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What's Love Got To Do With It?

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MIN. TARNESA MARTIN

Tonya Ketzler

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Dear Friends,

There are many aspects to love, as is evidenced by our writers' different approaches to the topic for this month, "What's Love Got To Do With It?". You will enjoy all the information and advice our ladies have given us in this issue. Deria Brown tells us how to love intentionally, Lisa Thompson talks about finding the self-care that works for you, and Tina Nies has written about how happiness affects love, just to name several of our articles.

Our Cover Girl is local and has written a book which expresses, through poetry, the very nature and nuances of love as she experienced it. Here's a glimpse at one of the poems inside her book:

"Knowing Love"
How do I know you?
In the middle of the day, I hear a word that triggers a
memory of time we've spent together. Or I smell the air and a
bit of your essence meanders in from a distant place.
Suddenly a light comes into my eyes,
I give a kind of half smile and a heart-filled sigh
That's how I know I love you.

Enjoy the story about Tonya Ketzler.

Our wish for you, not only for this "love month" but for the whole year, is that love completely fills your life.

Much love, Deb and Mimi

Make sure you visit our
W2W Resource Guide.
(See the back pages.)

Keep it handy all year to reference.

Reserve your spot for next year!
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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. Article guidelines are under the magazine tab.

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Loving HARD

Tonya Ketzler is a most gracious hostess who enjoys people. One of her favorite things to do is put people together—multiple ages and professions and younger ones that need "shoring up"—and watch the magic happen. She says she's a "fixer" so she loves looking at the qualities in people and then pairing them up according to what one has that the other needs, or who can help another with a project. With everyone gathered in a room she will then step back, observing to make sure everyone is getting what they need. "Nothing makes me happier. I have porch parties in the summer on short notice and that's what happens...people communicating. Life is a caldron and we as women are required to reach behind ourselves and help pull the next generation of women up over the edge. Porch parties help do that."

Tonya comes from the rich heritage of a family deeply connected with the community. Her family has been in some kind of horticulture for over one hundred seventy years in Genesee County. Her grandparents were Boy and Girl Scout leaders. Her dad (after coming back from the war) was elder in the church and a Boy Scout leader at 23. He was Lt. Governor for the Flint Kiwanis Club twice. With this family history comes responsibility. "Being involved in the community was not an option but rather an expectation. For generations we have tried to help make our home of Genesee County a better place to live." She is Clerk for Mundy Township and believes in what Jefferson said, "Take the knowledge you have, go serve the people, and then go back to the farm." She is "returning to the farm" in a couple of years.

Tonya was raised in a somewhat regimented home because her dad had been in the military. He often told her to "buck up buttercup" so she didn't learn to cry until she was around fifty. But she did learn to swear from her grandma. She says she is very lucky that she had two strong grandmothers. One was a good Methodist, who knitted and made cookies, and never swore or drank, and the other could out-swear, out-card-play, and out-drink any man around. So Tonya says she learned from both and can clean it up or dress it down.

Tonya is a strong woman who believes in the adage: If you wait to be invited to the table you will never sit there—you must invite yourself. She was a leader in "being strong" when it wasn't totally accepted in the community. Even her dad, with whom she was very close, voted against allowing women to join Kiwanis at the national level. When it was finally approved and Tonya told her dad she'd been asked to join Kiwanis, he was still adamant that it was no place for women. But Tonya joined anyway and so he quit, although six months later he had a change of heart. Six years after that she was appointed Lt. Governor of Kiwanis. Her dad showed his approval by giving her his own red Lt. Governor's jacket.

There were two occurrences especially notable to Tonya while she was Chairman of the Board of the Flint Chamber of Commerce (only the second woman in eighty-seven years) in the early 90s. Tonya held a first-ever conference of all the women in charge of women's organizations in Genesee County. Gathering those women helped them become aware of each other. For example, not many knew there were women's groups of attorneys and realtors. Her purpose was to note what the groups were doing and what wasn't being done in order to see if there were holes they needed to fill. Tonya was networking before the term was even used!

And also, she visited Russia twice, on behalf of the Chamber, ten years apart. The first time, shortly after the wall fell in 1994, she met with a group of women and told them what it was like to own a business in the U. S. On Tonya's return trip ten years later, a woman who'd been a part of that group told her that because of Tonya she now owned her own business and employed one hundred women!

For strength during tough times, the Church is her rock. She says, "I never call myself religious, but I have been accused of having a peace about me that people can feel. There are two things I make sure people know about me when we first meet: I am a Roman Catholic and I am a florist. You never know which of those two things they might need."

What has motivated her through life? "Life is a journey and you must enjoy the ride, with all its ups and downs, not the destination. I've never said 'why me' because I was raised, 'Why not you? What makes you so special?' Stuff happens. Don't look at the problem as a whole, but broken down into pieces. They are easier to swallow. My friend just told me that through cancer treatments this summer I was so calm and composed. I asked her how worrying would change any outcome. It wouldn't, so just soldier on."

When asked about her writing, Tonya says, "I started writing in high school. My English teacher said my research paper was the first she'd read with emotion and suggested I keep writing. I was co-editor of the school newspaper. I always have pen and paper with me, especially in church. You never know when a light will come on and you get inspiration. I love wordsmithing. I try to see the beauty and good in everything—color in black and white and shades of green in the trees. Grandpa Ketzler taught me that. I describe myself as a "nerd that sometimes lets the right brain fly!" when I am writing. When you spill your guts on the written page it's kind of cathartic.

My book is the story of one woman's love affair. It includes happy times and some raw emotion defining some of life's love equations. I try to use vivid scenery and heart-rending imagery. T. K. (her pseudonym) says, 'If you have loved hard, you will understand the book. If not, maybe this will give you the courage to try'. I hope everyone has the chance to love hard just once in their life, and then again, for their own sanity, I pray they never will.

I find in sharing my feelings I give others validation for their own emotions. Every woman will find something in this book they can relate to, an 'aha' moment where they can say, 'Yes I've felt that, I've been there.' It's not about one woman's journey but about us all."

Tonya has been writing poetry for a long time and has been collecting things she's written for years. When she read a couple of them to a friend he said that she should print them, and his brother, author Steve LeBel, said that he would help her. "If not for them my poems would still just be a pile of papers on my desk." The illustrations that accompany each poem help to visualize the verbiage. They are the art of Gary Pearce, a freelance photographer.

T. K. Flowers is Tonya's pseudonym and her book, *Loving Hard*, is available on Amazon in E format, paperback, and soon-to-be audio book.

▶ *Staff Writer /Editor Mimi Matthews*

The Last Sister

In the early 1920s, Roy and Helen Hurley became husband and wife. It was a very different time. Women stayed at home. Men worked for the same employer until they retired with a pension. Families were large, and resources were scarce and frequently shared.

The Hurleys had a very large family. There were seven girls and one boy. The age span between the first daughter and the last daughter was approximately 20 years, causing the very last daughter, Sharon, to feel like a cherished only child. Not only was she adorable, but she was constantly showered with gifts and love by the older siblings and by her parents. This was reflected in her beautiful wardrobe, southern college choice, and ultimate wedding near the water's edge in downtown Detroit.

In many ways, Sharon had the idyllic family and the perfect life.

As the years passed, the grandchildren from each sister who had married would spend hours with their aging grandparents. Sharon and her children were there more than others as their home was minutes away. The bonds of family love were strong.

In time, Roy and Helen passed away. As such, the family scattered and new traditions were made in each family unit with occasional group visits at funerals or weddings. Kids went off to college, and as the decades passed, they too started their own families in states and cities far from Detroit.

The circle of life slowly took one sister after another, and the only brother also made his way "home," as well. In late 2018, the last of Sharon's siblings passed away, and she truly became the *only child* with the whispers of her great big Irish family tugging at her heart.

