

WOMEN INSPIRING WOMEN FOR GOOD!

COMPLIMENTARY

W2W

WOMEN 2 WOMEN
MICHIGAN MAGAZINE

Live Loud! Make it Count!

It's A New Decade— Make It Count!

ABBY CORCORAN

20/20 Vision

STACEY KIMBRELL

Make It Count

TINA NIES

Stephanie Jane Kelly: "Phoenix Rising"

KIM HYTINEN



Katana Abbott

**Finding the Gift in Adversity:
It's Always There**

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Debra K. Collins
Publisher



Mimi Matthews
Editor

Dear Friends,

So what *does* "Live loud, make it count!" mean anyway? Our writers once again have illustrated our theme beautifully, writing about how it's important to choose to live with meaning and purpose, not just floating along wherever life's current takes us. We all want to make our mark and leave a legacy, right? These articles encourage you and spell out the steps to get you there.

We also have three amazing women for you to meet and read about. Our cover girl, Katana Abbott is helping women with their finances, goals, dreams, and life! Rhonda Erickson, our "She Means Business" feature (page 32), has a great story about her journey of never giving up, and is a wonderful encourager of women. And Stephanie Jane Kelly (page 18) will absolutely astound you with the decision she made to prevent her own breast cancer and how valiantly she is living. She has made it her mission to be honest and open so that women considering the same procedure have pictures and a friend they can talk with. All three of these women are wonderfully positive and **BOLDLY** living loud!

We hope you will be inspired by them, and are able to live your best life out loud!!

With wishes for a powerful 2020,

Much love, Deb and 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. 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.

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"Today I live a blessed life. I am married to the man of my dreams, I live in a beautiful home on the lake, have loving friends and family and the financial freedom to pursue my passions doing what I love in life. But it hasn't always been this way.

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Finding the Gift in Adversity:

It's Always There

*W*e'd like to introduce you to Katana Abbott, our cover girl. Read below as she tells us about herself, her business, and her plans for the future.

"Today I live a blessed life. I am married to the man of my dreams, I live in a beautiful home on the lake, have loving friends and family and the financial freedom to pursue my passions doing what I love in life. But it hasn't always been this way.

I remember my mother telling me about times when I was a little girl and we didn't have groceries or even milk. My grandmother would come over to make sure she had milk for me without telling my father because he was so proud. When we ate potatoes, we had to give the skins to our Labrador retriever because we couldn't afford dog food. My father was a roofer and many times he would not get paid. This was when he decided to join the US Army.

In fact, when my father joined the army, we thought we were rich. The army gave us a beautiful apartment in Germany. I remember my mom saying how lucky we were because we could have a cleaning lady and our apartment really was beautiful. She loved living in Germany.

Then that dream ended when my father died. I was just six and my brothers were just four and two. My dad was a hunter and he had gone duck hunting to bring home Christmas dinner. He never returned – he drowned. It was December 19th, 1964 during the Vietnam War.

My mother had to move back to Michigan to be near her family. She was able to pay cash for a small home with my father's military life insurance. Between her widow's benefits and driving the school bus for our parochial school, she was able to take pretty good care of us. I still remember some really fun times back then even though we didn't have much money.

But my mother wanted someone to take care of her. She was looking for her Prince Charming. What she ended up with was a monster — literally. I remember the night she introduced us to this man who she said would become our new father. I was terrified and cried myself to sleep that night.

Over the next nine years, our lives were a living hell and my brothers and I lived in constant fear and abuse. Although my mother



did not protect us, I know today that she was doing the best she could. She was plagued by obsessive compulsive behavior – her way of numbing out – but this made her unavailable to us emotionally.

I grew up too fast and was given too much responsibly as a caregiver to my grandparents and my brothers at the same time. I also cooked, cleaned the house and was always out fundraising door-to-door, helping to raise money for the poor or to raise funds for our school. This was something I loved and was great at. It gave me confidence. *I also learned that I loved helping others or leading a cause.* I discovered this when I was just 12 years old.

Often when there is domestic violence, there is also financial abuse. When my mother finally divorced my step father, my youngest brother was in a foster home and she was homeless because my step-father had taken the equity from her home. She had lost all her government benefits, had no income and she had breast cancer.

By this time, I was on my own. Because I was technically a “war orphan”, I had free tuition to college and income from the government to help support me while I was in college.

But the Universe had another plan for me.

In my third year of college, I ended up marrying my own monster. He said he loved me, but I knew in my heart that he was evil. He had been a professional student with three Master’s Degrees and needed to keep his green card. He had shown the signs, but because I wanted to be loved and taken care of, I thought I could change him and I married him anyway. **I was just 19 and returning to the familiar.**

Nine months later when I tried to leave the marriage he put me in the hospital. The detective was taking pictures of my broken and bruised face and asked me who would be picking me up. **I had no one to call. I was all alone.**

I was also all alone when I went to court for the criminal charges. Immigration had charges against him too and at the court house he was waiting for me. He jumped into my car and threatened to track me down and kill me if I didn’t drop the charges against him. I believed him and dropped the charges.

Here I was. **I had hit rock bottom.** I was living in a subsidized town house with no income, no job, and a broken down car. Worst of all, when I got married, I had lost my father’s legacy. The college education he had left me was gone and I really was all alone.

So how did I get from where I was back then to where I am today? In that moment in my life when I had hit rock bottom, a miracle



happened. I picked up the book, **Think and Grow Rich**, by Napoleon Hill and it changed my life forever. I found my burning desire and it gave me hope, faith, and I felt inspired. I learned about the Law of Attraction and how I could create any life I wanted if I just had a vision, did the work and never gave up.

Well, that became the model for the rest of my life, because I am driven to succeed, a student of life, always learning and studying to improve and I never, ever give up when I have a dream.

My dream was to never be a victim again and to be financially independent. I was just 21. I found a job with tuition reimbursement, health insurance and a retirement plan as a clerk typist at Sperry Vickers. Soon I realized that I was not only terrible at detail work, but **it was sucking the life out of me** and I had to do something else.

Because I still did not have a degree, I thought what else could I do? And then it hit me, I was great at sales. I had spent years going door to door raising money for the poor and the needy. I was always the top fundraiser at school when we had contests, and at 15, I had even worked making phone sales by calling from the phone book. **I know it sounds terrible, but for me, it was fun.**

I went to an employment agency and interviewed with two companies; a company that offered services where business owners trade services and a financial planning company called IDS. I took the job working with the business owners. **I know today it was all part of a divine plan,** because years later I would actually end up working for IDS, which would later become Ameriprise, and the contacts and experience that I gained in those early years would be the catalyst that led me to becoming one of the top financial advisors in the country.

Although it may sound cliché, I truly believe that everything happens for a reason. **We each have chosen to come here with a divine purpose although we have no idea what it is.** Our journey in life is to figure this out and it's normally not easy.

At 25, I took a job selling Hondas and this was a major turning point in my life. Using the selling skills that I had acquired over the last 10 years, not only did I become one of the top earners in the company (earning six figures in today's dollars), but I met my fabulous current husband, Mark, who I've been married to now for almost 35 years. He came in to buy a car from me.

