes a lot and has visions for doing even more.

## WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

I am a wife, mother, grandmother, sister, entrepreneur, and close friend. As an individual, every five to seven years who I am changes. The closer I get to 50 the more obsessed I become with the vision for my life, making it come to pass by taking action. I am extremely goal oriented and I like checking off the boxes.

I have become "no nonsense", whereas before I was more patient with things taking time. Now I have an awareness, especially after COVID, of life and the time we have; valuing it and making sure it's maximized. I am purpose driven and goal-oriented. Aside from that, I'm having a lot more fun than I've had. It's intentional. When I was younger I was just rush, rush, not taking time to enjoy things. The pace of my life hasn't changed, but I am taking experiences in and valuing them more.

## TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR HISTORY AND HOW YOU ENDED UP IN YOUR CAREER (OR THIS BUSINESS).

I started my career in finance, including banking, insurance, and trading stocks. I've always had the entrepreneur burn inside. I kept trying, trading up with ideas and kept going forward. Eventually I settled on a business model that works for me.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE GIVEN YOU "VALIDITY" TO DO WHAT YOU DO?

My life has always been hard. Nothing has come to me easily. I wondered whether this degree of difficulty was normal. It didn't seem that anyone else had to struggle as hard as I did to make a profit. I had to work my butt off for it. For a while I had a chip on my shoulder.

But now, what has come with that is the wisdom from pursuing wealth, family, and intentionally having an incredible marriage. I have a fight on my hands. I can choose to develop this “she-warrior” and make her skillful in battle. I know what it’s going to take to reach my goals. So I have to choose to become more efficient in fighting for and obtaining what I need and what I want out of life.

That efficiency has come from relying on systems, and having a core network instead of wearing myself out individually, trying to make things happen. I’ve transferred a lot of things from manual processes to automation now. That’s a smoother model for me because now a system can fight for me as opposed to using my physical energy. A strong team can take on some of the burden and the battle so I’ve beefed up my team a lot.

So my experience has been fight, work, rest, and repeat. And it’s definitely been worth everything that I’ve been able to glean from that.

### WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS MOTIVATED YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE?

I think you will find that with most entrepreneurs motivation changes. I need some form of motivation on a daily basis to get through the day. Life is different when you have to count on you and there’s no outside pay source. My staff depends on me. I have single moms who depend on me and that puts me under a lot of pressure. I look around for motivation every day. At first it was my young daughter. I wanted to model it for her, but as she got older and made her own choices, I had to find another way. Daily quotes, prayer, scripture reading, mentoring—I have always been mentored or coached. And there are always books. There’s one book called Tools of the Titans by Tim Ferriss that has a couple hundred quotes and approaches from top-level CEOs and business executives, and I’ll just sit and thumb through that.

The one thing that I would say has been consistent in motivating me is travel. Entrepreneurs have to travel. We have

to work in different scenery. Take in the vibe of a new city. Work from a different coffee shop. That has motivated me and piqued my senses. I’ve had some of my most creative ideas and moments when I’ve been fueled and gassed back up through travel. Even if it is just the next city over every woman in business needs to plan a trip. For me, I have to travel monthly. For others it will be different. But with all the Airbnbs and hotels and the trade shows that will come with your specific industry

I would encourage every woman to travel as often as you can afford to.

### WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR STRENGTH WHEN GOING THROUGH TOUGH LIFE CHALLENGES?

I draw strength during life’s challenges through prayer, through my relationship with God, as in the scripture, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”.

However, the second part is that just because I can doesn’t mean I should do all things. I draw strength from my tribe of strong friends that I can lean on, and I can shift some of the weight to, and they are able to bear me up.

Also, I am married to the best man on the planet. He has been a depth of strength. I have yet to exhaust his strength. I don’t know how he does it because I’m not easy to deal with by any stretch of the imagination. If you can imagine living with someone with all these ideas, all these actions, all this energy bursting forward every single day, needing to travel, having to implement, implement. It’s been interesting. So he has been an incredible and amazing source of life for me.

And life has been tough. I’ve raised children, and gone through COVID, and there have been some dark days, especially in business. Business is tough! There were some weeks I didn’t know if I was going to make payroll. When

shipments didn’t come in, when the supply chain was disrupted, and I had to close a store and needed to open another one—I had to change my business model because of what was going on in the economy. In the last two to three years I have disrupted my business model three or four times to continue to turn profit. And through all of that I have relied heavily on God, my support system, and my husband.



And then, this girl has got some strength herself. You know twenty years ago I would not have patted myself on the back. But I know that I can rely on me. I am pretty tough. So when nobody else is around, which happens a lot for business owners, and it’s just me and the bills, the payroll, the taxes, and this and that, I can count on me.

### DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL MISSION, PASSION, OR CALLING?

My calling is girls! I teach girls ages 3-13 how to be amazing though an organization I founded called Sparkle Pink Club For Girls. My obsession and passion has been to train every single girl to know her value and worth so they will not struggle and make poor relationship choices. They can run a business, they know how to pray, they are well rounded, and they are okay with how they look—more than okay. They are in love with themselves!

I believe in turning out the next generation of highly qualified girls who make good choices and grow up and believe in “community over competition”. They are not jealous of each other and competing; they leave that door open for each other. Whatever door I was able to break through in retail I am leaving that door open for the next generation and creating that sense of community. I am extremely passionate about that.

## HOW DO YOU HELP WOMEN?

Women seem to gravitate to me for sisterhood, for community, and for understanding. I “get” women, especially women entrepreneurs. I understand what they are going through. It’s very difficult for entrepreneurs and women to find someone who understands their obsession, understands their work ethic and why they keep going when everything says they should quit. Or when they have to make a choice, like whether to make dinner or work on their business plan a bit longer. And then not feel guilty about it. I want to be that safe place for women, like, “Girl, it’s okay for you to Door Dash dinner and keep plugging away. Everyone is going to understand once you are successful. But if you quit and you don’t get there, then you are going to feel some guilt.”

I am so glad that I went for it, that I tried it, that I did not quit! I want to encourage other women: Keep going! Don’t quit, don’t give up, change the business idea, change the platform, modify. Do what you have to do but don’t quit. Your kids and grandkids are going to grow up. Certainly that is a very significant and rewarding time in your life. But I believe that if you feel that entrepreneurship call there is a grace to do both.

There will not always be balance. Balance is a myth. I’ve never ended out a day fully balanced. Sometimes I’m a better mother than I am a CEO or entrepreneur. Some days I’m a better boss than I am mother. I came through for my clients and my staff but missed out on something as a mother. That’s where mental health comes into play, talking it through, having someone to roll those outcomes onto and process them. And try to do better, learn from

it. I’m honest with my children. My husband knows me through and through. Everybody in your close circle needs to understand what it is you are trying to do so they can give you grace, and the space to be what you need to be. You have to forgive yourself where you fall short, and there will be many, many days where you will fall short on something.

## WHAT, FROM YOUR LIFE'S STORY, DO YOU WANT MOST FOR WOMEN TO KNOW?

I want to refer back to the journey not being easy. But make sure you are climbing upward, making progress, continuing to move. Sometimes the pace changes and you have to slow down, if there’s illness or trauma or a life event. But at least keep going forward, upward. And don’t stop for extended lengths of time. Get some rest, take care of yourself, talk when you need to talk, laugh, and cry when you need to cry, but keep the momentum going.



### *Life lessons or tools I've learned along the way:*

**#1** First of all, I am the one who defines my life's quality. I set goals and when they are achieved and experienced that elevates me. So number one is goal setting.