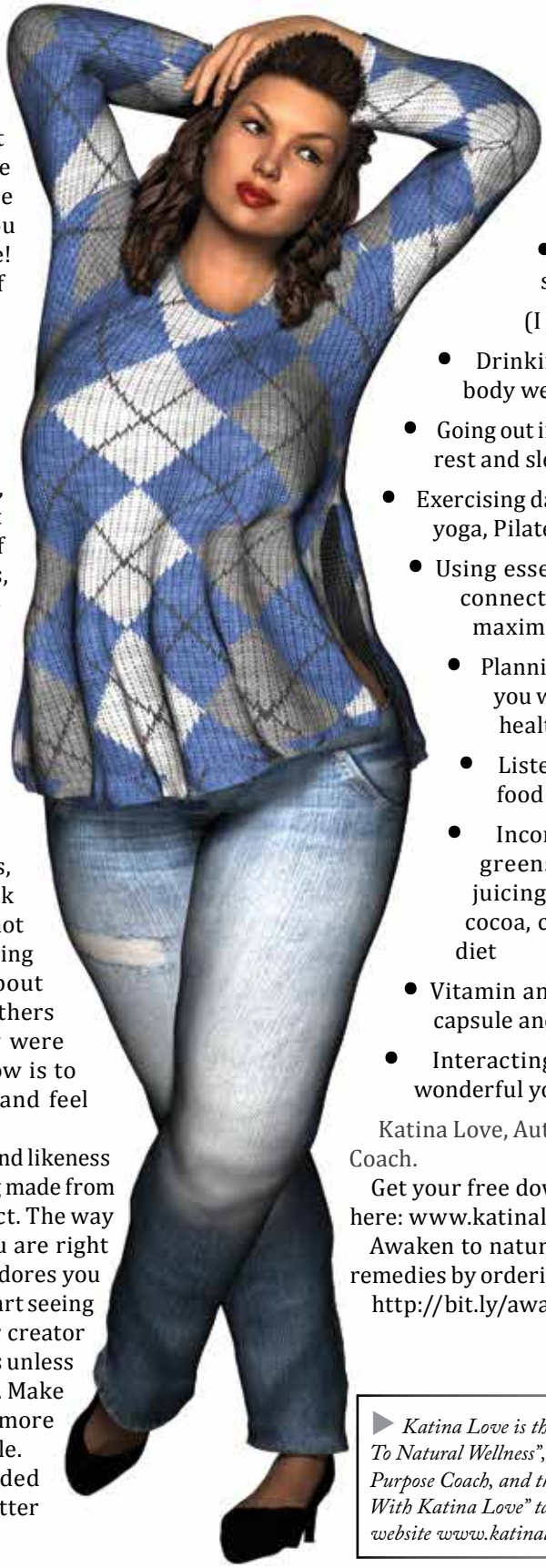
Today, the youngest of the Hurleys is now the matriarch of the entire Hurley family. Time will not treat her any differently than her brother and sisters who walked in and out of their home on Chatsworth Street. She, like them, will someday take her leave, but for now, she carries on their values and their sense of family and love.

The baby girl of the family now must visit the graves of nine people who brought her life and happiness. As such, she writes more, takes time to visit her children and grandchildren on beaches and in fields – wherever they call home. And occasionally, when the mood strikes, she has lunch with her nieces. If Sharon has learned anything over the years, it is to *love each other, and cherish those closest to you. The hands of time are ticking for all of us.*

And yes, the last sister is listening.

Helen Hicks is an award-winning administrator and motivational speaker living in the Detroit area. You can reach her at helenk7306@hotmail.com.

Love Your Body



Do you appreciate yourself and your body the way it is right now? If not it's time that you start! Positive self-image and unconditional self-love are so absolutely important if you are to have a full and happy life! Furthermore it is important if you are to be open to receiving all that life has to offer you and to know your true worth. There are so many ways you can begin right now with loving your beautiful and magnificent body. It does not matter what your size, weight, color or shape is right now, love it anyway! With all of its curves, bulges, scars, marks, discolorations and whatever else you may consider to be imperfect. For example: if you have one boob that is slightly larger than the other one so what! Many of us do, including me! Don't be ashamed! No one is going to notice it anyway through your clothes, ha!

If you are paying attention to what the media, television, videos, magazines, and other people think true beauty looks like, they are not good examples. Even your upbringing can affect the way you feel about yourself and body image. Did others comment on your body? If they were not good comments, your job now is to re-program the way you think and feel about yourself.

You were made in the goodness and likeness of God your creator and everything made from this energy is beautiful and perfect. The way that your creator sees you as you are right now is perfect and He loves and adores you just the way you are. It's time to start seeing yourself through the eyes of your creator and not through the eyes of others unless they see you as your creator does. Make it your intention to incorporate more positive self-talk into your lifestyle.

Now let's focus on taking guided inspired action to help you feel better about your body and self-image.

Helpful ways to increase positive body image:

These are some self-love practices to consider adding to your lifestyle to help you stay well, happy, and vibrant.

- Meditating, deep breathing and saying positive affirmations example:

(I love me)

- Drinking plenty of purified water (half your body weight in ounces is ideal)
- Going out in nature often, getting proper sunlight, rest and sleep
- Exercising daily. Suggestions: walking, bike riding, yoga, Pilates, playing with kids, dancing, etc.
- Using essential oils to heighten your spiritual connection, senses, and clarity, and to help maximize organ function
- Planning your meals in advance and whether you will prepare them at home or eat out at healthy restaurants
- Listening to your body and eating smaller food portions
- Incorporating lots of organic dark leafy greens and vegetables, fresh fruit, raw juicing, and superfoods, such as spirulina, cocoa, chlorophyll, and maca root, into your diet
- Vitamin and mineral supplimentation in tablet, capsule and/or liquid form
- Interacting with people who remind you how wonderful you are

Katina Love, Author, Life Purpose Spiritual Guide and Coach.

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Katina Love is the author of the book "Awaken To Natural Wellness", she's a Self-love and Life Purpose Coach, and the creator of the "Awakening With Katina Love" talk show/podcast. Check out her website www.katinalove.com.

A New Surprise Chapter For Mom

When Karen DePottey's father passed away in spring 2015, she and her family feared mom's days were numbered. "Dad was the outgoing one and mom quietly kept dad together for almost 63 years." Karen made a promise to her dad to watch over her mom till the end. As JoAnne's full-time caregiver, it was obvious her mom was struggling. She lost her spark. Sitting on the couch with her husband's photo in hand, JoAnne's sadness and forgetfulness grew stronger.

When Karen reflects on the months before her mom enrolled in PACE, she knew her mental and physical health were declining. She cared for all of her mom's needs, but "we were losing her." It was then she learned about Genesys PACE – the building across from where she worked at the Flint Farmers' Market.

PACE is a model of care designed to keep those struggling with chronic, long-term challenges in a community setting for as long as possible. Genesys PACE opened in August 2015 with the same all-inclusive care approach that has been developed over 40 years. There are more than 120 sites across the nation, including over 10 in Michigan. PACE coordinates all care, developing and overseeing a unique plan of care for each person enrolled. This one-stop shopping approach is coordinated and managed by a multi-disciplinary team specializing in older adults. Care can include services in the home, throughout the network and at the Genesys PACE Center.

When JoAnne started with PACE, Karen never imagined PACE would open a new chapter for her – a gift to her and her extended family. "At PACE, the interactions, excitement, stimulation and structure brought her new life. I know it's because of PACE." This new beginning gave JoAnne's family the chance to experience a different side of mom – enjoying her laughter, stories and joyfulness during the past four years. Karen describes a good day for mom is when she wakes, dresses, eats, then excitedly waits at the window watching for her PACE bus. After time at PACE, she returns home joyful. She's eager to share her stories, bingo prizes and self-made crafts. Any interruptions to this routine are both the exception and challenge. On weekends, or days when Karen must remind mom the Genesys PACE Center is closed, when she predictably responds, "Yuck, home today," and laughs. When JoAnne has a stretch when she's unable to go to PACE, Karen says "Her light and energy goes out a bit. Mom would love to go seven days a week if she could."