Over the next 20 years, I did do the work and I got smart

about money. I became a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional helping hundreds of people achieve their financial goals. **I was at the top of my game – and then something happened** – I had this feeling there was something more, **a purpose I was not fulfilling in my soul.**

I realized that while helping my clients achieve their financial goals I often found myself helping them find their soul's purpose and follow their dreams.

But what was MY dream? Well the Universe has a funny way of helping us get what we truly want when we make a decision.

What I did next changed my life. I hired a coach who guided me spiritually and what I discovered was helping my clients find their soul's purpose and follow their dreams was actually my soul's purpose and my dream. It's what made me truly happy.

Because I had created a team and systems so my business could literally run without me, at 48 I was able to sell my financial planning practice to my partner of 15 years. **This allowed me to follow my dream** of helping women on their journey of self-discovery, healing, guidance, and building abundance and prosperity in their lives.

I founded a global online community called **Smart Women's Coaching®** and my nonprofit, **The Smart's Empowerment Program** with the intention of creating a community of women working together to reinvent their

lives and grow wealth while following their passions and life purpose.

None of this was easy. In fact so much of it was very, very difficult, but when I look back over my life, I can now see that it was a series of steps in an ongoing process that I have used over and over to overcome my fears and manifest each dream. I actually call this process **The Six Pillars of Awakened Prosperity System™** and it starts with the Dream, then Discovery, the Leap,

the Plan, the Dance and finally Mastery.

All of it was perfect — the experiences, good and bad so that I could fulfill my life purpose.

To summarize all of this, I have found that there are **three very simple secrets** that make this whole process easier so you can go to the next level in life, aligned in your true purpose. They are:

- 1. Finding a mentor or a guide** who has been where you want to go and then following them. It takes 10 years or 10,000 hours to become an expert in your field – so shorten this journey with a guide. This could be a program or even a book.



2. **Identify your tribe** and surround yourself with people who love and support you and who will hold you accountable to your dream. **Don't do it alone.**
3. **Never ever give up.** So often we give up just before we reach success because of limiting beliefs or because we need the tools to keep us inspired and able to finish what we start.

My name means Samurai Sword. I think it's a perfect reflection of who I am. I've been cutting through problems and challenges for myself and others since I was a young child. My work and destiny are clear and focused: I help women find clarity in their lives and their finances, to heal self-doubt, and to step into their purpose and power with prosperity. This is my passion because I've done this for myself, and it's easy for me. Although I was abandoned and abused as a child, **I look for the gift in every experience because it's always there.** The secret is never losing faith and trusting the process. Once you do, the magic begins to happen and life begins to flow.

I love to write, create, oil paint, travel and inspire others to live their passion. I'm married to a musician who plays the French horn for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. We will be celebrating our 35th anniversary this summer.

I believe it's never too early to plan for expected and unexpected events like retirement, encore careers, moving abroad, preparing for long-term care and leaving a legacy. My new client told me, "You have the whole package; business, financial and the spiritual all in one coach!" I use my six-step-signature system that incorporates vision, values, goals, mindset, and self-doubt. Once my clients have clarity, we can then move forward with the business or financial planning. Too often, consultants skip this part and jump to the plan without proper discovery. This often ends up in failure.

My number one achievement was becoming a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional. Before this, I felt more like a salesperson. It took me almost four grueling years of long nights studying after putting my daughters to bed, but it transformed my career because I became a Fiduciary, meaning I must do what is always in the client's best interest. I remember the first time my client told me, "You are now our most trusted advisor." To this day I still tear up when I think of this. After my CFP® designation, I went on to become a Certified Senior Advisor, advising clients on aging, caregiving, and preparing for retirement. I still wanted to learn how to run a business better, so I took three years of the Strategic Coach® program in Toronto. This was a game changer. I implemented everything I learned, to the point that my business was able to run without me. This gave me the opportunity to sell my business to my partner of 15 years. I'm certified in money personalities and working with energy, so my work moves into the spiritual or metaphysical because that is where huge transformation and healing happens.

"How you handle money affects every area of your life!"

When your finances are out of control, your life is out of control. I saw how important it was for women to be educated, to learn about money, and why they ignore it and give up their power with it. My dream when I created my nonprofit, Smart Women's Empowerment, was to form an

army of smart, successful women who would each reach out to just one other woman in need and say, "Here, take my hand, and I'll show you the way." That dream is a reality, and today, we have reached over a million women with Smart Women Talk Radio and have over 500 women from 16 countries registered in our online school, the Smart Women's Academy where women can take courses for free.

For the future:

- We are launching many new courses on money, business, and health in the Smart Women's Academy. Most will be free or available with a scholarship.
- I'm excited about the new eBook series. This year's topics include: Preparing for Care, Creating an Encore Business, Reimagining Retirement, and Healthy Habits.
- I'm really excited to be leading my first Retirement Reimagined Retreat to Portugal this May. I also plan to take couples. This is the #1 retirement destination, and I want to explore it personally!

My favorite quote is: ***"A smart woman never retires, she simply reinvents!"***

I help women retire, but most of us do not want to retire to a life of leisure, instead we want to explore our purpose and leave a legacy. The key is truly taking the time to sit down and go through my six-step-signature system. Women can actually go through my private coaching process in our Smart Women's Academy with video, audio, and worksheets. Those that want to see what it would be like to work through the process with me personally can schedule a complimentary coaching session. They will be asked to complete an online coaching prep form which will help them come to the meeting with clarity so we can have a terrific session together. They can simply go to <http://www.TalkWithKatana.com> to visit my online calendar.

by Katana Abbott, CFP®, CSA™

We are writing a **Smart Women's Guide eBook series.** My first eBook in this series is called, *The Five Biggest Money Mistakes Women Make and How to Fix Them*. It's free and includes not just the five biggest mistakes, but stories and specific tips women can use to take charge of their money and to understand WHY they might not want to deal with it. Of course, it combines the practical, tactical, and spiritual laws of money!

To download Katana's new ebook, *The Five Biggest Money Mistakes Women Make and How to Fix Them*, visit www.katanaabbott.com

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It's GONNA BE

OK!

The other day, my friend, Charlene, posted on Facebook that she was having a rough morning because she forgot to wear earrings to work. As a result, she felt as if she was semi-dressed and not looking her best. I told her I could share stories that would leave her laughing about the things that I forgot as I navigated my way from home to work and back over thirty years. She laughed as I assured her it was all gonna be ok!

In the baby bearing years, it wasn't so much what I forgot, but rather, what I wore without knowing. Many times, I would realize, too late, that the shoulders of my blazers had baby puke on them – having missed the burp rag. There were also telltale baby food signs on slacks and sleeves, and once, and I'm not proud of this one – baby poop under my nails. OMG!

Having survived those years, my biggest "oops" occurred when I was in my late thirties working as a Development Director at a large university that catered to architectural and engineering students – most of whom were males.

I was in a mad rush to make it to the door and up a flight of stairs when one of those males approached me and mentioned that something was trailing out of my pants. I stopped and glanced down in horror. The foot of a pair of pantyhose was hanging out of the pants like a tail. Not knowing what to do, I reached down (in front of this man) and began to pull on the nylons. They slowly came through the pant leg, but it was painful as the more sensitive parts of that hose fell out.