**#2** You need to stop and enjoy even the smallest victories. I cleaned my house today...yay! I fought off everyone leaving a dirty dish in the kitchen sink overnight, or I wrote a chapter of my book. Stop and celebrate that.

**#3** Know your success moment. My therapist was the first person to look at me and say, “Dang, girl, you’re successful!” I didn’t know it! I was complaining to her about these things

I was doing and how Sparkle Pink was taking off and getting ahead of me and we had chapters all over the country, and we had the locations for the stores and the staff, and I was involved in church and I was complaining because everything was growing. And she helped me to see that success is growth. So, know your success moment. If what you set out to do succeeds, you have to stop and say, “Hey, I did it! Where am I going to go from here?”

Enjoy those moments where you were laser focused, you meant business and you took care of business, and you executed and no matter how long it took you reached that desired outcome. That is your moment. Celebrate it! Pull out your journal, however you celebrate. And then move to the next thing whenever you are ready. Because life is a series of successes, whether that’s at thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty or whenever, don’t ever stop!



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► *Deria Brown is the owner of The Glam Box Boutique, she's an author and television co-host, she is helping women around the world with business, beauty, and balance, and she is changing the lives of our girls through her Sparkle Pink Clubs for Girls.*

# Sparkle Pink Club for Girls

**T**here are nearly 800 million girls globally. Of those, statistics say as much as 92% of girls would like to change something about themselves. Make changes? Generally a person only wants to make a change if they are dissatisfied with the original.

Yet, girls are increasingly dissatisfied with their weight, hair texture, eye color, skin color, breast size, nose shape, ears, ALL OF IT. A girl unhappy with the way she was made could grow into a teenager and ultimately a woman with low self-esteem. How could we blame them when they are bombarded with airbrushed, photo shopped and filtered images of beauty on television and social media? That's a tough standard to compare oneself to.

Thank goodness there is Sparkle Pink Club for Girls. Founded in 2007, we teach girls how to be AMAZING! We get them at a young age, starting at age three, and help them uncover their value and self-worth. When you reach a girl younger you arrive before fear and doubt have had an opportunity to take up residence. Once they know their value they will weigh EVERY decision against that.

Aside from healthy personal development girls still face a future workforce that pays women less. Globally, girls still are undereducated and 72% of all human trafficking victims are women and girls. We have our work cut out for us as an organization as we tackle these issues head on.

Sparkle Pink Club for Girls is a safe place where girls can gather monthly, be elevated and in a glittery environment and find their voice and confidence. Clubs meet across America in Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Austin, Texas and right here where we were founded in Flint, MI. to name a few. There are also local and national conferences and events. In October 2019 we will see our first mission trip as we travel to the tiny country of the Bahamas. Widely known for its tourism there are 400,000 residents there, most of which live in poverty. We will be



[SPARKLEPINK.ORG](http://SPARKLEPINK.ORG)

taking hugs, lip gloss, hygiene kits and hope to girls in several schools and villages. To learn more about Sparkle Pink Club for Girls, events, and how you can help and get involved, explore at [www.sparklepink.org](http://www.sparklepink.org).

**E**ditor's Note: Most of us realize that our children and youth are in peril. Teenage pregnancy has concerned us for decades and we wonder what can be done about it. Well, here is an amazing way to invest in the lives of girls in our community before they become our leaders. Deria reports that in the ten years of working with girls through SPGCs not one has gotten pregnant! That is quite the testament to the effectiveness of what they do. However, it's not only about preventing teenage pregnancy; it's about creating confidence and empowerment in these girls, helping them to realize they are worthy to reach for their dreams of more.

Sparkle Pink Clubs for Girls is a non-profit that is funded completely by donations! Wouldn't you like to help change the lives of our girls? Become a Pink Partner today!

► *Deria Brown is the owner of The Glam Box Boutique, she's an author and television co-host, she is helping women around the world with business, beauty, and balance, and she is changing the lives of our girls through her Sparkle Pink Clubs for Girls.*



# A Time To Grow

**AT LAST,** the grass is green and the sky is blue (at least more often). Even the sun is warming up. Ah spring! As color returns I begin thinking about my vegetable garden as well as some changes I want to make or something new to learn or try. It's a perfect season for soil analysis and personal evaluation! A time for growth and renewal. Mother Nature presents this opportunity every year, why not take advantage of synchronizing our personal intentions with hers?

In planning and executing a garden, there are 6 steps that must be taken in order for it to flourish. The same 6 steps are necessary in personal evolution. Let's take a look at them:

1. **Prepare your soil.**
2. **Plant a seed.**
3. **Nurture it to take root.**
4. **Give it the needed attention to grow.**
5. **Feel accomplished as it begins to bear fruit.**
6. **Reap the ripened rewards of your effort.**

## **1. PREPARING YOUR SOIL = SELF EVALUATION**

What is it you wish to improve or accomplish? It must be personal, beneficial, measurable, specific and attainable in sixty days plus six. Is there a new habit, ritual or practice that you wish to add to your day? Or...is there one you want to stop? Examples would be: eat more fruit and vegetables daily, walk daily, stop eating French Fries, reading daily or perhaps banish negative self talk.

Write down several then pick one to focus on. Your soil is now ready to receive the seed.

## **2. PLANTING THE SEED = SETTING YOUR INTENTION**

Now you've chosen what you want to grow, time to plant it! The best way is to write it down, why you wish to accomplish this, how you/your life will improve once accomplished, set a beginning and end date to reach fruition, then...

## **3. NURTURE IT TO TAKE ROOT = MAKING & IMPLEMENTING A PLAN**

Next, dedicate designated time. This can be daily, three or four times a week or weekly. You can even start out with less time and add to it, if it's strength or stamina you're building. Write it in your planner, reminders in your phone or tell Alexa to schedule it. Whatever works for you. Now it needs to be established.

To me, this is the hardest part. It may be out of your comfort zone. Nurture it by continually reminding yourself of your why, desired results and how it will feel!! That FEEL part is most important! Following through when you "don't feel like it" will make it easier when you do and really make you feel good about your stick-to-it-ness! You want your intention to be well rooted. That way external forces (weather and challenges) will not stop it from flourishing. Established roots will grow a healthy plant!

## **4. ATTENTION FOR GROWTH = STICKING TO YOUR PLAN**

As you become more comfortable, your intention becomes more habitual, you will begin to see some results making it easier. Keep planning with YOUR TIME scheduled. Share its importance with your family so they will respect your agenda. They may even want to plant their own seed. Block the time out as occupied, only change it if absolutely necessary...don't cross it out, reschedule it! Now it can be watered with consistency, weeded with will power and fertilized with affirming self talk. Care for your intention by putting energy into it, be your own sun.

## **5. WATCHING IT GROW = WITNESSING YOUR PROGRESS**

Just as a plant begins to blossom and bear fruit, you will begin to see and feel the results of your effort. Keep going strong. As your intention is now rooted and blooming it will require less attention. It's getting easier now. Soon it will become second nature. Keep shining!

## **6. REAPING YOUR BOUNTY = CELEBRATE YOU**

Picking everything I need, from the garden, for a giant salad is such a happy day for me. It's a celebration! "I did it!" That's how you will feel, once your intention has come into fruition. It takes sixty six days to form a new habit...or break a bad one. You've done it!! Congratulations! Celebrate! You did it!

Repeat as often as you desire growth.