Karen stresses PACE "gives me peace of mind, knowing she is safe, taken care of – it's a constant

for me. I trust everything is fine from 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. If anything comes up, I will be notified." This was never more important than the time Karen woke in the emergency room after a horrendous car accident. Mom was with her. Her first thought was to call PACE to tell them mom was in the hospital. "Being a caregiver is challenging enough, but when the caregiver needs care? I know mom wouldn't have survived the trauma of the accident – she would have spiraled down. PACE kept her routine and socialization constant," said Karen. She describes PACE as a lifesaver. "Mom was taken care of, provided extra care and had extra eyes watching over her – PACE was the constant in mom's life during that time." She explained how PACE worked to line everything up. "PACE partnered with my sister to educate her and add needed assistance." Karen described the relief and blessing it was to have the PACE team watching over her mom while she fought long and hard to recover herself.

After four years of partnering with PACE to care for her mom, what advice does she have? "Make a call right away to get information. PACE benefits those enrolled mentally, physically and emotionally. It provides purpose in the last days (or in our case it's been a gift of years) with people who care and love them." Karen stressed that reaching out for help does not mean you can't do it. "Having PACE's all-inclusive care gives me a break and a healthier perspective as a caregiver. Mom and I both get our cups filled during

the days she's at PACE." Instead of being bogged down with the many details of coordinating medical and supportive services for her mom, she has more time and energy to enjoy the remaining days they have together. "PACE is a gift and a blessing – a darn stinking blessing," says Karen.

If you or someone you know is caring for a loved one age "55 or better" who struggles with physical, memory or unstable health challenges, let them know about PACE. For more information, call Genesys PACE at 810-236-7500 (TTY 810-236-7554).

PACE -- Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly

PACE serves those who are struggling and vulnerable to nursing home placement. To enroll in PACE, individuals must:

- be age 55 or older
- meet nursing home level of care criteria (struggling with long-term, chronic challenges)
- be able to live safely in the community with the support of PACE services.

PACE offers many services both inside and outside a home. Primary medical care, hospital, home care and therapy services may be provided. Meals, medication management, nutrition counseling, social services, transportation, leisure and social activities are options. Transportation to the Genesys PACE Center and medical appointments is scheduled and provided by PACE. Each participants' needs are assessed and coordinated by a team of 11 fields of expertise, both medical and non-medical. These needs are evaluated on a regular schedule or as needed. Family and caregivers are important and involved.

Eligibility is determined by our PACE intake team. This evaluation starts with a simple phone call. What you pay for PACE depends on your financial situation. Those enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, or Medicaid alone, have no co-payments or deductibles. PACE can assist with new Medicaid applications and provides a cost-sharing option with Medicare alone.

To find out what Genesys PACE services might look like for you or someone you love, call 810-236-7500 (TTY 810-236-7554).

See ad on page 35

A New Beginning

When I called my dad today, he'd just arrived home from one of his first days at Pace. He'd had a great day he said. When I ask what he likes best he says he likes to help people. He feels needed and wanted as he visits with his new friends. And I am sure he likes returning to his own home because I think it makes him feel independent. Pace provides the social aspect that is so important to my dad. And the food! "Oh my goodness, I have never seen so much food," he says laughing.

This is a long ways from the starving man that greeted me at the airport four and a half years ago! I was shocked at his appearance and devastated by his memory loss—affected by over-medication, but also, unknown to me, because he has Alzheimer's.

Thus my father came to live with me, which brought a whole set of challenges in both my personal life and my business. As the owner/publisher of Women2Women Michigan magazine, it's mandatory that I am out in the community talking with other business owners and meeting people. However, as I was trying to manage all of his care on my own—meals, laundry, finances, and vast medical needs, not to mention his craving for attention and love—my time was limited and my focus was divided.

Even when he was able to move into an apartment after eighteen months of living with us his level of care didn't really change. And now there was the added concern of his loneliness. He wanted to see me every day, and I was desperately working long hours running a business, caring for my family, and trying to meet my dad's needs. He didn't understand, of course.

Pace has been life-changing for my family and me. The relief of knowing that there is someone to help me navigate all there is to do for my father has been a godsend. With their support, I can now focus on my business. I can take a deep breath and rest assured my dad is having a good day visiting with his new friends.

I wasn't about to abandon my dad to navigate on his own. What choice did I have but to take care of him? Most of us don't have a choice when it comes to taking care of our aging parents.

However, over time the stress of care giving can lead to long-term health problems. A 2017 survey by Embracing Carers found that roughly half of unpaid U.S. caregivers suffer from feelings of depression, sleep trouble, weight fluctuation and other health complications — and that's before stress related to money even enters the discussion.

Pace is taking fabulous care of my father and giving me my life back. As they pointed out, they will take extremely good care of my father so that I can move from the care giving role and back into the role of daughter. It's the one role that only I can do.

My dad has always been my best friend and for me, there was no other choice than to help him in his time of need. Now with Pace at my back I have my own personal Swat Team!

Love Intentionally

Nothing burns stronger or longer than the flames of love. The heart's ability to get lodged, entangled, rooted and bracketed to another human being remains one of the greatest mysteries. Love is intoxicating....it makes us happy, sad, and at times a little crazy. Even still, with all of its intense onslaught, at some point in our lives the massive inferno that comes with new love and relationships gets doused and extinguishes with time.

Since we have recently begun a prosperous and impressive New Year, I would like to give you yet another something to add to your, "List of Things To Accomplish in 2019", and that is to value, enjoy, and be intentional about those you love.

I get it. The range of emotion in primary relationships is vast. For instance, in my own marriage I will feel a full spectrum of love, bliss, anger, and frustration over a lifetime. For the record, mostly love and bliss. However, if I'm not careful and attentive to the relationship, the strain of living will cause the embers to burn low and greatly affect my heart.

It's a good thing every new year brings with it an opportunity for a clean slate. Fresh starts are fun! For me, the gratification of a "do over" has tucked within it the opportunity to hit reset and get things right. Relationships are a breeding ground for offense, pain, and heartache. When these things occur it's good to have a chance to fix them. Unspoken apologies lead to resentment. I encourage you this year to get to work on fixing your heart and making sure the ones you love really sense it. Whatever has diminished your capacity to love and crank up the flames please address and move forward. Forgive when necessary and apologize as needed. Forgiveness frees up space in the heart to love more deeply and completely.

Having the heart free opens us up to even more fulfilling relationships and makes us healthier overall. When our hearts are uncluttered and the pain of relationships isn't a daily focus, we have the clarity and motivation to produce at optimal levels. The accelerant of a healthy heart and mind can produce incredible results at work, at home, in business and in your community.

The final challenge is to be especially attentive to the people you care about the most this year. Don't make them pay for the mistakes of others. Love liberally and in abundance, you have plenty to go around. Take the time to meet face to face with friends and family. Hug often. Forgive quickly. Say you are sorry.

Doling out unconditional love has its own reward!

Deria Brown is an entrepreneur, author, speaker and mentor to young girls. She can be reached at www.sparklepink.org

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.

Finding Her Voice:

Atiya Machesney

In 2006, Tarana Burke was consumed by a desire to do something about the sexual violence she saw in her community. She took out a piece of paper, wrote "Me Too" across the top and laid out an action plan for a movement centered on the power of empathy between survivors to create change. More than a decade later, the phrase "Me Too" has exploded and women all over the world have been saying "Me Too", and at long last telling their stories.

But what about the women who don't have a voice? The women who society has given up on? The women that have not only suffered trauma and sexual abuse but have been broken by it? Women held in jails represent the fastest growing incarcerated population in Michigan. Sexual assault is a common thread for women who find themselves in the criminal justice system. Women represent just seven percent (thirteen percent nationally) of inmates, but make up more than two-thirds of the victims of staff-on-inmate sexual victimization. Eighty-six percent of women in jail report experiencing sexual violence at some point in their life. Nearly half of all female inmates have been charged with drug-related crimes. It doesn't take a degree in psychology to understand why women have turned to substance abuse as an escape from their lives.