The professor started to laugh and that turned into a full-throated chuckle which then culminated in him doubling over and snorting. I practically ran to my office in shame!

At my going-away party several years later, he showed up with a pair of pantyhose to really embarrass me and remind

the entire staff that people forget to carefully hang up their clothes and separate their intimates in a timely manner.

These are good lessons, though. We are all human and we spend hours planning and cramming and trying to make everything work so we can get to work. Clearly, in my case, if I had simply left my earrings at home, I would have been having a good day!

Here's to all the hard-working women out there who have similar stories and even worse embarrassing moments to share. Keep those babies happy. Burp them and change them until they don't need that help anymore. Check the insides of your slacks and be sure to groom your nails. Chin up. Smile. It's gonna be ok.



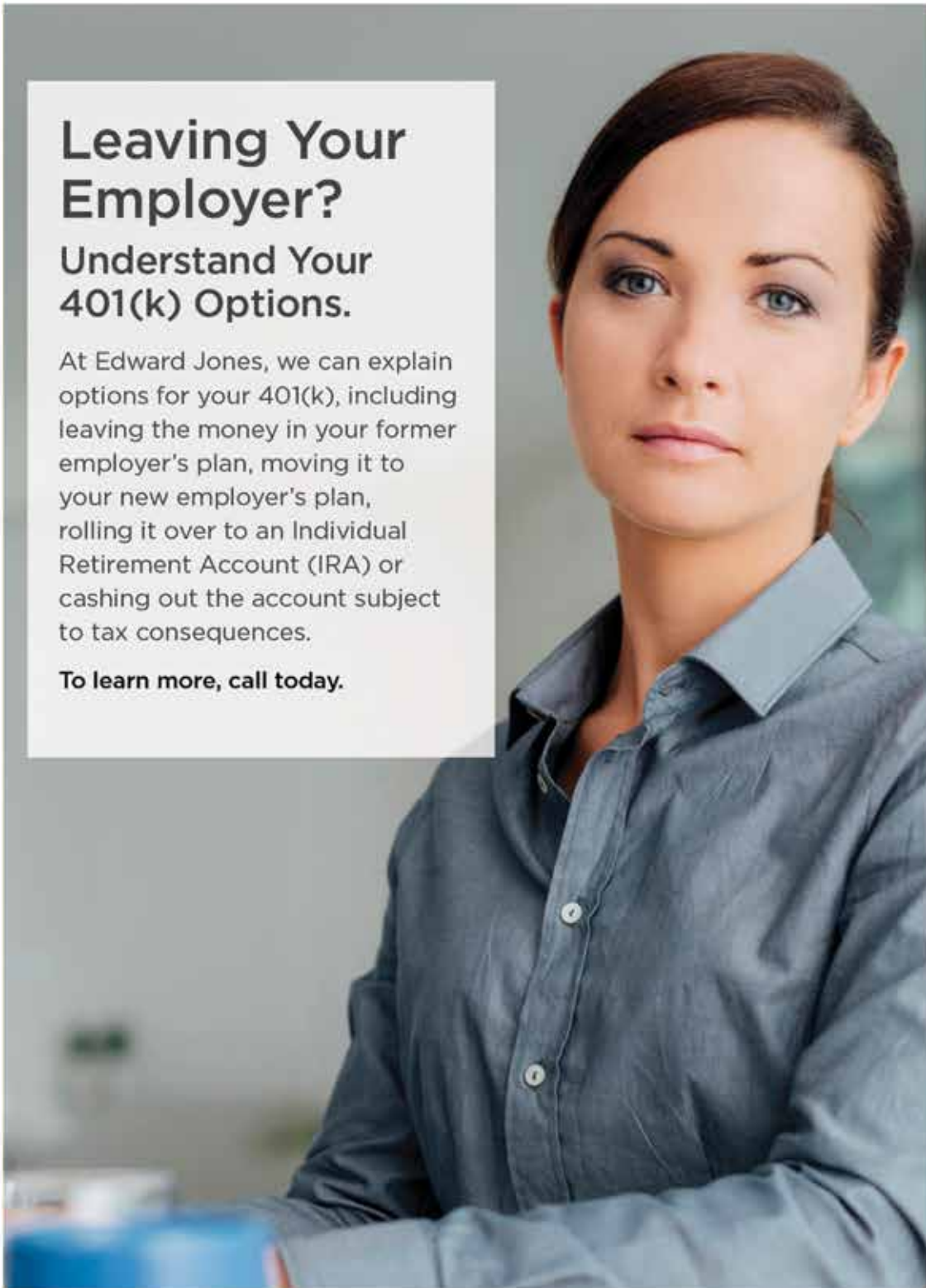
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Early in life many of us were taught to tone down our personality, be respectful, and to fit in with everyone else. Well to me that's not living! Especially in the times we're living in now. More and more people are doing personal development, inner work, and becoming more in-tuned with who they are as spiritual beings having a human experience. More and more women are becoming out-spoken, expressive, and authentic. Yes, we live in a time of being our true and authentic selves.

With that comes transparency and vulnerability and that's okay! When we live like that we give others the permission to do the same, and we help people live more fulfilled lives! Who would have thought that just by being your true self you help other people on so many levels? Even if they don't come back and tell you!

No more putting on a facade to fit in and try to be something we're not. I am amazed as I look back over my own life, how I adopted this behavior. To me this behavior was modeled from watching television and the people who were around me that I watched growing up. Why be someone else, when we can be our true selves? But what does that look like and who is that person? That person is you. For so many years I myself didn't know who that person was. It wasn't until I turned thirty-two that I even began to tap into the real and inner part of me.

I was always taught to look outside myself for validation, acceptance, and guidance—never looking within for it. It took a lot of inner work, self-love, self-exploration, self-acceptance and self-confidence to embrace who I am now. I did use a lot of "self" words

there; but they are necessary because it's time! It's time to be selfish in a good way. It's time to do you and be you! Being self-serving to a certain extent is healthy. After all, we're not here to just be how others want us to be or to just serve others with nothing left for you. You're here to enjoy life, live out loud, and be authentically you! So go ahead and express yourself! Celebrate you!

Katina Love is a spiritual guide, life purpose business coach and author of *Awaken to Your Life's Purpose* course & eBook on Amazon and book *Awaken to Natural Health*. Her passion is helping women discover and embrace self-love, their gifts and talents so they can own their life's purpose and create or enhance their current business. Visit www.KatinaLove.com or call 248.820.1563.



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Zingerman's Bakehouse Managing Partner Amy Emberling To Speak at 3rd Annual Alcona Small Farm Conference in Northeast Michigan

Farm to Fork Alcona will hold its 3rd Annual 2020 Alcona Small Farm Conference scheduled for February 28th & 29th at Lost Lake Woods Club in Lincoln, MI. This action-packed weekend features Amy Emberling, Managing Partner for Zingerman's Bakehouse in Ann Arbor. On Friday, Amy will present "Milling and Baking with Michigan Grains", demonstrating how Zingerman's uses locally sourced grains in their delicious bake goods, salads and desserts. On Saturday, Amy will lead an interactive workshop called "Creating a Vision of Success for your Farm, Business, and Life."