When life becomes your garden, you stay open to growth, embrace change and stay young, resulting in resilience and a more expansive comfort zone, i.e. a bigger, more productive garden!

Here's to your green thumb!

Much love, Coach Deb

► Deborah St.Hilaire is a unifier, enlightener and catalyst for change in the way women are treated and treat each other. Author, speaker, transformational coach and teacher, Deb, the founder of MyBodyMindSpirit.com, is dedicated to enriching lives through selfcare, meditation, movement, thought and journaling. She can be reached at 989.450.4200 or deb@mybodymindspirit.com.



# How Powerful Do I Feel *When I Stand in my Own Shoes?*



## I BELIEVE

*"when women are at the center of change, anything is possible."*

Yet, how is this possible when girls often lose their self-confidence at earlier and earlier ages; women are paid less than men for the same jobs; and women, by a 3 to 1 margin, have primary responsibility for their home, family and job.

How do women have the time or energy to change the world when we don't have time to take a nap?

I believe women are agents of change because we are the 'cultural mothers' of our communities. It's been proven over and over for centuries - when you empower a woman, you empower a village.

Women, in particular, cultivate *power through connection* - not competition or domination. We strengthen others by helping them create a more meaningful life. We empower others by our very nature and are more powerful as a result. We just might not realize it.

We know *leadership emanates from a person* and not from a position, role or hierarchy. The qualities generally attributed to women - collaboration, sharing and mentoring - are the very qualities many long for in leaders.

In our work and families, we tend to focus on the growth and development of employees, students and children. Our dedication and care inspires passion, courage and creativity. With our commitment to the greater good, we can't help but nurture vibrant relationships to create a better community for all. 'Cause that's what mamas do.

As makers of change, leadership is really a way of life for women.

Whether we are home makers, bread makers, baby makers or widget makers, we nurture others.

As the mamas of our communities, we also face the challenges of religious and racial intolerance and uncivil discourse and divisions which tear apart entire communities. For ourselves, families and businesses, it is essential that we are prepared to take on those challenges.

*"Because our communities are defined by **our actions** or by **our silence**, it is critical that we find our voices and empower conversations across difference to create the world we desire."*

As makers of change, women can change the world! We understand talent is strengthened only when it is shared. And the path to a better future lies in exploring those difficult issues that keep us divided. It is no secret that we are a stronger community when we are connected.

So women, take heart! You are a ball full of fire, a gentle soothing balm and a weaver of lives and communities.

Even if we are not the assigned leader of the group, we know: "When we are at the center of change, anything is possible."

So stand proud in whatever shoes you wear and feel the power! Oh, and don't forget to take a nap!

---

► *Elaine Stenger, PhD., is the Author of "Dancing in the Rain" and Co-Founder of Cairn Venture Group which produces Leadership Retreats for Women. "Connecting women to help change our world."*

Visit: [www.elainestenger.com](http://www.elainestenger.com) or contact Elaine at [estenger2@gmail.com](mailto:estenger2@gmail.com)

# So Just Ask Already!!

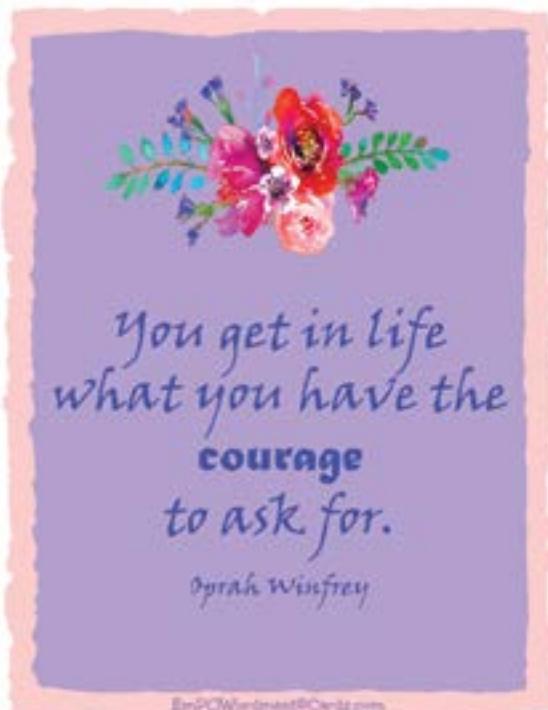


**T**he baby finches that morning were raising a ruckus! They may be tiny (about 2 inches long) but they are mighty! Their parents were kept very busy because those babies wanted food and they wanted it NOW, thank you very much! Even my walking under the tree to determine their species didn't deter them in their purpose. I could just hear them chirping, "This is where they said to wait for food, and I'm staying here until I get it." They were seriously noisy younguns!

My lesson from those birds (and the question raised by watching them) was this: Do WE know how to ask for what we need and are we willing and determined to do so?

As a curious soul, I've always asked questions. Yet I was hesitant to ask anything that would make me seem dumb, i.e. clarification. But now, after finally realizing I'm not a dummy, I ask for what I need to fully understand something. I say things like, "I don't really understand. Will you please explain again?" Or I'll repeat back what I think they said and ask for more words. I really like to use the phrase, "I need more words, please." People are sometimes taken aback because they think they've done a good job explaining already. But reality is that many of us struggle to communicate clearly.

Some things take more courage to ask for, like time alone (without feeling guilty) or intimacy without sex. That last one is tough, as it seems that for many couples it's either full-blown, "Ooooh, I'm getting some tonight!" or just living as roommates, with nothing much in between. But women need affection without expectation—touch and intimate sharing of conversation (with looking into each others' eyes, not a screen of some sort)—in order to find fulfillment in a relationship. Asking for what you



need is a good way to improve any of your relationships.

Asking for time alone feels wrong for women who put everyone's needs before their own. Yet, if we don't recharge it's pretty hard to effectively do all we must. The idea of women taking "me time" has become more popular, yet many still struggle with taking it. If your schedule is busy and demanding and you have a partner, you may feel you need permission from your partner, or at least help in arranging a time that works for both of you. However, it could also mean asking yourself to take the time, and believing that you deserve it.

During the week, check in with how you're feeling (stressed, harried, resentful?) and then ask for and give yourself permission to take a couple of hours away from it all. Put it on the calendar if you need to.

Asking for help is a tough one for many women. I believe this is something acquired through practice, and when learned helps us become more powerful.

I grew up not wanting to bother or inconvenience anyone, which helped to build independence. But it also led to resentment and feeling as if my needs were not important. Asking for help would have lightened the load, given me support, and made some things more fun.

Asking for what you need is liberating! It's a way to take charge of your life, bring relief, and dissolve resentment. Be like the finches and try it. I bet you'll like it.

