

creativity | community | entrepreneurship

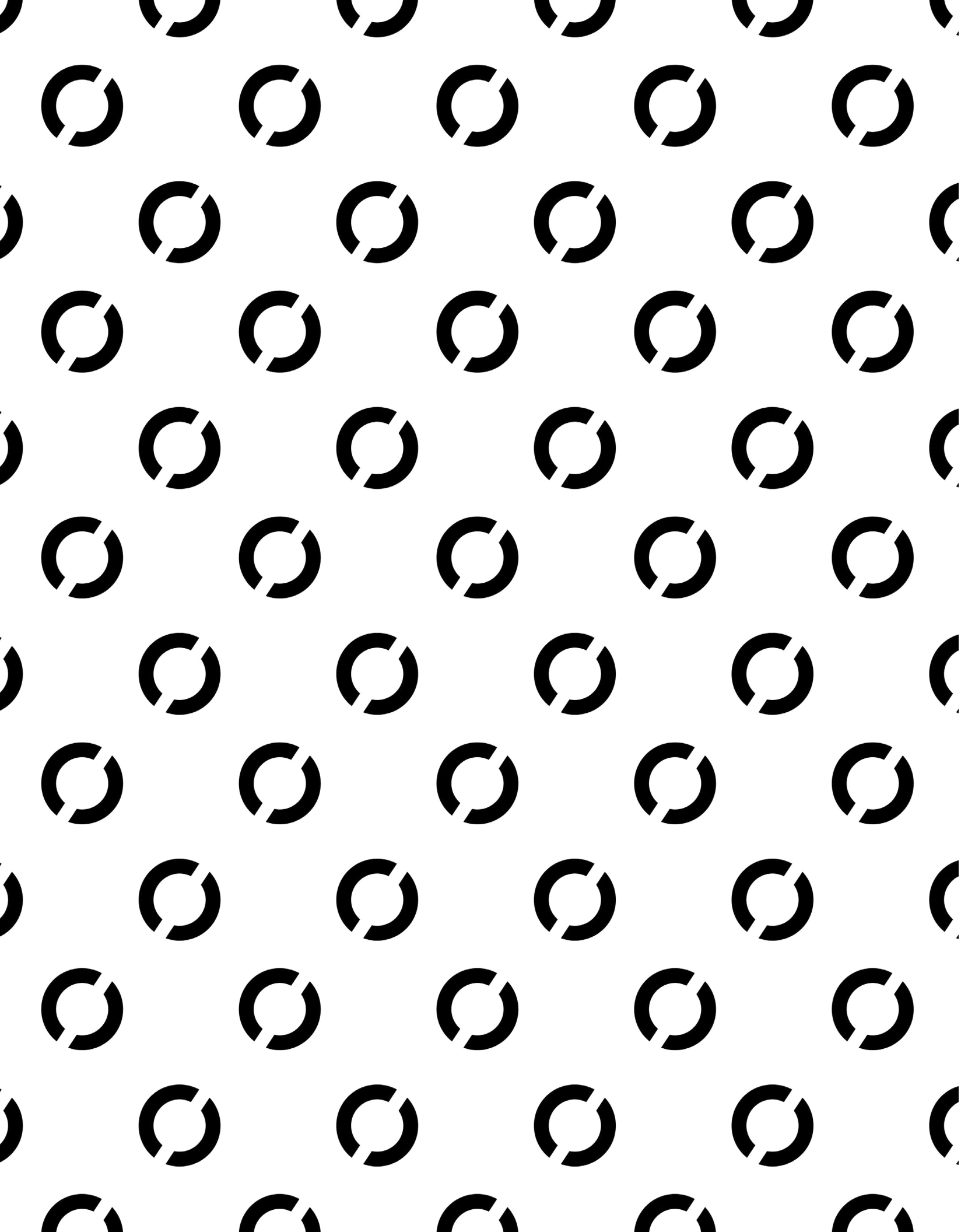
# BELONG

magazine



13

ISSUE THIRTEEN  
BELONG-MAG.COM



## ／ Our Mission

**Belong Magazine is designed to celebrate community, creativity and entrepreneurship.**

In all that we do, our mission is to inspire women to use their passions for a purpose in creating and sharing authentic words, images, ideas and experiences virtually and off-line and to be life-giving and encouraging to others.

It is our desire for women to know that they are enough, their voice matters, and that they have a place.