For detailed information or to register, go to www.f2FAlcona.org

PURSUE THE THINGS
YOU LOVE DOING,
AND THEN
DO THEM SO WELL
THAT PEOPLE CAN'T TAKE
THEIR EYES
OFF OF YOU.
MAYA ANGELOU

20/20 Vision



Take the 30-Day Challenge

It takes 21-30 days to form a habit. This is very helpful training for the brain in making positive differences in your life. Commit yourself to the process outlined below. 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 kind of negativity, gossip, or drama in your life. If the conversation is not encouraging or uplifting, remove yourself from the situation. Respect yourself and stand firm. Do not allow others to bring you down.

Get a notebook and make your own tabs if necessary with the following:

1. Write down 15 or more positive attributes about yourself.
2. Write down 5 of your self-improvement goals—only work on 1-2 at a time.
3. Write out a list of positive changes you want to make in your life.
4. Write down 5-10 long-term goals and 5-10 short term goals—include your intention and time frame.
5. Pick the top 2-5 positive changes you want to make and write them on 3 x 5 cards (you can include supporting scriptures). Place cards in your wallet, purse, on your mirror and desk...wherever you will see them daily. Every time you see the card, spend 3-5 minutes reciting the desired change with confidence. When you have changed this thought process or behavior in your life, place the card in the “accomplished” stack and pull out the next card. Begin the process again, if needed.
6. If you are aware of any self-sabotaging thoughts, write them down in the journal and examine the root cause of why you feel that way and make steps towards correcting it.

Use Your Words to Declare Good Things

Speak blessings over your life and your family. Throughout the day, say things such as, “I have the favor of God. I am strong and healthy, and I’m well able to do what I need to do.”

If you don’t believe any of the following words apply to you, write them on another piece of paper and say them to yourself every day when you wake up and as you go to bed, until you know for sure that you believe it.

Radiant
Brave
Strong
Kind
Confident
Smart
Capable
Lovable
Amazing
Fearless
Beautiful
Happy
Determined

Resourceful
Outstanding
Inspirational
Perfect
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Creative
Brilliant
Sensational
Lovely
Adorable
Gentle
Courageous

► Stacey Kimbrell is a Natural Health Professional, Chemical Awareness & Essential Oil Advocate, International Speaker and Author of *Living Balanced*. Stacey loves to provide a simple and practical approach to living a healthy, chemical-free lifestyle. DRINK, THINK & DO! 810.423.5721 Stacey@staceykimbrell.com LivingAnointed.com





FLINT WOMEN'S FORUM ANNOUNCES SPEAKER FOR ANNUAL

Celebration Of Women Event

The Flint Women's Forum (FWF) has announced the keynote speaker for their annual signature event, Celebration of Women. Patti Poppe, President and Chief Executive Officer of Jackson, Michigan based CMS Energy and its principal subsidiary, Consumers Energy, will address the crowd at the May luncheon.

Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest utility and the nation's fourth largest combination utility, provides electricity and natural gas to 6.7 million of Michigan's 10 million Lower Peninsula residents. Poppe was elected to this position in July 2016 and made company history as the first woman to be appointed to the role. Prior, she has held a variety of automotive management positions and served as power plant director at Detroit, Michigan based DTE Energy before returning to her hometown of Jackson to join Consumers Energy in 2011.

The event will be held at The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan banquet facility in Flint, Michigan on **Wednesday, May 6, 2020**, from 11:30am until 1:30pm. Table sponsorships are available now with general admission tickets going on sale in late March. Those interested in table sponsorships should contact Amber Taylor, president for the Flint Women's Forum, at tayloramber1.88@gmail.com.

ABOUT FWF

The purpose of the Flint Women's Forum is the advancement of women as a non-sectarian, non-partisan organization. The Flint Women's Forum brings together people of achievement and influence in the professions of the arts, science, education, industry, commerce and public service. Through educational programs and the exchange of ideas, experiences and resources, the members contribute to one another's professional advancement, increase the visibility of women leaders and facilitate the effectiveness of women in the community. They hold monthly lunch meetings the third Tuesday of each month. For more information, visit their website at www.flintwomensforum.org



Stephanie Jane Kelly:

“I’m *having a hard time coming up with a starting place,” she says, managing a smile while carrying a burden most couldn’t comprehend –her brunette locks an envious mess of curls and girl-next-door that somehow embody exactly what this amazing woman represents. Tapping her glasses, she pushes the frame firmly to the bridge of her nose and contemplates.*

“A lot of it boils down to me being truly stubborn.”

That trait she calls stubbornness? It’s really an admirable mix of perseverance and gentle strength that has brought Stephanie Jane Kelly, mom of four, through bouts of cancer, multiple spine surgeries, hysterectomy, breast removal, and daily challenges with fibromyalgia and gastro paresis flare-ups.

Stephanie is real. Like bread and butter real. She is the salt-of-the-earth version of a heroine who is brave enough to have a double mastectomy in order to prevent breast cancer, and then tough enough to bear a tattoo across her scarred chest for all to see.

The tattoo, designed by an artist named Miss Jamie at Lovely Monkey in Whitmore Lake, features a phoenix with its wings



“
A lot of it boils
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“Phoenix Rising”

replicative of Wonder Woman's shield. Always a Lynda Carter fan, Stephanie hoped to claim for herself some of that strength she admired so much in that character. And the phoenix with its ability to regenerate is very symbolic to Stephanie.

"It was serendipitous to me that a shop with an artist who specializes in post-mastectomy tattoos opened up where we lived the same year I had my surgery. I was told to



wait six months after the mastectomy to get the tattoo, so it was pretty much six months to the day," Stephanie says, "That huuuuuurt!" Now, when she talks to people who are considering the same type of post-mastectomy tattoo experience, she always recommends they wait a year or more.

For Stephanie, "living loud" isn't about being fearless, but living life in spite of fear. After watching her mom and a very dear aunt go through breast cancer, treatments, and surgery, she was no stranger to the toll of the disease. And when genetic testing confirmed what she intuitively knew—that she carries the BRCA1 gene (a marker for various types of cancer, especially of the breast and reproductive organs)—she already had a plan. For Stephanie, it wasn't a matter of if she would get breast cancer, but when it would happen.

Breast cancer was always her biggest real fear. She describes being scared of bridges and aliens and other things, but breast cancer was more tangible and inevitable. Initially, family and friends tried to convince Stephanie to not go through with the surgery, but she was determined to save herself by sacrificing her breasts.

"When I know what needs to be done, I have a very hard time not doing it," she says. "These aren't very sexy topics to talk about and maybe I over share, but I think the world needs more truth -- not just victory reels of experience, but real examples of truth. So I put mine out there."

She discovered that people were curious and supportive. And, to her surprise, they were helpful. Stephanie found her tribe. As she travelled down her medical path, it became even more important to her to share her story with people. She hopes it might help someone also find their inner strength to conquer their fears.