Who is listening to these women? The prison system was not designed to meet the needs of female inmates and the health systems there often fail to meet women's unique set of circumstances. This means that in addition to entering jail in more perilous situations than men, women also tend to leave more damaged as well.

In September 2018 Catholic Charities of Shiawassee and Genesee Counties responded to the needs of women by adding a women's group to their already existing Re-Connections program, to address the specific needs of post-incarcerated women returning to Genesee County. The program's mission is to empower individuals with felonies through coaching, education and employment and covers a range of topics from resume building/interview preparation, to relationship-building, art therapy, and college program presentations.

Atiya Machesney graduated from the pilot program on November 2, 2018. Her life had hit rock bottom. On May 3, 2015 she had been awake for eleven days and had crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and various pills in her blood stream. She blacked out and woke up in Oakland County Jail facing ten years in prison for assaulting her husband with a knife in a fit of rage. She was charged with intent to do great bodily harm.

Atiya makes no excuses for what she did that night. She explains "I was holding on to so much cold anger and was taking it out on everyone around me. I didn't know how to process my emotions." Atiya had been raped by her uncle since she was nine years old. By the time the abuse stopped in her early twenties, she was past the point of being able to deal with the emotional side effects. She had turned to drugs to numb the reality of her life.

Women's prisons are overcrowded with poor conditions. Atiya looked around her and saw so many women that were repeat offenders or lifers and vowed to herself that she would not let that happen to her. "If God would give me a second chance I would learn as much as I could. I was able to develop a sense of gratitude for what I was going through," says Atiya. "A therapist at the prison was able to help me identify the cause of my problems and develop a game plan. She taught me to trust people and have faith."

Her husband has stood by her through it all and has the scars to prove it. He understood what Atiya had gone through as a child and refused to press charges. Due to his compassion she only served eighteen months in prison—eighteen months that she is grateful for. "My bag of tools was empty before I went to prison but now it is overloaded. I am a changed person. I don't need anyone to say they are proud of me. I am proud of me," she beams.

At thirty-seven years old Atiya was released June 26, 2018. Since her arrival at Catholic Charities she has taken advantage of everything she could to get her life back on track. She has successfully completed substance abuse, marriage counseling, domestic violence, Re-Connections, and feels stronger now than she has at any other time in her life.

She currently is working full time at Catholic Charities in the Warming Center but one day intends to be an advocate for young girls who have been raped. She would also like to open a half-way house. "I can't fix what happened in the past," she says, "I can only be a better person in the future. I thought my life was done, but the devil is a liar. The best thing I could have ever done was come to Catholic Charities."

For more information on Catholic Charities programs or how you can get involved please visit www.ccsgc.org.

The Heart of Love

Clara's Hope
every child deserves a family

Tami Kromer is a woman whose capacity to love is huge. She is energetic, gifted, and passionate about helping families in the foster system. She has walked a pretty amazing—and difficult—journey in the last twelve years.

Tami and her husband, Dave, began the process to foster children before they had any of their own. They were in the midst of licensing when she became pregnant. Feeling it wasn't the right time, fostering was set aside for a while. All three of their biological children were born prematurely which, she says, set her up with good experience for fostering, especially those with special needs.

About the time their children were ages three, seven, and eight, Tami and Dave began to "feel in their gut" that they should revisit fostering to adopt more children. Friends had brought home three siblings from Siberia, and Dave felt like they should pursue a sibling set also. Once again they began the process of getting a foster license, with preconceived notions about where this process would take them. They wanted sibling sets that were straight adoption and no babies.

Of course none of that happened. They ended up fostering a teen mom with a seventh-month-old baby, not at all what they expected. Eventually, that baby was adopted by them, a child that was in great pain, had suffered extreme trauma, went into rages, and had attachment and sensory issues. (This child has grown by leaps and bounds, and is now doing amazingly well.)

Those early years were tough, and the Kromers thought they were finished with fostering because of how difficult and draining it was. Then their adopted son's baby sister was born, needing foster care, so they again became foster parents. This daughter's adoption was final when she was two.

In twelve years they have fostered thirty-two children. One of them was Clara, who was born with hydranencephaly, which is basically without a brain. She

was a terminal special-needs child and blind, and the Kromers purposefully chose her to adopt. They truly believe every single child deserves to have a family who loves and treasures them. And love Clara they did—wholeheartedly and unconditionally. Clara filled their lives with joy. The whole family fell head-over-heels in love with her, which made it all the more difficult when she died eight months later. Their love was wrapped up in this precious daughter, and the void she left still causes pain.

After adopting Clara, people in their church and the community suddenly began to offer help. Tami and Dave had never asked for anything from anyone, and now, with all of these people wanting to help, Tami was in a difficult situation. Accepting help wasn't easy for Tami who, at least to the public, seemed to have it all together. Letting go of her pride (not an easy task) enabled her to do as she felt God had instructed, "Let them into your mess."

Tami and Dave realized that having this wonderful support was what adoption and foster care should look like. Shortly after Clara's adoption they established Clara's Hope, an organization that brings support to foster and adoptive families, whom they feel should not have to do it alone. Last year, Clara's Hope impacted the lives of over fifty families and one hundred ninety-six children. Support is offered in many ways, such as providing meals, babysitting, housecleaning, and relief from other overwhelming tasks. Support could also be through training with a trauma therapist, or helping to form a safety plan so a crisis can be prevented.

Tami is a public speaker, and one of the important lessons she teaches people is that families don't know they need help until they are in a crisis. And then, it's difficult for them to know what help is needed. That's where Clara's Hope comes in. Tami and Erin, the program director of Clara's Hope, visit the family and help bring order to the chaos by identifying the family's needs and then arranging to meet those needs.

Lack of support causes eighty percent of foster parents to quit after hosting their first child. However, all of those that Clara's Hope has worked with have remained as foster families. Support makes all the difference.

Clara's Hope is a non-profit organization funded through donations and fund-raising. Their biggest fund-raiser, the Clara's Hope Auction, happens in February. All proceeds provide support services for foster and adoptive families within Genesee and Livingston Counties. Won't you consider attending next year and donating to them this year? They do amazing work!

Visit www.clarashope.org.

Just Keep Going!

Melissa Hager

It is a new year. So what?! Did you really change anything (besides that two-day stretch of getting on the treadmill...lol)?

I think we put too much pressure on ourselves. You can make a change any time of the year! Really it is true! There is no rule that only in January can you lose weight, get in shape, or start to save.

Do your thing. Set some goals and hit them. A few good steps in the right direction all year long far outweighs one big step in January that won't be repeated over and over again.

Standup comedy is the same. Every comedian says, "This is my year" and "I am going after bookings". After a few rejections, they slump off, and then just wait for work to come to them. The consistent bird gets the worm. Stay on it friends. Go after it. No matter how big or how small, JUST KEEP GOING!

And by the way, laughter helps produce endorphins that can keep you motivated. Get to a comedy show soon!

Check out thecomedyseries.net for upcoming shows.

Winter Weekend

Stay-cation

Sometimes the best getaway involves staying home and trying your hand at a new creative project. It's not quite the same as a change of scenery, but the adventure is there for the taking. You could even plan your very own mini at-home workshop and invite friends yo join in the fun. The farthest you'll need to travel is to the local hardware for some paint and supplies, and possibly a nearby thrift store for a project piece.

The best beginner items are wooden picture frames, framed mirrors, or small side tables. If you're feeling particularly confident, you could try a bathroom vanity or dresser. Some people are apprehensive about taking on a paint project, but don't worry because you aren't going to ruin your project. It's just paint and you can always change it later.