► *Mimi Matthews is in the "encouragement business" as the owner of Empowordment Cards by Mimi, which features greeting cards that inspire and encourage. She is also a speaker, workshop leader, writer, and our editor. Visit her shop at www.etsy.com/shop/EmPOWordmentCards, her blog at www.particularpassions.me, and her website at www.passionistaatlare.org.*



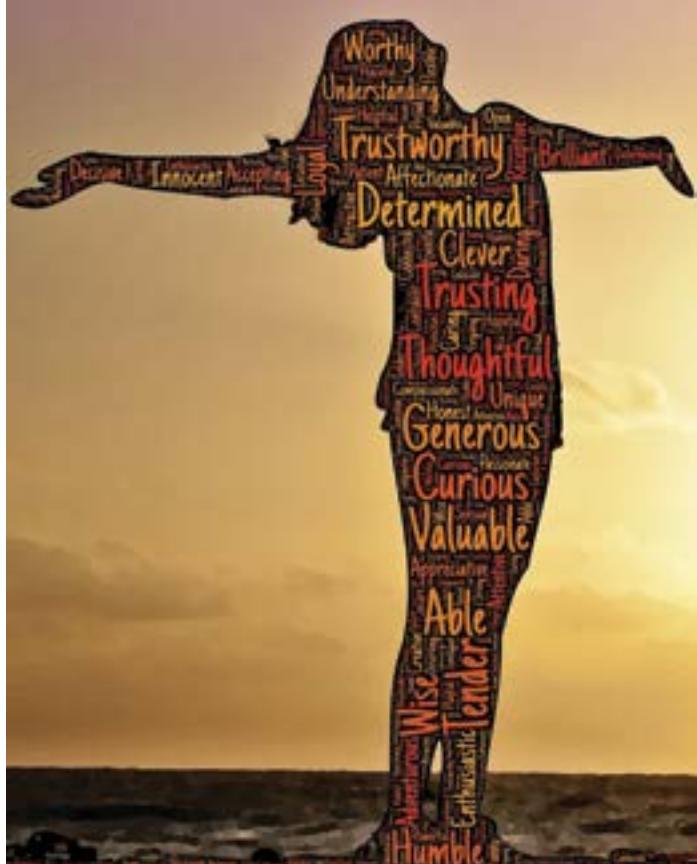
# Positivity Is a Life Style

**P**ositivity is a life style that fuels your mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing. I find it to be a necessity. Positivity is attractive because it is a natural quality that other people want in their lives. Those of us who can keep a positive attitude during rough times become an inspiration for ourselves and others.

Being positive gives you power to rise above setbacks and live through fears and shame that would traditionally stop you from moving forward on purpose. Years ago, many people would say, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste". However, life experiences have taught me that a mind can never be wasted, but *can* be consumed with negative thoughts.

How many of us have allowed negative thoughts to redirect our paths, define our moods, disrupt our peace, and keep us from living our best life? It's time we pick ourselves up, submit to the power of positivity that lives in us, and move forward feeling refreshed, brand new and rejuvenated. Living a life of positivity can be fun as well as exciting, while giving us balance and courage to successfully manage our hormones, houses and horrible moments.

Positive thinking is a mental attitude in which you expect good and favorable outcomes. In other words, positive thinking is the process of creating thoughts that create and transform your life's lemons to lemonade. To become more positive accept the truth, be the you God created you to be without apology or compromise, practice awareness, avoid labeling your thoughts, feed your positivity with things that make you happy and



give you peace, engage in uplifting conversations with yourself and others, don't be afraid to be your own best friend, take care of yourself, surround yourself with positive people, and say no to thoughts of negativity.

In conclusion being positive is a daily choice that you have to be willing to make. It's a commitment to becoming a better you. It's time ladies for us to step out of the box of negativity and leave the pain, shame and misery we've endured in the past. This year positivity is going to be a planned transition. I'm making daily positive confessions, journaling, laughing, getting to know and learning to love myself, and striving to become a better me for me—spiritually, emotionally and mentally.

► *Hi, I am Tarnesa Martin, aka Nurse T. I am a mom, grandma, mentor, health educator, community advocate, writer, motivational speaker and certified life, health and empowerment coach. I specialize in helping individuals with healthcare management, self care and bridging the gaps of emotional losses.*



*I am the Founder of Women of Radical Praise, a women's support group. I developed this group to create a safe space for women to gather and birth their purpose with confidence, learn how to unmask pain, and share their story of success, survival and resilience—with power. Becoming a better version of you starts with you becoming who God created you to be without apology or compromise. "Shades of Health" focuses on our mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial wellbeing.*

# SUMMER BBQ

**Barbecue + Friends = a Recipe for a FUN DAY!**

**It's time** to get outside and enjoy the weather. What better time than to call some family and friends and invite them over for a barbecue.

## HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER:

★ Date ★ Time ★ Location ★

Are you looking for ideas for recipes for your barbecue? Pinterest.com is a great source. Go to the site and search barbecue. You'll find hundreds of great recipes, tips and ideas for your next get together. The only problem will be narrowing down what you'd like to do with all of the great ideas you'll find. Another great website is [www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com).

Just because you are hosting the barbecue doesn't mean that you have to provide everything. Let's break things down and have people sign up to bring things. Many years ago, I also kept a list of items that I was in charge of so that you don't forget something in the fridge and find it when everyone has left. Has that ever happened to you?

Here is a list to help you get started:

- ★ Salad
- ★ Munchies – chips, dip
- ★ Fruit and or Veggie Tray
- ★ Cheesy Potatoes
- ★ Crockpot dishes
- ★ Main dish – hamburgers or hot dogs and buns
- ★ Condiments
- ★ Paper Products – plates, utensils, napkins, cups
- ★ Games/Prizes
- ★ Drinks for adults and kids
- ★ Ice

Hope you enjoy your Memorial Day barbecue and that you have so much help from family and friends that you all have a chance to relax and enjoy each other's company and hopefully the weather will cooperate!

► *Betty Huotari is a professional organizer who services all of Southeastern Michigan. She can be reached at 810.348.1772 or [betty@logicalplacement.com](mailto:betty@logicalplacement.com). Betty publishes a monthly newsletter. For more information please visit her website [www.LogicalPlacement.com](http://www.LogicalPlacement.com).*



# A Season For Growth



I'M NOT GOING  
TO WORK ON MY  
WEAKNESSES!

How many times have you heard you need to work on your weaknesses? "Turn your weaknesses into your strengths!"

That is a huge energy drain! Why would you want to do that? Don't waste your time! The book *Three Feet From Gold* puts it this way: "Work your strengths, hire your weaknesses".

What are your strengths? Many times, we don't recognize them because they come so naturally to us that we don't even consider them a strength.

Maybe you're super creative – you may think, "Well, isn't everyone?"

Maybe you're good at organization – you may think, "It's no big deal."

Maybe you are really detail oriented, or maybe you love social media and posting awesome pictures on Instagram.

*Forget about trying to build up your weaknesses, focus on your strengths! It's the season for growth! Growth and success creates more growth and success and it starts with your strengths!*

Maybe your faith is what has kept you hanging in there all these years and kept your attitude positive.

Maybe you're naturally curious and have been since you were a child. I bet you didn't even realize that your desire to try new restaurants, meet new people, and to learn new things was actually a strength. It absolutely is.

So, what ARE your strengths? How can you use your strengths to grow, and to set and achieve your goals? We always seem to be working on something—losing weight, advancing our career, starting our own business (even a side gig), earning a degree or certification, feeling healthier, and the list goes on – it's endless! How can you take advantage of what you are already good at to keep moving yourself forward?

The best resource I know to learn what your strengths are is the VIA Institute on Character. You can take a free survey and learn how you rank in the 24 categories of strengths.

My top 5 strengths are: Spirituality, Gratitude, Love, Love of Learning, and Fairness.

How can I use my strengths to grow, to set a goal, enjoy the journey and achieve my goal? I'll just talk for a minute about my top strength which is spirituality – a couple ways this is manifested is in my calmness and my sense of purpose.

Calmness is certainly valuable as a coach. You sure wouldn't want a coach that went off the deep end when you shared a personal challenge. You would want someone who could be calm, empathetic, and understanding.