"When gastro paresis came into my life, I wanted to see what other people did to cope -- what they eat, what experiences they had with tests and docs. So I talked about it and put my experiences out there. I did the same with my surgery," she says. Stephanie documented and shared every doctor visit, each step of the double mastectomy and hysterectomy, and her recovery process.

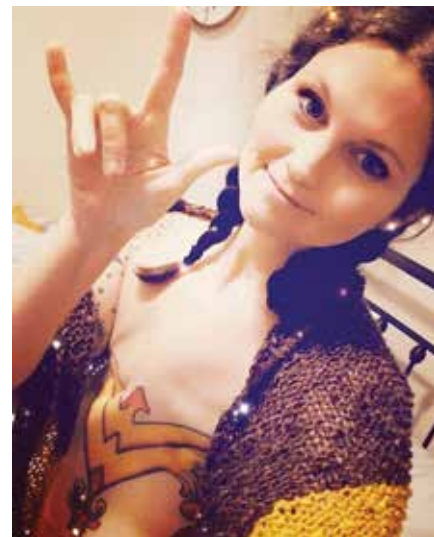
"It was like, hey world, I am going to be losing my breasts ... which is pretty much the #1 factor in beauty and femininity in the US, but I think people understand it more if you are actively fighting for your life. Yet, to do it before I got sick was a hard thing to get people to understand at first."

Stephanie longed to feel relevant as a woman while being thrown into early menopause with a flat chest. She searched online for images of other women in the same situation, and although she found some, there was a void.

"I couldn't find pictures of a woman post surgery with what the drains looked like," she recalls. "I wanted to see the bindings they put you in. I wanted to see the scars and how people dealt with things like swimsuits, etcetera. This is not what the world says is sexy or healthy or attractive."

Stephanie knew what had to be done. And in her typical, lovely stubborn fashion, she posted all of it for the world to see what true beauty and strength looks like.

Follow her at: https://www.instagram.com/stephanie_jane_kelly/



► 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.



Exhale. . .

TURN THE PAGE. . . START A NEW CHAPTER!

The year 2019 is a completed chapter! Perhaps, it was a chapter that included loss--a family member or a cherished friend. Notwithstanding, you wondered how you could face another day without his/her presence. Somehow, you made it! One day at a time, you learned to never forget that wonderful person who has filled your heart with precious memories. Exhale!

The year 2019 may have included a spouse who decided after more than 30 years of marriage and children that he/she wants out of the marriage. Devastation paralyzed you! "I have invested my life into this marriage! Where do I go from here? Why has this happened to me?" you asked yourself over and over again. Through it all, you discovered there was life after divorce. You were introduced to the survivor living inside of you. Exhale!

Maybe your long-term career collapsed just after purchasing that dream home you worked so hard to afford. Your financial security was shattered and you found yourself searching for a new job to avoid financial ruin. Through many unanswered questions, heartfelt moments, and unwavering diligence, you secured a position that exceeded/surpassed the position you lost. You learned that lemons can lead to be best-squeezed lemonade! Exhale!

There are countless scenarios that can result in confusion and tears; situations that can turn your world upside down. Unfavorable circumstances can present more questions than answers. What should I do? What direction should I take? Who can I trust to help me? Will I live through these dark hours?

There is something so awesome, but baffling, about life. In the midst of pain, turmoil, storms, and devastating situations, we can uncover a deep well—full of unrelenting faith, trust, perseverance, and victory! Seemingly insurmountable problems/hurdles can lead to great purpose, promise, and prosperity!

Life is filled with unexpected twists and turns, ups and downs, setups and setbacks, tears and smiles. However, we must remain optimistic through it all!

EXHALE, TURN THE PAGE, and WRITE A NEW CHAPTER!

DECIDE to make it a Happy New Year!

► *Author-Motivator Burnie G. Nelson*



WE ARE MEANT TO LIVE OUT LOUD!



“What do you stand for? Do you have a cause, a belief system, rules and morals?”

We carry everything we learned from birth to seven years old like a banner of joy or a banner of pain. Our little spongy brains collect everything we hear and see, saving it as our truth and guidelines. We measure our lives, our success and failure, our beliefs and lack thereof, and our sense of self and our self worth all on what was said and how we were treated.

Often times, the reason for our behavior is buried deep with our subconscious, hidden from our daily life of erratic behavior and self sabotage. It's not our fault. It isn't even our parents' fault. They did the best they could. Physical discipline and shouting were acceptable to a society that was recovering from financial devastation and poverty. They knew one way, often times that one way was abusive. I'm not casting blame, I am setting the stage. There were colloquialisms and clichés, in the 1950s, such as “better to be safe than sorry”, “always have a backup plan” “cruisin’ for a bruisin’”, “ankle biter” and “children should be seen and not heard”. That's a lot of fricking baggage to be carrying around and I haven't even talked about the gender slurs both sexes had to endure, what toys and chores were selected for us, and how we were often separated for gym class and sports.

It's no wonder that we have so much to unlearn, self esteem issues and basic insecurities. It was my generation that broke the mold, as did the generation before me, as will the generation after, etc. It's evolution at its best.

We become better parents, raising more socially accepting, less judgmental, more inclusive children, with fewer hang ups and more empathy.

We had to be heard, we fought for it, rioted for it, had sit-ins for this right, just as women's suffrage before us, and animal, abortion, and equal pay rights are being fought now. There will always be change—let it begin with you.

Break away from the words that silenced you and the hand that held you down. Become secure within yourself in order to become open to new adventures and ideas. You were put here for a purpose. You were meant to live out loud.

What will it take to overcome an upbringing and self-imposed life of living quietly in the shadows? Inner work. It's as easy and as difficult as that. Here are some ways to begin:

Get to know who you are and what you believe. Start writing about your core truths and the kind of person you are and want to become.

What do you stand for? Do you have a cause, a belief system, rules and morals?

Do you hold your pain, anxiety and/or inner turmoil close to you, unwilling to allow others to see your vulnerability? Let go of that. Journal, read how to release or seek professional help.

Do you keep good ideas to yourself out of fear? Have you always wanted to try something but never did, out of fear? Stop living in fear. Come into the land of support and acceptance. It's been there all along, you have been blind to it. Girl, put your rose colored glasses on!

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Marianne Williamson

► *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*



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IT'S A NEW DECADE—MAKE IT COUNT!

Starting off a new year is always exciting to me. I could do without the bitter cold we experience, but with a new year comes change. Rebirth. We feel like we have a fresh start to our lives. Which makes me wonder, then, why by week three of January everyone returns back to their old habits. Most resolutions have been abandoned and people are smack dab back to where they were before the new year. Why is it so hard to make the commitment stick? It's easy to become comfortable with our "routine", but girl, you need to break that chain and learn to live loud!

That will mean something different to everyone. For me "living loud" means being confident and encouraging others around me. It means taking care of my health so that I am able to be there for the people I care about. It means not saying yes to everything I am asked to do. Prioritizing my habits and goals is number one. What does "living loud" for you mean? Close your eyes and think about that for a second. Be truthful with yourself. How do you talk to yourself?

I am currently reading *The Honeymoon Effect* by Bruce H. Lipton, Ph.D. It is about creating the relationships we want and having heaven here on earth. We all have energy and using our intuition to help us is crucial. We need to listen to that. He says, "If you pay attention to good and bad vibes, you'll enhance your energy, you'll enhance your life."