Choosing paint and brushes can be intimidating. There are so many options, but there's great value in "oops" jars of paint or in sample sizes. Don't be afraid of color! You can

also layer colors in between sanding to create an antiqued or shabby effect. You will need sandpaper (garnet type and around 100 grit) for prepping the wood and 000-grade steel wool for sanding in between coats. A water-based polyurethane works well as a final coat to protect your work, but be sure to read the labels because many topcoat products can alter the color of lighter paints over time. Chippy brushes are inexpensive and are a favorite of many crafters.

Next, decide on a design style by visiting blogs and pinned furniture photos online or simply experiment. Start by wiping the item clean and sanding it lightly, wiping away any debris afterward. Then begin painting. Try different brush strokes – some with an ample amount of paint and some using more of a dry brush technique (barely any paint on the bristles). Wiping stain over dry paint can also help you to achieve an interesting look. Sand with steel wool in between coats and allow each layer to dry completely to ensure a better finished product. Keep adding layers until you achieve a look you like and apply your clear coat to seal it. And remember, it's only paint and you can change it!

So when the blustery winds of winter whip through Michigan and you don't feel like braving the bitter cold and icy elements, break out some paint, invite your friends over for a crafty paint party, and have yourselves a creative stay-cation.

▶ *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.*

Love is in the Air

How Essential Oils Can Enhance Your Romance

If your idea of a hot Friday night is slipping into your PJ's and falling asleep in front of the TV, we need to talk. Your jobs, family, daily stressors and our never-ending TO-DO LIST might have you thinking you don't have the time. But, we always have time for what "WE WANT," don't we? When there's a problem with sexual desire or arousal, it's a physical or emotional issue. Essential oils can support and enhance both.

Essential Oils have been used for centuries in many ways, even just the fragrance of an "additive free" essential oil can directly affect your emotional state, energy levels, maintain hormones and stimulate sex drive.

Let's bring a little more love, beauty, and sensuality your way. So, don't miss out on one of life's greatest pleasures this Valentine's Day. Use Young Living Therapeutic Grade Essential Oils You can use them topical or enjoy the tasty Vitality line for internal use.

Women's Favorite Aphrodisiacs:

Ylang Ylang- A floral scent, it increases sexual desire, encourages attraction, supports the circulatory system.
Cinnamon Bark- Hot oil*, this scent is sweet and spicy. It improves circulation and blood flow. Put a drop on your tongue for kissing. *(Always dilute when using topically)
Sandalwood- Promotes emotional openness. It's an exotic scent.
Orange- a sweet, clean, and refreshing aroma with a sense of peace and harmony.
Fennel- it is energizing, vitalizing and stimulating to the circulatory, glandular, and respiratory systems.

Men's Favorite Aphrodisiacs:

Goldenrod- is relaxing and calming and supports the circulatory system, urinary tract, and liver function.
Idaho Blue Spruce- with a pleasing evergreen aroma that relaxes both mind and body. Great for muscle tension and emotional release.
Cedarwood- woodsy and warm aroma. Its powerful scent creates a relaxing, calming, and comforting atmosphere.

5 Ways to Use Essential Oils for Romance

Aromatic, using a diffuser.
Topical, as a therapeutic massage. Remember dilute the essential oils with a carrier oil such as sweet almond or coconut oil. Do not use any petroleum-based products with essential oils such as baby or mineral oil or regular lotions.
Spritzer, on linen, around the room and yourself.
Bath, adding a few drops to help create a relaxed and romantic atmosphere. Don't use Black Pepper, Cinnamon or Ginger as they're warming oils.
The body, add a few drops of real vanilla extract, orange, lemon, tangerine or peppermint Oil (the kind that is for Internal Use). Use anywhere on body you want to nibble or naw at.

Stacey Kimbrell is an International Speaker and Author of "Living Balanced." As a Natural Health Coach, Stacey loves to provide a simple and practical approach to living a healthy, toxin-free lifestyle for what you EAT, DRINK, THINK & DO! Her desire for you is to "Live with Hope & Zeal in all things." 810.423.5721 Stacey@staceykimbrell.com www.LivingBalancedGuide.com

Happiness:

What's Love Got to Do With It?

Everything! It's been a few weeks since the New Year, are you still feeling the excitement and motivation at the idea of new opportunities, goals, intentions, and resolutions?

Maybe you didn't even think about it. Maybe, like me and many people I know, you're focused on happiness or loving yourself more in the new year.

Even then, what does happiness or loving yourself mean to you?

The struggle to identify what happiness or love is to us is often an obstacle to feeling more love, more happiness. We might read or hear information about how we should make time for self-care, let go of negativity, quit complaining, practice mindfulness, and so much more, all as tools to be happier. It can get confusing, even overwhelming and we might feel like giving up.

One thing most of those tools have in common is love! Love is also the bottom line of nearly every goal, intention, or resolution we might set.

Think about it… why, for example, would you want a promotion at work?

More money? Prestige? Additional benefits and bonuses? Moving up the corporate ladder?

And why do you want those things that the promotion might bring?

To take care of your family? Create financial security? Have money to do things you love or to travel? Improve your health? Move to a new home?

And why do we want those things?

It feels good to be accomplished and valued. It feels good to do more things you love. It feels good to provide for those you love, etc. Feeling good increases happiness and our feelings of love, for ourselves and others.

So, no matter what you want to accomplish in your new year, keep focused on your why…love!

One practice that I use every day is something that takes just two minutes! This self-love practice is a combination of tools that can be done anywhere, anytime.

1. Recognize daily gratitude for what you'll feel when you succeed at your goal or for what you already have in your life.
2. Acknowledge daily triumphs. What did you accomplish today, especially to support your goals and intentions?
3. At least once a day, say something nice to yourself in the mirror. Say anything, even something as simple as "It's nice that you to want more for your family."

Like baking, improving happiness gets easier and better with everyday practice. While this seems simple, you'll soon notice you naturally see more of the good in your life and spend less time looking at the not so good. You'll also create habits of focusing on the real results you desire as you create goals in your life. Wishing you more love and happiness in 2019!

▶ *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". www.facebook.com/40daylovefest/ http://www.40daylovefest.com/*

Just Stop It

Years ago, before I was a transformational life coach, Bob Newhart did a skit on Saturday Night Live that cracked me up. Google this: "Bob Newhart just stop it video". I still laugh just thinking about it. I mean, really laugh. The funniest thing about it is how true it is.

So often, when coaching, I want to say those exact words, "just stop it!". People tend to relive their past or blame their current problems on their parents, upbringing, education or old relationships—over and over again. We are not creatures of our environment. We have free will. NONE OF THAT MATTERS. In other words, STOP IT! You can only write/right your future, you cannot rewrite your past.

This is a good time to evaluate what's working and what's not, to take responsibility for it, decide what changes need to be made, make the decision to start and take the first step up the "path less traveled".

We all have behaviors that no longer serve us, just as we have furniture and clothing that may be outdated or unworn. We appreciated that item at one time but have found that we have outgrown it, or perhaps our taste has changed or matured. Time to let it go. Time to move on. Time to evolve. Time to "just stop it".

How can we recognize if our life needs some altering?

It takes some evaluating and self-examination. Here are some questions to ask yourself. They have worked for me and I frequently use them when I begin coaching a new client. Start by setting some time aside for you. Snuggle up with a blanket and a cup of tea, don't hurry, start with a fresh notebook and open up to yourself. Take a few deep breaths and begin by asking yourself the following questions:

1. Am I happy?
2. Do I partake in activities that I enjoy more than twice a week?
3. Do I smile often and laugh easily?
4. Do I make time for myself?
5. Do I enjoy what I do for a living?
6. Do I have close friends?
7. Do I spend time, alone or with friends, away from my family?
8. Do I spend at least fifteen minutes per day in quiet reflection and/or meditation?
9. Have I eliminated negative self-talk?
10. Am I grateful every day?
11. Do I read, take time to grow and expand?
12. Do I tell those that I love how I feel?
13. Do I allow myself weekly time in nature?
14. Do I have a creative outlet, making certain to engage both sides of my brain?
15. Do I dance and sing daily?