My sense of purpose is a benefit for being a solopreneur. Being in business for yourself can sound glamorous, but it can feel like you are taking on the whole world by yourself! Being grounded in my purpose helps me through the tough times.

What is your top strength? Reflect for a moment, how does that strength show up in your life, or how HAS it shown up? How has it contributed to your success in the past? Nothing helps with future success like a past or current success! You did it before, you can do it again, and knowing what strength helped you succeed gives you a focus to succeed again – no matter what your goal is this time.

*Forget about trying to build up your weaknesses, focus on your strengths! It's the season for growth! Growth and success create more growth and success and it starts with your strengths!*

"In any given moment we have two options: To step forward into growth or to step back into safety." ~ Abraham Maslow

Choose to step forward with your strengths into growth – It's the Season For Growth!

► *Debra Loader is a National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach and she works with women who are exhausted from doing it all. She can be reached for private or group coaching at debra@debraloderlivingwell.com or 810.287.4096.*



# YOU HAVE *Powerful* POSSIBILITIES

"There is no man living who isn't capable of doing more than he thinks he can do."

~ Henry Ford

Henry Ford shares the perfect example of potential – not just the things we know we are capable of, but also those things that we may not even imagine possible today. Sometimes others see in us more than we see in ourselves, much like we might see more possibilities for others than they see for themselves.

I don't know about you, but it can be frustrating for me to have people give me so many ideas and possibilities about what I "could" do when I really don't want to go in that direction. Our friends and family mean well when they see great things in us that we may tend to shrug off or not be so excited about or even flat out not believe.

But think about the last time you watched a young person you love not using a talent or ability that you see in them. You might encourage them, give hints about the possibility of something, or even directly tell them what they should be doing. When they continue down a path where we don't see as much potential, we might give even stronger advice or direction and it can get to a point where our loved one shuts out our advice altogether.

It can be a tough space to be in, both on the giving and receiving end of encouragement about our potential and possibilities. So, how do we navigate, recognize, and encourage ourselves and our loved ones in more positive ways?

We can begin by simply recognizing ourselves and others for who we are right now. We can make love lists where we take a few moments with a pen and paper to write all the things we love about life, ourselves, our loved ones, etc. Set a timer and just go at it – you can do this on your own, with a friend, or even at the table after dinner. If you are doing this with others, then fold your sheet, put your name on the outside, then pass the sheet around, writing things you love or admire about each other. Keep passing the papers for a set time or until it gets around to everyone.

If you feel good with a love list, try it another time with a list of practical possibilities. List possibilities that you believe to be possible today, things that you believe could work out for you or a loved one. You want to build your belief so that as you journey through life, you'll begin to believe that you could do more, maybe even that thing that you once believed impossible.

When you're ready, go for a list of powerful possibilities where you begin to



brainstorm ideas that push you to achieve more. You might even see some things on this new list that others have seen in you in the past. That's the thing about loving someone, we not only see powerful possibilities and potential, but truly wish them happiness and success in those things. Through this type of practice, we might also see more powerful possibilities in ourselves. What better example for others than to achieve more than we once thought we were capable of?

You have powerful possibilities.

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► *Tina Nies is a Certified Life Coach and a Vision Board Coach. Her passion is building and strengthening self-love as a foundation for success. She is an author and is known as the "Empress of Love". Facebook/40daylovefest and www.40daylovefest.com.*





# Time Is Precious

Time is precious. There is only so much of it. How are you spending your life? Your time?

During your day are you aware of what you are doing? Or are you thinking of the next thing, the next project, the next obligation, or the next day even?

If you are paying attention to what you are doing as you are doing it, then you are being in your moment with time. If you are thinking of the next “to do” item, you are not in your moment and then it is gone. There is no getting it back. Sometimes people wonder, “Where did the time go?” Maybe it was spent with your mind in the past or the future.

Some people say that time goes fast, or that life is short. Is it? Sure, for some people life is over before they even start, or some get to middle age and die. Some people never fully live while they are here in existence.

What can be done to live now? To fully get the most out of time?

What if we say yes more to the things and the people and the experiences that our gut tells us to? What if we let go of the fears, insecurities, and negative self-talk, and trust ourselves that we are able to do the things that bring us to life?

How would time feel if we were truly alive while we are here? Does time go fast for those that are living up to their true potential?

Does time go fast for those that are living in their now—thinking about their now, not their past or the next thing? (And usually when people are thinking of the past or the next thing it is done with worry or regret or some other negative feeling, which robs an individual of their now and their health. Negative feelings cause feelings of dis-ease. \*Thoughts become things.)

How can we begin to treat ourselves right? When can we allow ourselves to live now, enjoy now, enjoy where we are and what we have (even enjoy what we don’t have)?

When can we allow ourselves to say yes to ourselves, to bring out the fine things that may be saved for a special occasion, to wear the items that make us feel great and fancy and special?

If you are not doing these things now, then what are you waiting for? A time in the future that is not here yet? Can you allow yourself to not wait? Can you give yourself permission (if you need that) to live your fullest life, to treat yourself the best you can, to be yourself and live in your now?

If we are not living in our now, then who is? If our minds are preoccupied with another time then what or who is making our decisions in this present moment? Past experiences are. If we are not being mindful, and present, then we are really reacting to life instead of responding to it. Reacting or responding. Responding is

so much more resourceful, it is how life is lived when awareness is present.

If you like, try to stay in the moment all day. Whenever you find yourself thinking of another time, bring yourself back to the present moment. Notice if you feel like you had more time in your day. Because really, when we are thinking of another time we are missing the time of now, and when we miss that time we don’t get to experience it, and then later it seems as if we had no time all day or that the day just disappeared. Well, if we weren’t in it or with it, then it did just go away, it didn’t get to be experienced.

It really is life-altering to practice staying in the moment. I was doing this for a few years before my husband passed away at a young age. I am so glad that I was in so many of our nows instead of thinking of the what ifs or the what could have beens. When he died I knew that I had spent as much time with him as I could because I was there, aware, of our time together, in our time together.

Best wishes, and with great love,  
Jennie Gray Bouteiller

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► Jennie Bouteiller is a Master Practitioner Humanistic Neuro-linguistic Psychology, Hypnotherapist, and Deeksa (a Oneness blessing) giver. She can be contacted at [healingshiftshappen@gmail.com](mailto:healingshiftshappen@gmail.com) or by phone at 313.600.7178.



# OUT OF THE ASHES

# Phoenix Transform

TIME TO RISE



**N**othing can set someone adrift more easily than losing a mother. In the days and months after she's gone, you hear her in the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street. You see her in your breath floating in the air on a cold winter's day. Gone is the cool hand on your brow when you're not feeling well. Nothing has changed, yet everything has changed.

On January 29, 2014, Emily Cowen's mom lost her 4-year battle to cancer. Emily was only 28 years old. She was a teacher at Fenton High School happily making her own way in the world, but still too young to lose her mother. In September of that year, unable to cope with the loss, her dad tragically committed suicide. She was officially lost at sea.

At this point in her life Emily weighed over 300 lbs. Her struggle to maintain a healthy weight had started in childhood, but grieving the loss of both parents was not helping. She topped the scale at 220 lbs in the 5th grade, during which she started her first official diet. She entered high school weighing 290 lbs. The road through these milestones was fraught with dysfunction, financial stress, and illnesses. Like many, food was a comfort and coping mechanism.

That Christmas she focused her time off on resting and emotionally resetting

herself. She was energized by having the worst year of her life behind her and was ready to start living again. January 5, 2015 was the first day of the new term. It was cold and lightly snowing and optimism was beginning to creep back into her heart. Then without warning, the trajectory of her life changed forever. Someone ran a red light and t-boned her on the driver's side.