Looking within yourself you need to honestly listen to what you tell yourself. Is it words of hatred and discontent? Or is it

words of love and affirmation? How we speak to ourselves is crucial. Negative thoughts will in turn bring more negativity into your life and positive thoughts will bring positivity. I know you've heard it before but reading it one more time won't hurt, will it? Change your beliefs in your subconscious. Tell yourself words or statements of affirmation. When you choose to speak words of love to yourself, you, in turn, will feel loved.

Write down what it means to you to live your life loud and make it count. You are brave dear friend. Don't you forget that.

► Abby is a stay at home mom of two boys. She is helping people with their health transformation. For more information abbycorcoran.isagenix.com She is also co-host on the Ladies of the Comedy Series Podcast. You can find it on Apple Podcasts and PodBean



GIRL, MAKE SOME NOISE!



Ever since I can remember it hasn't been appropriate to be loud. Outbursts, outside voice and having the "laughies" has been responded to with an equally audible, "Shhhhhhhhhhh!"

I get it. There is a time and a place, but who determines that? You can! This is not an article that desires to override manners but I do have a point to make.

Being quieted and toned down can take its toll on your confidence and force you to second guess your genius. Creatives, entrepreneurs and tastemakers are by nature, noisy. Maybe even disruptive. We change mindsets, processes, and patterns through innovation and action.

I want to encourage everyone that has an idea, opportunity, or invention to turn up the volume in 2020. Get loud, make some noise and be heard. Draw attention to your amazing genius and get the word out. There is a whole tribe of people waiting to "hear" from you if you'll crank up the volume!

► *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.*



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PRETENDING IS NOT AUTHENTIC LIVING!



I was 5 ½ years old when I decided it was better to lie, than speak my truth. This is when I began the habit of living in denial. It was a hot summer day in June and the elementary school I attended did not have air-conditioning. I couldn't wait to get outdoors for recess to cool off. When the bell rang, I ran quickly to my favorite playground equipment. It was called the Maypoles, which consisted of a tall, sturdy pole with six long, strong reinforced wires coming from the top. Each thick wire had a set of handlebars at the end, for kids to hang on to. I grabbed the first one and as soon as all the spots were filled up by other kids, we began to run. Those of us who loved the Maypoles knew that the faster we ran, the higher we flew off the ground. On this particularly hot day, my hands began sweating. We were flying high in the air and suddenly I lost my grip. Kabang! I flew off the Maypoles onto the ground with a big thud.

A teacher came running over to me and asked if I was okay. Even though my right arm was killing me, I lied and said I was fine. She offered to take me in to the principal's office for help, but I refused. I'd heard in school that only **bad** kids were sent to the principal's office, and I certainly didn't want to be one of them! However, the most important reason I didn't want to go to the principal's office was because the principal just happened to be my dad! I didn't want him thinking I was a **bad** kid so I decided it was better to lie about everything than to embarrass myself and disappoint my dad!

I remained in school the rest of the day and pretended I wasn't in pain. (I was a great little actress back then!) The minute I got home, I ran to my mom and started crying. She took me to the doctor, and lo and behold, my arm was broken!

This was just one of hundreds of times throughout my life that I pretended I wasn't hurt, not just physically, like the playground incident, but emotionally too. I became so good at living in denial and putting my own feelings on the back burner, that I tolerated verbal abuse for several decades of my life throughout two different marriages. Finally, by the age of 57, I'd gone through enough pain and misery that I finally had to ask myself "How can I make my life really count" because clearly, nothing I'd tried so far was working!

I was telling my friend Katie how unhappy I was and that I didn't know what mattered in life anymore. I didn't know it at that time in my life, but when we ask a question and we're sincerely searching for answers, the Law of Attraction will assist you in finding it. My answer came in the form of Katie, as she was the one that introduced me to the Law of Attraction. Over the next few years, I began to learn that when we pretend to be happy to the outside world, but are really miserable on the inside, we are cheating ourselves out of a good life. Why? The Law of Attraction states that "like energy attracts like energy" and **happy** and **unhappy do not energetically match**. So the bottom line is, our life story will never have a happy ending, when we're living an unhappy life.

When I let go of all my pretending, people pleasing, and living in denial, I learned how to live an authentic life. This is when I discovered that being true to myself is what makes life really count! The details on how to do this can be found in my book. www.stepsintoalifeofjoy.com.

I invite you to take a look at 2020 in a new and different way. Our thoughts lay the foundation to our life experiences, so let's start by taking a closer look at how we think about every aspect of our lives. Each time we lie to ourselves, we put a hole in our foundation. This can make for a very bumpy ride through life. A smoother ride can begin now, by setting our intention to be true to ourselves and then consistently choosing new, good feeling, self-empowering thoughts in 2020.

► *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.*



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MAKING IT COUNT



*M*uhammad Ali encouraged us in saying, “Don’t count the days, make the days count.” George Bernard Shaw reminded us that, “Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.” At each new year, we are bombarded with promotions on how to “make this your best year ever,” or “make this the year you finally ____.”

No pressure there, right?

Thinking about and deciding how to make our life count or how to be happier or more successful can be an overwhelming task!

Of course we want to finally achieve that seemingly out of reach goal, of course we want to create our best year, of course we want to be happier, etc. Yet, we often feel like something gets in the way every time we try, or that it’s not the right time, or it’s not the right goal, or maybe that we just can’t for whatever reasons that exist for each of us.

We often feel pressure, guilt, overwhelm, even doubt as we strive for these lofty and important life goals. Sometimes, we give up.

When we strive for these big, best-life type of goals, are we missing out on smaller achievements in our everyday life? Are we missing out on making our ordinary days count?

What if, in creating our best life goals, we focus on the everyday choices that lead to the larger vision we have for ourselves?

Think about one of the bigger goals that you are working on right now or that you would like to begin.

Take a piece of paper or notebook and write down everything that you imagine that you would need to do or procure in order to reach that goal, everything, big and small, things to be done sooner and later. On another sheet, write down everything that you imagine, based on your own personal experiences and expectations, that could distract you or discourage you. On another sheet, write down everything you see as a benefit to achieving the goal, things that benefit you, your family/friends, your community, etc. Lastly, on a new sheet, write down why you want to achieve this goal and how you imagine that you will feel when it is complete.

It's likely that your benefits and whys will be positive: things like feeling happier or successful, providing for your family, making more money, or creating new opportunities. Let's create these feel-good successes along the way instead of waiting for them to come later.

Take what is on that last sheet, your whys and expected feelings, and turn those into ordinary everyday goals. You might include things from the first list, things that you will need to do to reach the bigger goal. You might also begin to create strategy goals for how you'll handle distractions along the way.

For example, a big goal might be to get a promotion at work that would include benefits such as a substantial pay increase, more vacation time, or change in authority level. The whys might include more money to travel with a partner, feeling like ideas are better received, and feeling respected and really part of the work team.

Now, create work goals such as taking advantage of goodwill opportunities in the office, having lunch occasionally at favorite places of higher up management so they see you in different settings, giving more compliments to others, or offering to help when seeing someone having a tough time on a project.