> *We have free will. NONE OF THAT MATTERS. In other words, STOP IT! You can only write/ right your future, you cannot rewrite your past.*

If you can honestly answer "yes" to ten of these exploratory questions, you are on the right path. If not, time to alter your course. You know that self-sabotaging thing you do…STOP IT!!

I call these "The Faithful Fifteen". I use the word "faithful" because each one should be a priority. Once you can answer "yes" to each of them, you will feel the difference. Your faith will be stronger than ever before…your faith in what? Your faith in a higher power, your faith in yourself, your faith in humanity and faith in your joy-filled future.

The number fifteen has the significance of manifestation and harmony. It means balance between the physical and spiritual, allows energy to flow freely, taps into your power and encourages cooperation.

Do not go into overwhelm, if you answered positively to only a few, just know that you have some work ahead. Master one at a time. Get help if need be. Know that you can lead a happy, fulfilled and purposeful life…see it ahead of you. Imagine how it will feel. This is now your journal. Reflect upon these questions frequently, check in, make sure you're staying on path.

It's never too late to be the person you want and are meant to be. Start today…this is a new beginning. Everyday is a fresh start. You matter, your happiness matters, your wholeness is important.

May you have the best, most faithful year ever. Welcome to 2019.

With Love.

▶ *Deborah St.Hilaire has been a women's empowerment/life coach since 2010. She can be reached for personal and group coaching, speaking engagements and retreats. thedivalution@gmail.com or 419.366.8091*

Find the Self-Care That Works for You

Most days when I need to find some time to myself or just moments to think, you can find me running on the trails. Which right before writing this is exactly what I was doing. I needed a break, we all need breaks sometimes even if it's only 30 minutes. Sometimes that means being mute, closing your eyes, watching something that makes you laugh or cry or even reading. Society is finally pushing to help people understand the importance of self-care and love which is awesome. However, I found that it can be overwhelming too. There are so many great ways to give yourself care, but you have to decide what works for you. If you do what everyone else is doing, and you don't even enjoy it, is that really caring for yourself? I don't think so.

But, you might be thinking, "I don't even know where to start!" That is kind of fun isn't it? You get to try all the things people are saying to try to give them a chance. You get to try something new, maybe come out of your comfort zone, and then from there choose it as self-care or not.

For me, I love to run, even if it's 30 minutes, because it clears my head, it makes me get fresh air and it makes me feel better. If you ask anyone that has a self-care routine, they once had to start somewhere too (just remember that). I still try different self-care routines or take suggestions because I might find something new. I also love bubble baths with wine or tea while listening to music. I love hot yoga or even just spending 30 minutes with a friend (phone free) laughing or listening (with a little guacamole too—that never hurts). I have found, however, that I hate getting my nails or toes done, and that I can't sit and read books (I like audible tapes). I tried those and more and they just didn't work for me, and that is okay. I found what works for me.

So this is what I want you to try during February and all of 2019... find self-care routines that work for you. Yes, that means trying new things or even things you aren't sure of, but if you don't try them you'll never know. And then once you find what you like, slowly put them into your routine. No day, week or month will ever be perfect but you have to start at some point.

Once you do, you will see the difference. I now see the moments in my life when I haven't stuck to my self-care routines to give myself a break and how my mood changes or how I feel. I am definitely a better person all around when I provide myself with some self-care. So go and find what works for you. Remember, your self-care routine could be different from someone else's, and that's okay...it is yours for a reason.

Lisa Thompson: Self Love Beauty's mission is to ensure women have self-love through feeling confident in their own beauty and empowered one story at a time knowing they are not alone in their journey to reach their full potential. Founder and CEO Lisa Thompson started this brand 6 years ago to share her journey to self-love and inspire others. She speaks to women and men of all ages on many topics related to self-love and confidence. Visit this brand today or email them at info@selflovebeauty.com.

The Beauty of Difference

Each year in February, we commemorate the awesome achievements and contributions of Black Americans in American history—**Black history *is* American history**. We remember great Black Americans such as **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** (he was a pivotal figure in the non-violent civil rights movement), **Nelson Mandela** (he spent most of his life campaigning for an end to apartheid in South Africa. After over 20 years in prison, he was released and became the first elected President in post-apartheid), **Sojourner Truth** (African-American abolitionist and women's rights campaigner), and **Harriet Tubman** (a former slave who escaped and then helped many more to escape on the Underground Railroad). Our nation should forever honor its first U.S. President of African origin, **Barack Obama**. He served two terms as President and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Today, we (all Americans) stand on the broad shoulders of great Black Americans—past and present; those who have paved the way and those who continue to fight for justice on behalf of all Americans. I salute organizations like the **Genesee District Library**—an organization with deep roots in the community —that chooses to celebrate and proclaim the achievements of outstanding Black Americans each February; Black Americans who are making a positive difference in the community. As a recipient of this prestigious award, the 2016 GDL Award of Excellence, I applaud their enduring efforts to recognize the contributions of Black Americans in Genesee County.

We have made tremendous progress, but Black Americans continue to confront great challenges in many aspects of life. We must not grow weary in the fight for dignity, respect, and equality. Like our forefathers, we must choose to stand and fight despite controversy/opposition. We have a voice in society, and we must make the firm decision to be heard. Our decisions affect the lives of many near and far!

As we celebrate another Black History Month, I esteem the **"Beauty of Difference."** I conclude **"Difference"** to be the factor that makes the world in which we live a **"Beautiful"** place! We serve a God of beauty and variety! Imagine a world in which everyone is alike/similar: same language, same characteristics, same purposes in life, same gifts/talents. What a dull, mundane world!

When I think of the most beautiful places and things in life, I credit the **"Beauty of Difference!"** Each individual has something **(unique gifts/talents)** to contribute to the splendor of life. My personal belief is that many biases and prejudices continue to exist because of our lack of willingness to vacate comfort zones and learn to embrace someone or something different from our own. It's perfectly fine to accept and love a person of a different ethnicity, whether as an associate or a romantic interest. It's okay to love and appreciate the talents/gifts of others, even if the individuals

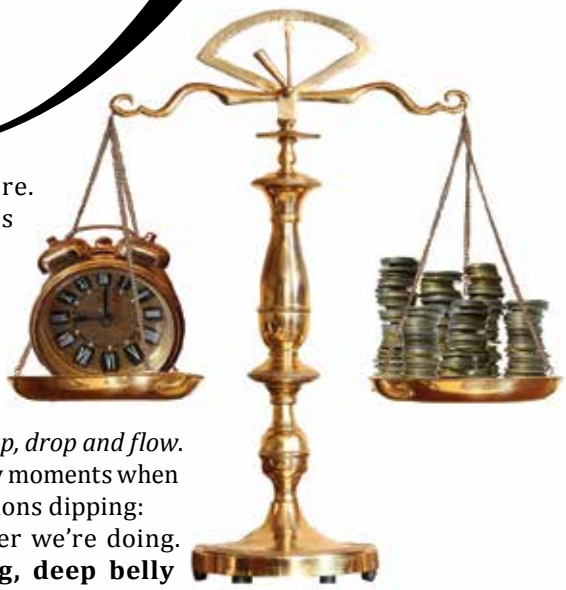
do not resemble us. It's A-OK to connect with those who share our purposes and views in life; they don't have to live in our neighborhoods.

I believe **Black History Month** encompasses much, and I believe it encourages the **"Beauty of Difference"**. We should learn to accept, love, and appreciate the beauty of each person we encounter. Our similarities are fine, but what makes us rare, distinct, and beautiful is discovered in our differences. Moreover, it's our unique differences, united, that make us stronger!

▶ *Burnie Nelson is an author, motivational speaker, creator of a women's journal and leadership periodical, and founder of the women's organization "Where Words and Heart Meet" and the women's network "I'm Not Built to Break".*

2019

The Year of Balance



Would you like to step into 2019 with less ups and downs and more ease and flow? I would! So I've decided to make this year my year of balance. What I mean by this is that I'm intending to keep the energy that flows throughout my body balanced, instead of pushing myself into some extreme new action like a new diet or exercise program or working longer hours to make more money. I've come to realize that the flow of **all abundance** in life (whether in health, wealth, or relationships) begins with the energy that flows in and out of my body.