Sometimes when we can't stand on our own, Angels stand for us. There is no way she should have survived the impact. No way she should have been able to get out of the car unassisted, or later check herself into the emergency room. No way she should have been able to withstand leaving that day with nothing more than pain pills after doctors dismissed her complaints as little more than complaining. There is no way she should have been able to go back to work for several more weeks... but she did.

By March she had reached the end of her pain tolerance. Another trip to the ER revealed that she had four fractured ribs and several spinal herniations. Over the coming months she endured three spinal surgeries fusing her entire lumbar region. The last surgery was almost fatal due to an incompetent surgeon and complications

that left her waking up in the ICU with respiratory tubes shoved down her throat and a butchered spine. The surgery that was supposed to take five hours had lasted for twelve because the surgeon had been unable to fit the rods and screws together that were supposed to support her spine. When he finally closed her up, he left scraps of metal in her back cavity.

She was barely able to move her left leg from nerve damage. She had pressure burns on her face and body that required six plastic surgeries. If that wasn't enough, she contracted three superbug

infections from the hospital which almost killed her.

Due to infection complications, from what turned out to be fusion surgeries she didn't actually need, she had to have three more spinal surgeries- this time to save her life. The new surgeon removed five pounds of metal hardware from her back, including the infection caked shrapnel that had been left to fester.

For eighteen months her life had been one pain or trauma after another. After the surgery she was facing seven months hooked up to IV antibiotics, followed by oral antibiotics for an additional 12 months, prolonging her recovery. She spent most of her time lying in bed, and a back brace that went from her chin to her waist became part of her daily attire for almost a year.



Her new normal became excruciating, nonstop pain. She couldn't walk without a walker for over a year. She couldn't bear to do things as simple as brush her hair or teeth. It took her a year and a half to put on her shoes and tie them. To make matters worse she began to suffer social anxiety from the harassment she was subjected to during the lawsuit against the auto insurance.

Some call it the dark night of the soul, a painful process that heralds change, transformation and ultimately embodiment of the Divine. For many it is nothing more than a spiritual crisis. Emily could barely do anything - go anywhere. She was in constant pain physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It was a journey that almost broke her spirit and her mind... but she is made of tougher stuff.

Roughly 14 months after her first surgery, more bad news became the turning point in her life. She was diagnosed

with hypothyroidism. By this point she weighed 384 pounds. She finally got angry. Angry that she had to go on ANOTHER medication, after months of pain medications, nerve damage medications, muscle relaxers, high blood pressure pills, anxiety and depression pills. She was angry she had ANOTHER health condition to worry about. She was told her quality of life would not improve. She would never walk again without a walker.



Getting better became her only job. "I knew if I was ever going to really live again, I needed to learn healthy strategies to reduce stress, practice self-care, and emotional processing. I needed to eat in a way that would fight infections, build muscle, reverse my thyroid condition, and address my anxiety and depression," says Emily. From day one, she decided that losing weight was NOT her primary goal. If it was a side effect, then so be it, but she refused to be a slave to restriction, calorie counting or the scale on her journey back to health.

About halfway through her recovery she realized that what appeared to be the worst thing that could have happened to her may just have been the best thing that could have ever happened. Her journey was not just about her own health but about helping others to do the same. It revealed to her, her purpose in life.

In 2017 she went back to school to become a certified Integrative Nutrition Health Coach and graduated from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition (New York) where she learned innovative coaching methods, practical lifestyle management techniques, and over 100 dietary theories - Ayurveda, gluten-free, Paleo, raw, vegan, macrobiotics, and everything in between. She has completed Intuitive Eating Pro Skills Training and holds a Natural Holistic Remedies Certification.

In her search for health she lost 164 pounds, all naturally, in a little over 2 years DURING her recovery. Her physical therapists told her repeatedly she could never do yoga again. Not only does she do it regularly, but last year

she took one of the longest flights in the world to a yoga retreat in Bali – *alone- with complete strangers*. While she continues to endure pain and complications as part of her new life, she has found acceptance, joy, and happiness in the process. She has amazing cholesterol, heart/oxygen rates, blood pressure levels and no longer uses pharmaceutical pain, nerve, mental health, or blood pressure medications.

She still bears the scars from her old life. She carries loose skin on her arms and stomach from so many years of being overweight and the scars from her surgery will bear testimony to everything she has been through, for the rest of her life. Sometimes if she sits too long you will see her stiffly walk across the room as she breathes movement back into her limbs. But when asked why



*Art piece Emily commissioned, constructed from the metal parts that were removed from her back.*



she doesn't have plastic surgery to get rid of the evidence of her once larger self, she adamantly says "No way! Those stretch marks are my life story! They have been my teachers and I am proud of them! I will never apologize for my size or the imperfections of my physical body. I love and respect myself just the way I am."

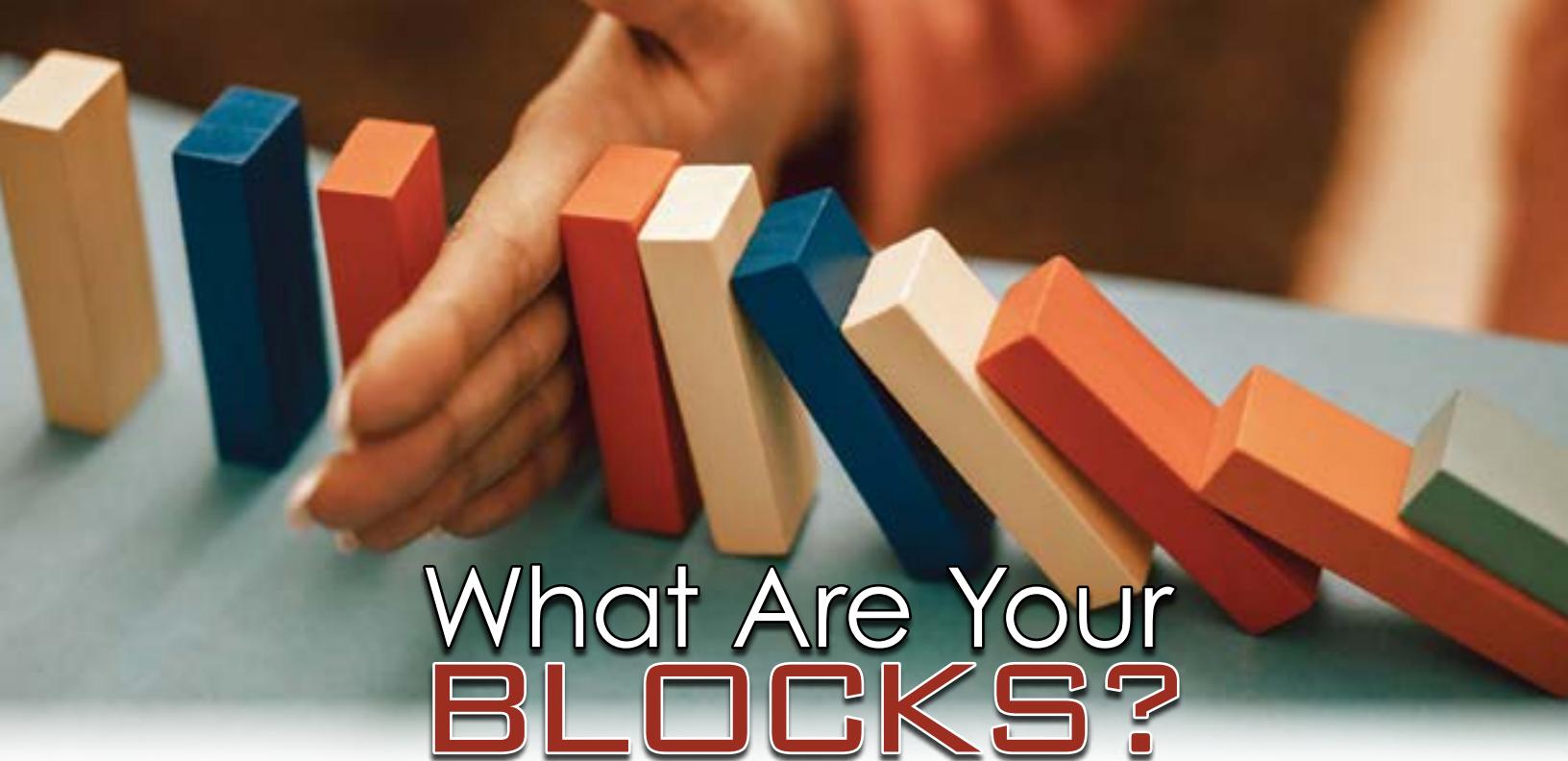
In the fall of 2018 Emily started her own practice, *Phoenix Transform*, where she teaches an integrative approach to health and wellness. She helps her clients look at how all areas of their lives are connected and affect health: mind, body, and spirit.