Then create personal goals such as looking at ways to explore your own town for special dates with a partner or creating low-cost day trips. Maybe you have a shared interest in animals and decide to volunteer together each month at a local shelter.

As you achieve these smaller, everyday goals, you'll begin to feel what you expected to feel at the end of the big goal. You'll begin to move closer to the big goal naturally and it will feel like it's achievable. You'll also be making your days count.

Along the way, be sure to acknowledge yourself for achieving these smaller goals. And when you're going through distractions and doubt, acknowledge yourself for anything you do, even if it's just getting out of bed and going in to work. It counts. You count.

► *Tina Nies is a certified Vision Board and Law of Attraction Coach, Love Coach, and bestselling author of 40 Day LoveFest for You: a daily practice of self-love and reflection. Her focus is on raising awareness of the power of our choices. Connect with Tina through her website, www.TinaNies.com*



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The new year was 2016. I was struggling with my purpose, my calling, my reason for being. Do you have those deep questions?

Only recently had I come to terms with my personality of passion and intensity (interpret: loud) and was just beginning to understand what it meant to be an encourager. In my high-energy excitement I'd often tell people what they should or shouldn't do (interpret: bossy) but I'd had a total shift in my spirit about that.

While I will always be a teacher (if I learn it I teach it) I found myself sharing from experience more and more. From firm conviction of having worked through something. The last decade had taught me tons of things and given me way more experience than I'd have chosen.

A long time ago I heard a quote, I believe by Smith Wigglesworth but couldn't verify it, which said something about pitying the man who only had an argument against someone who had experience. And that's where I am presently. I've had the experience and lived to tell about it.

So what does "live loud" have to do with anything? Well, as the old saying goes, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well". My interpretation for "well" is "loud", which means to do it wholeheartedly and with passion. If you are going to sing, sing with gusto. If you are going to be a friend, then put your whole heart into it. If you are going to pray, make it worth the time and pray fervently. When you love, love deeply and unconditionally. And when you laugh? Oh my goodness, give it all you've got!

Of course, all of this means becoming vulnerable because you must open your heart to listen and feel with your heart. But in time it becomes a condition in which you live. And wouldn't you rather have an effectual life than one that is just marking time, day to day?

If you struggle with this concept of vulnerability you can read more about it in Brené Brown's book *Rising Strong* which totally supports what I've been feeling for years. She is an amazing teacher and has way more words than I. She delves into "wholehearted" living, and gives us tools for being vulnerable and brave.

Due to the limitations of this column I can only hint at those topics and what they've meant in my life. But I'd like to encourage you to begin this decade and year living fully, deeply, and with gusto. Don't shy away from living boldly and loudly! And in that way, whatever you do, you make it count.

► *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>*



6 TIPS FOR ADDING MORE SEAFOOD TO YOUR FAMILY'S MENU

Family Features) Seafood can make for a healthy addition to diets, particularly for children. It improves body and brain function, and studies conducted by “Pediatrics” and the “American Journal of Clinical Nutrition” have linked seafood to reduced risks of heart disease and allergic conditions like asthma.

In fact, the United States Department of Agriculture suggests making seafood part of healthy diets and its 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend putting it on menus at least twice a week.

While there are common complaints, such as “my kids won’t like it” or “I don’t know how to prepare it,” these tips can help make it quick, easy and affordable to add nutritious seafood to your family’s menu.

Start with shrimp. Shrimp is one of the most popular types of seafood in the United States. Try shrimp warm or cold as a snack, appetizer or main course. It’s versatile and can be sauteed, broiled, boiled, grilled or baked.

Make it fun. Consider putting healthy fish like wild cod, salmon or pollock into fun foods like tacos or burgers.

Buy frozen. Fish is now flash frozen at sea to lock in freshness. Frozen seafood meals add convenience and help cut down on waste because what you don’t use can go back in the freezer.

Cook with your kids. If your kids don’t think they like seafood, have them help with dinner. Cooking with kids can help develop healthier long-term habits and a more adventurous palate. It also helps improve motor functions and confidence. In fact, a study published in “Pediatrics” shows getting children involved in meal preparation may increase their enjoyment of healthy foods.

Pick the right products. To create a family-friendly menu, consider an option like Aqua Star’s Cutting Board meal kits, a selection of 10 recipes that include everything a family needs to prepare a tasty, healthy meal. Selections include tacos, flatbreads and comfort favorites. With pre-portioned ingredients for quick preparation and cleanup, they make it easy for parents and kids to create their own restaurant-quality meals.

Eat at home. Eating out often can drive unhealthy eating habits and strain family budgets. Seafood is easy and convenient to make, whether you use a simple recipe like these Chipotle Shrimp Street Tacos or choose a convenient meal kit, and can help you spend more time together at the dinner table.

Find more tips and recipes to add seafood to your family’s table at aquastar.com.



Chipotle Shrimp Street Tacos

Total time: 20 minutes

Servings: 2

- 1 Aqua Star Chipotle Shrimp Street Tacos Meal Kit, including:

creamy ancho chili sauce

Aqua Star shrimp

chipotle seasoning

spinach

corn

roasted tomato

white corn tortillas

- 2 teaspoons cooking oil, divided

Submerge unopened sauce packet in bowl of water to thaw.

In large skillet, heat 1 teaspoon oil; add shrimp and cook 6-8 minutes. Drain excess fluid and add chipotle seasoning.

In medium skillet, heat remaining oil; add spinach, corn and roasted tomato. Cook 4-5 minutes until water is evaporated; set aside.

In microwave, warm tortillas in moist paper towel 30 seconds.

To build tacos, fill two tortillas with shrimp and vegetables then top with sauce.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images (family eating)

MY JOURNEY OF Never GIVING UP



*R*honda is a woman full of wisdom gleaned from her interesting life experiences. You will be impressed with her “go-getter” attitude, and if you could meet her in person, you would enjoy her positive, energetic personality!

Rhonda, what do you do for women? What is your gift?

Over the years I have made it a personal goal to help the women in my life see their potential and not settle. I hope to provide a platform for them to bounce ideas, ask questions and ‘noodle’ out the best way to approach a situation. I believe we grow up listening too often to the voice that is loudest telling us why we can’t instead of how we can. I truly want to instill a sense of fearlessness when it comes to trying something new. I mean, what’s the worst that can happen if we act on an idea for a business or product? What’s the worst that can happen if we take a chance on love? I believe as women we are a lot stronger than we often give ourselves credit for. Many have heard me say “Be a Warrior” or “Like a phoenix, we will rise from the ashes, from our failures and be so much better, so much stronger.”

I'd like every woman to know that she is amazing. Her gifts are hers alone-no one is like her. Share them. You were uniquely created to contribute in your own special way. Don't be afraid to try. Wake up every day asking with an open mind, heart and soul, "What is the plan for me today?" Great things are happening all around us and we just need to recognize them.

Tell us about yourself.