**They belong. YOU BELONG.**



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# Contents

- 03** FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR
- 06** HOME SWEET HOMEPAGE
- 10** SETTLING IN TO THE SEASON YOU'RE IN
- 14** BRINGING HOME THE BACON
- 16** HOMEWORK
- 21** ON THE HOUSE: FREEBIES AND OPT-INS
- 26** CLICK TO CUSTOMER
- 30** LAYING OUT THE WELCOME MAT
- 32** DIY:HOME
- 36** 5 SIMPLE WAYS TO ADD STYLE TO YOUR HOME
- 40** PARE DOWN THE PAPER CLUTTER
- 42** COZY MINIMALIST HOME: ENOUGH
- 44** HOST BEFORE YOUR HOME IS "READY"
- 48** SIMPLICITY + STYLE AT HOME
- 54** HOME ON THE ROAD
- 72** HOME AWAY FROM HOME
- 78** GIRL TRIP
- 86** HAVEN
- 88** CREATIVES MEET BUSINESS EXPERIENCE
- 92** BELONG MARKET GUIDE

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# you belong here



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## FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

As a little girl, I enjoyed going to the grocery store with my mom--especially when I was old enough to go look at the stationary and stickers section by myself for five minutes (remember sticker books?!). After browsing, I'd go back and walk the length of the store looking down each aisle for my mom. Frozen foods, beverages, chips and candy, baking supplies...my anxiety steadily increased with each pass that I didn't see her. Inevitably, near panic would be setting in when I'd spot her frosted blond head.

Just like the grocery store as a child, I've often felt lost as an adult trying to find my place. And even more so as a creative entrepreneur. I've looked down the aisles of facebook groups, podcasts, networking opportunities, blogs, conferences and more, but sometimes don't feel like I've found the familiarity that comes with belonging.

"The ache for home lives in all of us," said Maya Angelou. I think we all want to find the place where we matter, where we are known and where we belong. This is the place that I call home. It's not always a physical space but it's always a place where one can be barefooted and bunheaded, which is to say: beautifully oneself.

Whether you've found it or whether you're still searching, Belong exists to be the aisle markers reminding you that there is a place for you. Not every aisle is going to stock what you need, so keep looking. Keep looking until you find the frosted blond head of community, of belonging. Keep looking until you find your home.

If you're in the midst of looking, take a break. If you've found your place, take a break. Settle into this "home" issue like a comfy couch filled with loose change hidden under the cushions. You just never know what you might find on the pages that will help provide direction to the place that you need to go, the place where you belong.

you belong,

*Brooke Saxon-Spencer*

# Home Sweet Homepage



by **Kristen Fulchi**

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“Your website is your digital home; treat it as such.” We’ve heard that phrase so many times, and yet it can seem so unattainable. How can we possibly make our website inviting and interesting enough to keep people on it longer than the average 10 seconds?

**The answer? A thoughtful and intentional homepage.**

Your homepage is so much more than your digital welcome mat, it’s a sneak peek into your home and a very clear indicator of what the rest of it will look like. If designed with thought and intent, your homepage can purposefully guide visitors through a pre-designed journey, weaving them through your services page and on into your contact form - transforming a visitor into a client.

I am all about breaking things down in easy to read, actionable steps (no one has time to read crazy long articles without subheadings!), so here are 10 easy to implement, must-dos for your homepage.

## 1. WRITE OUT YOUR GOALS

Although this might sound silly to some (“My goal is to sell, duh” – you’re probably thinking), it’s such a crucial step. What are you looking to sell to your visitors? If you’re product based, what are your top three sellers, top three categories? If you’re service based, what service or package do you want to push the most?

*What would the ideal visitor end up doing once they land on your site?*

Ask yourself this question, write out your goals, and map out your homepage. Make sure you have images or buttons that guide visitors to where you want them to go. Then prioritize these items on your homepage, make sure they’re mentioned towards the top and not the bottom of your site, and add clear copy and beautiful images to entice visitors to click on through.

## 2. MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT YOU DO

I can’t tell you how many sites I’ve landed on and promptly exited because I had no idea what they did. I’ll look at their header, logo, main heading text, and even do a quick scroll of their homepage, and if I can’t figure out what they do, I’m gone.

Everyone is leading incredibly busy lives and they don’t want to work to be sold to. This is probably the easiest and most important must-do, because without this, there won’t be any visitors to entice.