Her goal is to help others get in touch with their body's needs and equip them with the self-awareness to make good decisions in any circumstance, because let's face it, life happens. She teaches how to approach health goals from a non-diet, weight neutral perspective by focusing on developing and implementing healthy habits, instead of fixating on a number on the scale. She believes in *adding* things to create a fuller, richer life instead of just focusing on restriction. "We can't hate our bodies into health and wellness, which is why body image/body positive work is incorporated into my integrative health coaching programs," say Emily, "If hating our bodies into health worked we'd all be skinny!"

For Emily, the dark night of the soul is over and she doesn't take one minute of her life for granted. When she is not helping others transform their lives, she is traveling the world, marveling in how precious life is. She is doing all the things that just a few short years ago she was told she would never do.

► To learn more about how Emily can help you transform your life, visit her website [www.phoenixtransform.com](http://www.phoenixtransform.com) or email her [info@phoenixtransform.com](mailto:info@phoenixtransform.com).

*Article written by Kellie Pardi, while Interim Development Director, Catholic Charities of Shiawassee Counties and Genesee Counties.*



# What Are Your BLOCKS?

True healing comes from inside of you. If you hold blocks from fear, trauma, abuse, loss, you name it, then I'm here to tell you that confronting them is your best option. Blocks are created when our brain and body react too often in fight or flight mode. Of course, this is a protection mechanism, but instead, over time it physically breeds disharmony and mentally generates solid negative neural pathways when we avoid dealing with our conditional blocks. The pain then shows up in our lives as depression, anger, addiction, and disease. Think about that word, "dis-ease", and how when our emotions are suppressed it causes our bodies to go numb, and that lack of conscious awareness causes physical dis-ease. This is how the mind-body works - they are inseparable. And as adults, we become fear-based and begin self-destructing when we can no longer keep up the charades.

So what are you doing to become more self-aware and self-understood? If you take a quiet moment and ask yourself, "what is blocking me from my full potential?", what would you answer? I can almost guarantee that no matter what you come up with, your answers point to one simple truth - YOU. Now, I'm not here to harp on anyone, because we all have this not-so-unique way of coming up with excuses for why we do

not change or ever live up to the crazy awesomeness that we feel is hiding inside of us. But, I'm here to tell you that becoming the person you imagine yourself to be is not as distant as you may think. I want to help you connect deeper within yourself. Will you answer these questions to discover more about your blocks? If so, please reflect on these questions, and feel free to journal out the answers!

- **Am I good enough to have everything I desire?**
- **Do I feel worthy of full and true happiness?**
- **Do I feel valued and appreciated by those around me?**
- **Do I love myself, wholly and deeply?**
- **Am I lovable?**
- **Am I enough?**

If you answered NO to any of these questions, ask yourself WHY that answer is real for you. In doing so, you will uncover any blocks you may have in how you perceive yourself. Many of us have grown up believing lies about ourselves that infiltrate into our adult lives and to the core of our personal belief systems. We believe we are not good enough or worthy of love. In return, we don't truly love ourselves, or believe we are good enough to accomplish our wildest dreams. But, now it is time for you to

redirect the pathways in your brain and start believing in what you want out of life - no more living in the past. Dig deep and face the hard emotional and physical pain that is trapped in your body, and after you confront it, you will be so happy you did.

I've personally dealt with deep depression, anxiety, and self-loathing, especially when stress is present. I had conditioned my body to live in "flight" mode most of my waking hours. Years ago, I allowed myself to stop taking prescription drugs and began to naturally alter the chemical makeup and thought patterns in my brain. Releasing my past by confronting and dealing with painful experiences has brought me to many realizations about myself. I am becoming my ideal self, and in doing so, I am able to share this journey. If this sounds familiar, reach out to someone you trust to help guide you through your heavy blocks. You should know that you are worthy of everything you desire, because you are a creator, and an extension of that which created you.

► Jennifer Gardner is a best-selling author, NLP practitioner, Life Coach, Hypnotherapist and owner of Shift Holistics. She loves meditation and the Law of Attraction.



# A Mom's Voice

A parent is the ultimate advocate, and becoming one nearly two decades ago helped me find my voice better than anything else. From my womb sprang three daughters. Who knew they would be so individualistic from the start? Our home is boisterous with teenage chaos and laughter, sisterly spats and emotional drama, and sometimes eerie silence as they each retreat to their electronics. The age of my kids spans from a spunky 14- to a sassy 19-years-old, with my middle-born often regarded as the youngest even though she is actually 18.



Lisa was born with a rare genetic condition called 2q23.1 microdeletion syndrome as well as autism. In addition to moderate to severe learning disabilities, she also experiences speech impairment and behavior challenges. The need to advocate for her began just days after her birth when she was plagued by dramatic episodes of sleep apnea that left her repeatedly gasping for air. She

couldn't suckle and I fed her drop by drop from a medicine syringe. Her reflexes were non-existent and muscle tone was low. I pleaded with doctors for help and when nobody seemed to take us seriously, I bought a video camera and recorded her. Upon viewing the tapes, her doctors referred to her condition as "phenomenal" and called her a "mystery."

And so our distorted version of "normal" began.

As she missed milestone after milestone, Lisa was deemed to have Global Cognitive Delay. She received services until the age of three from our local school district through a program called Early On. During this time, her diagnosis changed to PDD-NOS (Pervasive Development Disorder - not otherwise specified, which was one of the original prongs under the Autism umbrella of syndromes). At age three, Lisa was assessed by our school district and determined to be autistic, and from that point on, she began receiving special education services.

Autism diagnoses can be slippery and we had a difficult time convincing our insurance company of her disability. The first round of genetic testing was performed when she was an infant, but revealed no abnormalities. The second round, years later, taught us nothing more. Without coverage for occupational, speech, and physical therapies, we were left to concoct programs at home.