I am first and foremost the mother of five beautiful children. I have been married to Rick for nearly 30 years. My priorities are God, family, and country. I believe in working hard and playing hard. Some of my favorite things are snuggling with my grandchildren or just hanging out with them doing anything, visiting with my parents and family, music, laughing, gardening, baking and cooking. Some of my least



favorites are cleaning closets, laundry, laundry, laundry, and procrastination. I believe you need to confront whatever the issue is. It will not shrink in importance, but only fester if you don't.

I am the oldest of seven children and grew up on a farm in the Thumb Area of Michigan. My parents moved to the farm after my dad served his time in the Army in Texas. The farm is about two miles down the road from my grandparents on my mother's side and they owned a dairy farm. After the chores were done, I'd often jump on my bike and visit them, perhaps help Grandpa milk the cows or Grandma feed her pigs. Their day would start at 5a.m. and end around 9p.m. We'd often spend summer nights sitting under the stars once chores were done. Lake Huron is only a mile or so away so as I got older, the beach and bonfires were our favorite things to do on a Saturday night.

Growing up I spent a lot of time with the cattle in the barn. We raised calves and I bottle-fed more than I can remember. However, chores included much more than feeding the

calves-like pitching manure and hauling hay and straw. It was all physical which means we didn't need to worry about "working out" or what we ate. This was probably the time in my life where I learned to embrace working hard and found peace and satisfaction in doing so. Evenings in the summer were spent playing baseball, basketball, tossing the football.

In the Thumb area we only had one channel that came through using the antenna, so our choices were limited. But believe it or not, there was still plenty to watch for the time we were allowed. I really enjoyed the programming, music, and commercials as well. Perhaps this was my start in media and embracing the world of Marketing & Advertising.

After graduation I attended Central Michigan University. I had an academic scholarship, but room and board were not covered. I tried out for the debate team and was selected. I was able to travel around the Midwest and East Coast debating for CMU. With that I received a scholarship that helped with expenses. I also cleaned the coach's family's house and babysat his children. My other job was waiting tables at Big Boy, where I developed some fun disco steps with my friends. In the era of Saturday Night Fever, we'd close the restaurant and run down the street to the pub where we practiced our new moves.

Two rules I had in college were to always to sign up for an 8 a.m. class so I didn't sleep my life away, and study until 10 p.m. when I wasn't working, in order to keep my focus on school. But I also had a lot of fun and great experiences outside of class. Again, "Work Hard, Play Hard!"

I married my first husband (high school sweetheart) prior to my third year in college. We moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming where he was stationed in the Air Force and I intended to complete my bachelor's degree. But I soon realized that going to the University of Wyoming in Laramie wouldn't be an option with one car between us, so I went to work and planned to finish college "later". I worked as a waitress, hostess, banquet server, and Maître' D at Holding's Little America prior to my first child's birth. I also sold Avon door to door during my pregnancy when I was told I was "too pregnant" to wait tables. With a newborn, I babysat for a neighbor so that I could stay home but still contribute to income. After our second daughter I realized I could work at almost anything and be happy if I had my family, my beautiful babies. I would sew matching dresses for them to wear for many occasions and was amazed that I could complete that task.

Time passed and we moved back to Michigan. The marriage lasted five years. I am not bitter or melancholy about that time in our lives. We have two beautiful daughters and as our lives evolved, we continued to do the best we could, working together to give them a good life.

About five years after my divorce I married again. Together we had two daughters and Rick had a son, so we had five children, spanning ten years in age! We grew close and today we truly function as a loving family. I won't try to sugar coat the transition of bringing a family together, but my partner and I made a pact to be on the same page with the kids and never disagree with each other in front of them. It was during that time that I completed my education and earned a Liberal Arts degree. I had two babies in diapers, an hour and twenty minute commute to work and back, a husband



who was traveling out of state, and the many challenges of managing a household of five children. But I did it! Our entire household supported me throughout the process. I believe finishing college was critical for me and I truly wanted to finish. What a glorious day it was to walk with the class and have our family there to celebrate!

Fast forward to today: all five children have earned bachelors and/or master's degrees and are doing very well in their own right. We couldn't be prouder of them. They truly are my legacy.

Why do you do what you do?

Wow this is a tough question. I believe I always have had the need to succeed and to make my parents proud and they always were. I think it's just the curse of being the eldest-to want to please. Growing up I thought I would marry a farmer and have 5 children. I've got the kids, but my career truly evolved because others believed in me-I didn't really set out to do anything specific but was determined to be the best I could be at whatever I did. My first management job was in a restaurant. The owner said I treated my work like I owned the place and she promoted me from part-time server to manager.

Then her husband said I could be successful selling. He hired me, sent me to Dale Carnegie Selling Training and I began to sell advertising for his print publications. Then a trainer at Carnegie helped me get hired into an ad agency as an account executive, and finally, clients helped me apply at Ameritech (which became AT&T). Looking back, I believe God spoke to me through all of them and helped me find my way

to the company where I would work for over 30 years-AT&T Advertising. I worked in numerous positions and saw the company go through mergers, acquisitions, and downsizing. I learned to be an amoeba; to flex, change and bend.

Every day I thought of myself as a resource, a problem solver. I believe that's why I was blessed with such a long career. The name changed numerous times throughout the merger/acquisition processes and in 2019, I took a leap. I joined DediCare, a home health care company. I walked away from 30+ days of vacation and other perks to try something new. Today I am proudly contributing time and resources in home health care with family and a close friend.

Through all of this, I believe opportunity has been out there. Like floating on a raft on the river, you need to be able to decide when to step onto the riverbank and try something new. No regrets...if it doesn't work, get back on the raft until the next stop. Eventually you land where you were meant to be -but enjoy the journey along the way because every stop is a piece of the puzzle that makes you.

Do you have any special experiences that have given you "validity" to do what you do?

There isn't one experience, but I have an appetite to try new things, be relevant, be curious, and embrace change--all of which have helped me take this journey, for the most part, faithfully and without stifling fear. And to NEVER give up. There will be times when you make a leap and you look back and ask, "What was I thinking". The truth is, you can't go back because in making the leap you have already changed, and you are not going to be the same person you were prior to the leap. So just keep moving forward.

I live by many of my father's sayings. One comes to mind from a little spiral autograph book I got when I was probably in the 5th or 6th grade. He wrote..."Each fall is a lesson, do not be disturbed. With God's Blessing. Love, Dad". I can't recall how many times that tiny little phrase motivated me to GET UP and get going! NO Pity Party here!

Why DediCare?

Most seniors over sixty-five want to stay at home. Sometimes they need help. DediCare provides many services: housekeeping, companionship, home health aides, licensed practical nurses, certified nurse assistants, and registered nurses. They take the headache and hassle out of recruiting so you don't have to, by running background checks, drug screening, and health evaluations.

DediCare provides Individualized Health Plans, transportation, meal preparation, medication preparation and management, and IV therapy. It is locally-owned with over twenty years in the health care profession, and is centrally located in Genesee County. They also offer catastrophic care and memory care solutions.

After reading about her, you can see that your loved one would be in good hands with Rhonda!

For more information about DediCare Solutions, visit them on Facebook or at www.dedicaresolutions.com

You can reach out to Rhonda at rerickson.dedicare@gmail.com; or LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rhonda-erickson-1a265020/>



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