How can we recognize when our energy is out of balance? It's balanced when we feel happy, productive, and easily accomplish our daily list of things to do. When it's off balance we can feel tired, stuck in a rut, frustrated, and overwhelmed.

Our emotions are guiding us all the time, so paying attention to them throughout our day is the most productive way to help ourselves keep our energy balanced. When we find ourselves looking at something that we don't like, the longer we focus on it, the stronger the momentum becomes. As a result, we will quickly find ourselves stuck in a rut of attracting more and more unwanted things. The Law of Attraction and the power of momentum is not biased, so if we continually focus on things that do make us feel good, we will indeed have wonderful things happen all day long!

Most of us multitaskers find ourselves switching our focus throughout our day. Back and forth we go, doing something we enjoy and then inadvertently moving into something that brings us down (like listening to a stressful political debate). We choose to take a nice walk in nature on our lunch break and we begin to feel better but upon returning to the office, we find ourselves talking to an unhappy client, etc. This back and forth shifting of our focus is why we often feel like our life is off balance and we're on a roller coaster ride. A roller coaster ride is stressful and we endure it because we know it will come to an end in a few minutes. An unbalanced energy ride through life only comes to an end when we decide we will not tolerate it any longer.

Catching our emotions early and *interrupting* the length of time for momentum to build is the **first** step in balancing our energy and eliminating a life full of ups and downs. When our emotions feel good, there's no need to change our focus. However, when we begin to feel our emotions take a dip downward, think of it as a small spark that could eventually turn into a big fire. When our clothes start burning we are told to *stop, drop and roll* and somewhat similarly, when our energy starts dipping, we can *stop, drop and flow*.

So, in the first few moments when we catch our emotions dipping:

STOP – whatever we're doing. Then **take 3 long, deep belly breaths**. This helps us get grounded and connected with the creative source energy of the universe.

DROP – whatever we're thinking. Then **become present**, that is, tune into what we're feeling both in our mind and body. Let go of all thoughts for a few moments.

FLOW – into better-feeling thoughts. Ask ourselves, what ***would*** I like to be feeling or experiencing right now? How would I ***like*** things to be? Dwell on this and feel into it. Think to ourselves, "*wouldn't it be nice if...*" about the situation. Choose a new way of thinking (a new perspective) about things until we feel relief.

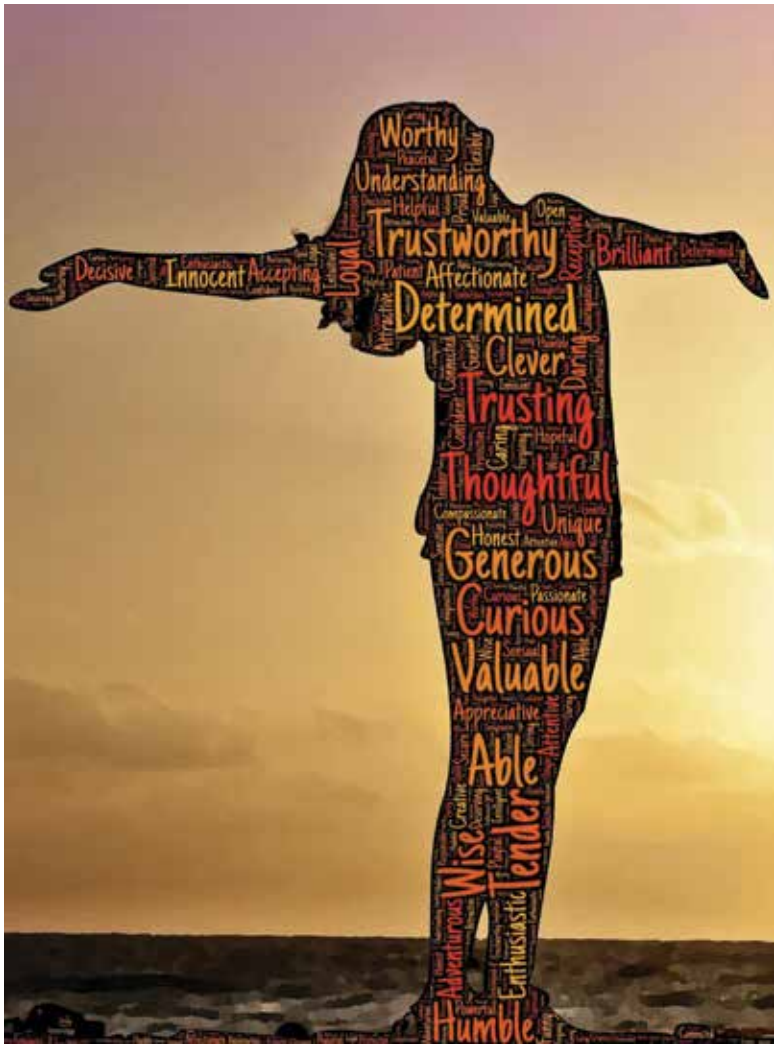
We can do this whether we're at home or at work. Simply find an empty bathroom, unused office, or go out to your car.

There are many ways to help ourselves balance our energy field by using the power of our thoughts. For more tips, simply go to http://steppingIntoalifeofjoy.com, where my newly released paperback version is now available.

May your New Year be happy, prosperous, and balanced! Much love to all of you!

Suzanne Young an intuitive life coach. She specializes in the Law of Attraction and empowering others by helping them learn how to reconnect with their Inner Guidance. She is also an inspirational speaker, author, and co-owner of Personal Success Programs, since 2007, with her husband Kevin Young. You can email her at suzanne@psprograms.com and their website is www.psprograms.com. Her office number is 248-349-6225.

Positivity
Is a Life Style



Positivity 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.

▶ *Min. Tarnesa Martin , Writer, Motivational Speaker & Life on Purpose Coach is the founder of Women of Radical Praise & Life On Purpose – "Finding Yourself"*
Life coaching, Self- Development & Empowerment services, which focus on connecting, supporting and strengthening women through life challenges that impact them personally, professionally, physically and spiritually.
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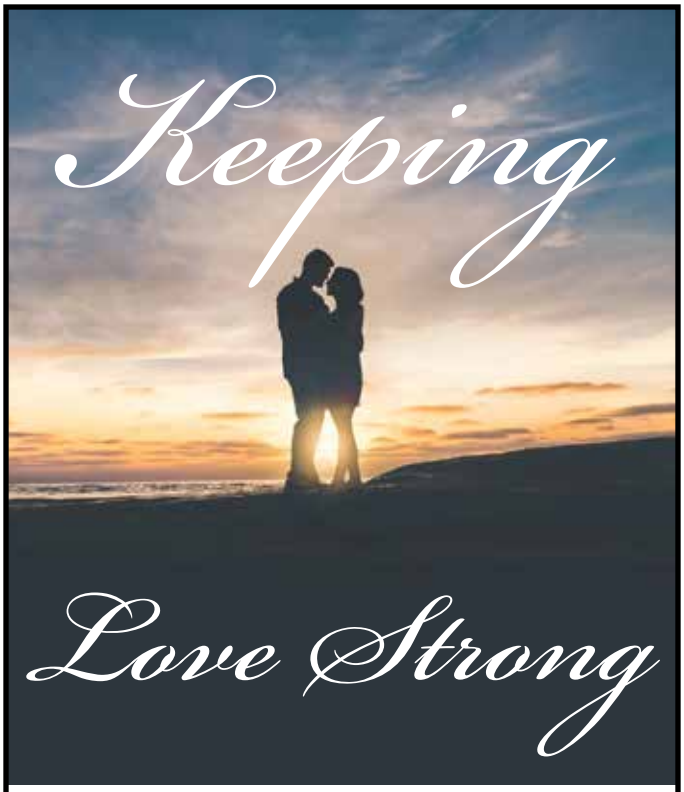
Put Your Fears Behind You

Why is it that our fears paralyze us and keep us from trying? We think "but what if _____" or talk ourselves out of trying because we listen to our own lies saying we will fail. We aren't good enough. But as a popular saying goes, you may fall but what if you FLY?!