One of the easiest ways to implement this is to add a photo to your header that clearly explains what you do. Don’t add a pretty image of a flower, a random pattern, or choose to forgo an image in lieu of text. If you’re a product based company, make sure it’s a photo of your product (the whole thing, not a super zoomed in version where you can’t tell what it is!) and if you’re a service based company, showcase a photo of you doing your thing (photographing a client, designing a website, mapping out a marketing strategy, working one on one coaching a client).

Then, make sure your initial heading (whether that’s added on top of your photo or below) is clear, concise, and says exactly what you do.

## 3. BREAK THINGS DOWN

Too much copy and people become disinterested. But, grab their attention and they’ll read for days.

Your homepage should have the teasers to the big content, never filled with tons of copy, but eye-catching headings, subheadings, and images.

As an easy rule of thumb, break things down into three. This goes for listing out product categories or services, breaking down the way a process works, or guiding people to different portions of your website.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISTEN FULCHI DESIGN STUDIO



# “Intrigue them, capture them, and turn them into beautiful, referral-giving clients.”



This allows visitors to easily skim and consume your content, which in turn allows them to understand and process more, resulting in a peaked interest (with good copy and images) and more time spent diving through the details of your site.

#### 4. MAKE THE EYES DANCE

This is one my favorite phrases and the most fun must-do on this list! It's my way of saying, keep the design interesting, change up layouts, and literally make their eyes dance - a sultry, fun salsa dance, that lets their eyes glide slowly down the page.

One of my favorite tricks for this is to create zig-zag designs through layout (an image on the left, copy on the right and the next section, image on the right and copy on the left), break it up with a bit of a “hop” with full-width banner images for quotes or important sayings, and use arrows or cute graphics to guide the eyes from left to right.

#### 5. COPY BEFORE DESIGN

Don't skip this one! As tempting as it is to jump straight into designing all the pretty details, your design should be supporting your copy not the other way around. Why force copy into a design that is editable and customizable? Design for copy that is written with intent and purpose, customizing it to deliver your message in an enticing and intriguing way.

#### 6. CRISP, STUNNING IMAGERY

Beautiful imagery creates trust, communicates professionalism, and entices visitors to BUY. We're consuming so much content on a daily basis, so it's more crucial than ever to stand out from your competitors and immediately garner trust and interest for each and every visitor.

Here are a few quick tips -

- Use bright, natural light if you're taking your own photos with a white poster board to bounce back light.
- Reach out to a commercial photographer to professionally photograph your products or take custom stock images for your brand
- Reach out to a local photographer to take branded headshots
- Purchase styled stock imagery that perfectly evokes your brand.

#### 7. NAVIGATION

Keep your navigation simple and the wording clear, making sure you have the major four - Home (this can be on your logo), About, Services/Products, Contact. Adding too many navigation tabs can make a site look

overcrowded and overwhelm the visitor, while too little can be frustrating (“Where is their services page???”).

If you have a lot of links, use drop downs to organize them and guide visitors through your products or services, and consider using your footer for less visited pages. Use clear wording (this is no time to get fancy), and make sure anyone hopping onto the site would understand where each link would take them.

#### 8. KEEP IT CONSISTENT

Don't forget to weave every detail of your brand throughout your website, including specific fonts and colors. If you're not able to use the exact same font on your website, use a similar one in the same font family. So if your brand is centered around a strong serif font, make sure that's being used on your website, not a sans-serif.

But this isn't the case for colors, make sure you use the EXACT color number on your website as you do in your brand. The slightest difference in color can evoke a completely different emotion. So find your numbers and stick to them!

#### 9. MOBILE-FRIENDLY


The majority of website platforms have the ability for you to view your entire site on a mobile device while you're designing it. Take advantage of this option! Scroll through your site, make sure it make sense and is usable from a mobile visitor's perspective, and make any necessary changes.

#### 10. THE VISITORS PERSPECTIVE

Once you've made all the changes above, close your laptop, walk away from your desk, and don't look at your site for at least 24 hours! Give your mind a break to refresh, reset, and now view the entire site from the visitor's perspective. Pretend you're a potential client and read through the site, click on the links, see what areas you naturally gravitate towards. Fix any broken links and typos and tweak copy as needed.

You can even go one step further and ask a friend to hop on your site and watch as they navigate through it. What buttons are they clicking on your homepage? What words are they using to describe your site? What's the overall feeling?