Thankfully, genetic testing has come a long way in the last two decades. The third round of testing came when Lisa was in middle school, and it revealed a 2q microdeletion along with a pre-mutation of fragile X syndrome. This was the beginning of change for us as far



as getting the necessary therapies to help Lisa function at her best. Nowadays, our home is also often full of people around the clock whose job it is to help Lisa practice life skills that will support her independence as an adult.

As a mom, I had to find a deep inner strength and the voice my children needed. That voice sometimes is steady as a drum and other times loud and frantic (as it was when my oldest child was diagnosed with leukemia at age 10). Sometimes that voice looks like behavior meetings at school; sometimes it looks like an army of therapists in my home; sometimes it looks like a day stacked with doctor appointments. And sometimes that voice looks like a mom who has it all figured out, but really just tries on a daily basis to be the strongest and best version of herself for her kids.

► Kim Hytinen is a Michigan native, freelance writer, dreamer, and lover of interesting vintage and antique goods. As a former small business owner, college administrator, and the mom of three teens -- one of whom is special needs -- Kim's experience adjudicates her propensity to writing on a variety of topics.





# WHAT ARE YOUR **TOP 10** *Positive Attributes?*

If you were asked to write down your “Top 10 Positive Attributes,” would you struggle? Do you believe you’re good at anything? Well, if you hesitate at all, that is a problem.

What is it that stops you from believing in yourself? Is it bad luck, the world around you, or could it be coming from within? Most people learn the art of self-sabotage as a child. People usually resort back to what they know or have learned from their parents. Generation after generation, self-sabotage has been a toxic family heirloom. Not only does it hurt you mentally, physically, and spiritually, but it also hurts everyone who is trying to help you.

Determine to replace old negative beliefs and self-sabotaging thought patterns with new, positive, and powerful transforming affirmations to help change your mindset. If someone compliments you, accept it, believe it, and repeat it!

## WHAT WE THINK

Your thought life has a constant impact on your self-confidence. Thoughts like; "I can't do that", "I'm not cute enough", "I'm too fat", "I'm too short", "I'm not smart enough", "I can't spell", "My hair is too thin...too curly...too straight and not the right color", "I always fail", "I'm not strong enough", "I have no purpose", "I'm just not worthy", are negative thoughts that lower your frequency and can create acidosis.

## WHAT WE DO

Your actions can set the tone for your day and your life. Some examples of harmful actions are; being a perfectionist, avoiding conflict at all costs or searching out conflicts, procrastinating, focusing on the trivial things, embracing negative relationships, comparing yourself to others, lacking boundaries, not respecting yourself enough to have/make others respect you, being timid, fearful, anxious, self-injury, lacking financial self-control, and having addictive behaviors.

## WHAT WE SAY

Today will be a new day to stop this self-destructive behavior and start feeling good about yourself and begin fulfilling God's purpose for your life! We are all different, with different heritages, cultures, skills, talents, and gifts. We are meant to complement each other.

Commit yourself to forming a new habit for the next 21-30 days.

Get a notebook and write down:

- 1** 10 or more positive attributes about yourself.
- 2** 5-10 long-term goals and 5-10 short-term goals-include your intentions & time frame.
- 3** Make a list of positive changes (self-improvement goals) you want in your life. Pick the top 2-5 positive changes you want to make and write down 10 times on 3 x 5 cards. Place cards everywhere, so you will see it daily. Every time you look at the cards, spend 2-3 minutes reciting the desired changes with confidence.

Tell your family, friends, and yourself what you are trying to accomplish, and ask for their support and encouragement. This positive accountability will help motivate you. DO NOT allow or participate in any negativity, gossip, or drama in your life. If the conversation is not encouraging or uplifting, remove yourself from the situation. Stand firm and respect yourself enough to have others respect you! Do not allow others to bring you down.

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# Spring Growth

One spring morning as I glanced out into my backyard, big, white snowflakes began falling. It was April 19th, and I must admit, I was tired of winter. I immediately thought, "Oh bummer!"

By the time an inch of snow had accumulated, I glanced over to my garden area. I saw a beautiful bright yellow finch perched on the branch of a dried-up dormant butterfly bush. Just below the finch, in my otherwise colorless garden, one little pink hyacinth plant (slightly buried by snow) was patiently waiting for the sun to reappear.

Mother Nature doesn't mind if there's a sudden spring snowstorm. She always goes with the flow and her spring growth continues as usual. We humans are different. We have a choice whether we want to grow or not. Sometimes we get stuck in a rut. This may go on for a season and sometimes, out of habit, it can go on for years.

Today, I invite you to try a new kind of spring cleaning. This is a mental exercise where we will choose to clean out and discard old habits of thought and disempowering beliefs that no longer serve us. These are the kinds of thoughts that do not feel good when we think them. They often produce a knot in our stomach (or gut feeling/instinct) trying to remind us that this thought doesn't resonate with us anymore.

Let's picture our mind as if it were a garden. Our thoughts are the seeds we plant in our mind/garden. Well known author and speaker Dr. Wayne Dyer said that our thoughts produce our emotions so paying attention to our emotions is how we will choose our mind/garden seeds. The good feeling thoughts (the ones that make us smile) are the seeds that produce a beautiful garden in our mind and our lives. The thoughts that make us feel bad, like "I hate winter!" or "I'm not good enough" or thoughts of self-doubt like "I can't do that" are the thought seeds that grow into stifling weeds in our mind. These are the

thoughts that make us feel stuck in a rut. These are the thoughts we want to pull out of our mind before they start multiplying.

Here's how I helped myself do a mental clean-up on April 19th : Because of the unexpectant appearance of a snowstorm, I quickly caught myself beginning to feel bad as I thought, "Oh bummer! I hate that winter is still here." Knowing that this thought/feeling would keep multiplying (like weeds in a garden) and get worse if I didn't do something about it, I took several deep breaths and allowed my mind to settle down. I chose to start appreciating how beautiful it was to see the big, soft fluffy snowflakes gently falling to the ground. Then I took another deep breath and began to smile at the sweet little yellow finch, and the pretty pink hyacinth plant as they patiently waited for the snow to end. I then found myself loving the resilience of Mother Nature. Within a few minutes, I'd quickly made myself feel better. I had purposefully chosen to uplift myself which also changed my outlook for the day. I did this by simply catching my emotion early and choosing a new way to think about things.



A great way to begin the process of a mental clean-up is to take your attention away from what you don't like and focus on something you can easily find to like and appreciate. The more things you find to appreciate, the more powerful your upliftment will be. For me, it was remembering to breathe deeply (when we're anxious, we subconsciously go into a fight-or-flight mode and start taking short, quick breaths) and then I combined it with appreciating the beauty of the big snowflakes, the pretty little finch, the pink flower, and the resilience of nature.

Repetition builds new habits so now I do my mental clean-up process all the time. I begin it as soon as I realize I'm feeling bad. I ask myself, "what was I thinking that made me feel bad?" After I acknowledge to myself what thoughts were making be feel bad, I shift my focus and I begin to find thoughts that make me feel better. Establishing this new habit helped me learned that *happiness is a choice*. The good news is *you* are the only person who chooses your thoughts. We've heard frustrated little children say, "you are not the boss of me!" It's time to claim it for ourselves. When it comes to creating our own reality, we are our own boss. As we choose to remove our negative thoughts (those weeds that subconsciously grow out of control) and replace them with better feeling thoughts, we will find ourselves experiencing a new and improved life. As this new habit gets stronger and stronger, we will easily prove to ourselves how we change the quality of our lives by changing the quality of our thoughts.

Happy spring cleaning my friends!

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