Seriously until you try you'll never know. Believe me, I never saw myself doing some of the things I am now! I took steps toward my dreams and passion of empowering women to live their best life with confidence, and here I am six years later a speaker, graphic designer, COE (Creator Of Experiences) of Passionista At Large, column writer, women's event planner, and Queen of Sparkle!!
You just never know, my friends!!

I encourage you to GO for it!! It's not all sunshine and roses, for sure. But you CAN start taking steps toward making those dreams happen. Don't let fear and "what if" stop you! You are amazing and braver than you think! My hope for you is that your year is filled with new adventures, steps toward your goals and dreams, and the ability to put all limiting fears behind you.

▶ *Mimi Matthews believes in the power of words to change lives. You can read her life stories and uplifting posts on her blog http://particularpassions.me/ and buy her encouraging and empowering words on unique cards and gifts on her Etsy shop here: https://www.etsy.com/shop/EmPOWordmentCards*



Allow your words to be seasoned with grace.
Treasure your mate's feelings like fine linen and lace.

Let genuine forgiveness cover every offense and wrong.
This will keep your marriage healthy and strong.

Keep a spirit of humility and a heart of submission.
Stubbornness will only foster strife and division.

May misunderstandings be short and intimate nights be long.
Passion will write the lyrics to your own special love song.

Let prayer be the string that binds your hearts close in love.
The secret to a successful marriage is revealed while communing with God up above.

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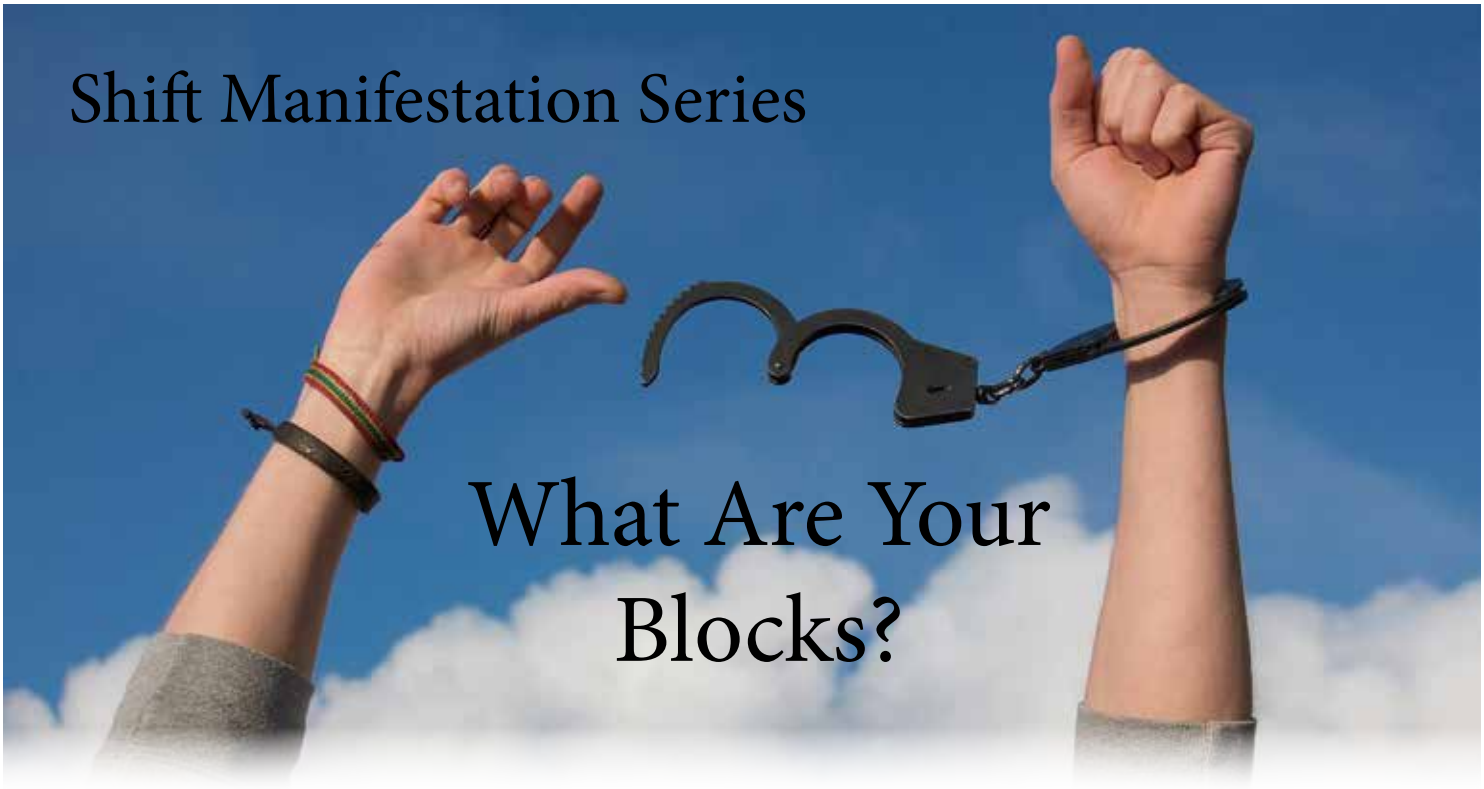
▶ *Burnie Nelson is an author, motivational speaker, creator of a women's journal and leadership periodical, and founder of the women's organization "Where Words and Heart Meet" and the women's network "I'm Not Built to Break".*



Shift Manifestation Series

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 congenital 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 you can relate, or have an interest as to how you can also help yourself break free of heavy blocks, feel free to contact me. I want you to know that, you are worthy of everything you desire, because you are a creator, and an extension of that which created you.

Shift HOLISTICS

Follow our Shift Manifestation Series gain conscious insights. Shift Holistics is a local movement to Shift our consciousness into a new paradigm. Please like and follow us at www.facebook.com/ShiftHolistics.

Jennifer Gardner is a best-selling author, NLP practitioner, Life Coach, Hypnotherapist and owner of Shift Holistics. She's an advocate for meditation and the Law of Attraction. You can contact her at Shift.Holistics.Web@gmail.com.

We Are Love

Love never leaves me.
Love is me.
Me stay with me.
You are me.
And I am you.
We are family.
We are love.

Human experience.
Experience each other.
Experience our selves.

Choose wisely.

Listen to your heart.
Listen to your gut.

Be you.
Be love.

What is love?
A feeling. An experience. A sensation.
A pulse. A rhythm.
A tune. A touch. A word. A sound.
A tempo. An individual sensation.
A collective endeavor. Causeless joy.
Appreciation. Love. A favorite word.
A favorite feeling. A favorite experience.

Wanting to kiss someone. Wanting to be lovingly held. Wanting to experience joy. Wanting to experience kindness. Being vulnerable with a trusted person, someone who loves you for who and what you are.

To feel whole. To be a continuation of love.
That fire. The electricity. The knowing. The movement. The dance.

A desire to be desired. To be appreciated. To be valued. To be able to reciprocate.
To be taken care of. To take care of.

To laugh. To share. To connect. To care. To belong. To connect. To love. To dance. To laugh. To hold. To take care of. To be taken care of. To share. To touch. To feel. To love. To smile. To laugh. To desire. To belong. To comfort. To be comforted.
Love.

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Resource Guide

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for the event of the season!

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www.CatholicCharitiesFlint.org/chairity

For more information on how you can sponsor the event or purchase tickets visit our website or contact Joan Clarke on 810.232.9950 ext. 710/email jclarke@ccsgc.org.

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