#### TYING IT ALTOGETHER

Your homepage is the one place that can exude your brand emotions, fully captivate visitors, and invite them to dive deep into the pages of your website getting to learn all about your wonderful business. Intrigue them, capture them, and turn them into beautiful, referral-giving clients. 

*Kristen is a brand strategist, photographer, and website designer who believes in thoughtful design, intricately defining brands, and weaving brand emotions into every touchpoint of a company.*

# Settling In To the Season You're In



by **Kate Crocco**

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Anyone else feel your life is made up of seasons--big or small pockets of time that encompass a theme? This theme is not always chosen and often feels undesirable and anything but wanted. Some seasons are full of beautiful new beginnings, abundance, and celebrations while others feel like pure chaos-- bartering with God to "GET ME OUT".

What if I told you seasons didn't have to feel so painfully different?

What if I told you it is possible to embrace and settle into seasons with a few simple mindset shifts?

If you are currently in a season of uncertainty, lack, over-commitments, the list goes on, this article was written just for you. AND if you are in a season of abundance, ease, and fullness, this article is also just for you - because we know ultimately that this season won't last forever. Before I dive into some pointers, let me share a little piece of my story so you can understand why I might be the girl to help you with this.

My entire life I lived for the next season. My infamous motto was, "Once this happens then I can begin or enjoy x, y, z." Sound familiar?

I believed that the feeling of being at home and settled was something that was earned. I'm sure each of you can relate to some extent, and it's not our fault. This conditioning begins for all of us at an early age. *If you eat all your dinner, then you can have dessert. If you complete your homework then you can play and have fun.* We are taught that in order to have the desirable thing, we must first do the less desirable (and in this example - vegetables and homework!).

We grow up with this mindset ingrained in us. *I won't feel settled until I get that promotion. I won't feel in control until I have my own business. I won't feel comfortable until I have the wedding, the house, the dog and so on.*

I lived in this neverending limbo for years. I never felt content - always striving for the next thing. I would become disappointed once I got to the next thing because nothing felt different I would set my bar even higher and be at it again. It was always the mindset of *just one more thing - once I get out of this season then I'll feel settled and deserve to feel settled.* Until one day I looked around me and realized that so many amazing things had happened in the midst of painful seasons. I realized that inevitably the calm always followed the storm. I realized that it was actually the bitter that made the sweeter exactly that - just a little sweeter.

What if I could just embrace the stormy season and see it as the foundation of the goodness that is to come with the next?

What if I could begin to take the wounds from those difficult seasons and use them as the lessons, and later wisdom, to propel me forward in future seasons?

Hmmm. Maybe it would be worth giving this a shot - to quit allowing the painful days, years and months to feel so painful and the celebratory seasons to be glossed over. I began to realize that those times when I would feel comfortable for a fleeting minute would be followed by something else arriving to shake it up.

What if I released the control and just allowed my life to be shaken, but not moved? Maybe this would actually make me feel more in control of it. I began to accept that I didn't need to feel settled in order to live a happy life. The feeling of being at home, feeling safe, feeling protected, and feeling comfortable in the season that I was in could be something I create and carry with me through it all.

So I bet you're wondering how I did this. Let me share some simple steps that will help you cultivate a mindset of feeling at home right where you are today.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SWEET ALICE PHOTOGRAPHY



# “Find those things that provide inner peace and hold onto them tightly.”

1 Repeat...*My home is within me. External things and circumstances cannot provide me with the comfort that a peace within can.* Tell yourself this mantra on the daily. Peace is found within, not in external things. How can you cultivate more peace within? For me it's through daily prayer with God. For others it's through mediation. Maybe it's escaping the chaos for a moment and taking a walk or listening to music. Find what provides an inner peace for you and hold on tightly to it.

3 This one piggybacks off the last statement around waiting to celebrate your wins. You know, *“Once I get to 6-figures then I'll feel proud of my accomplishments”*. Please do not wait to celebrate. If you aren't proud of what you've achieved today, you won't feel anymore proud when you reach the goal. You will reach it, begin shooting for the next, and walk away feeling even more unfulfilled. Trust me; I've been there. I celebrate each small win today and no longer wait until that special day. Each day we are breathing is a special day.

2 No more putting off until the next season. *“Once things slow down I'll visit my grandmother. Once I finish grad school I'll be ready to date. Once I make 6-figures in my business, then I'll feel proud of my accomplishments.”*

I tell clients all the time, “Today is the most time you will ever have, tomorrow isn't promised and we always overestimate how much time we will have in the future.”

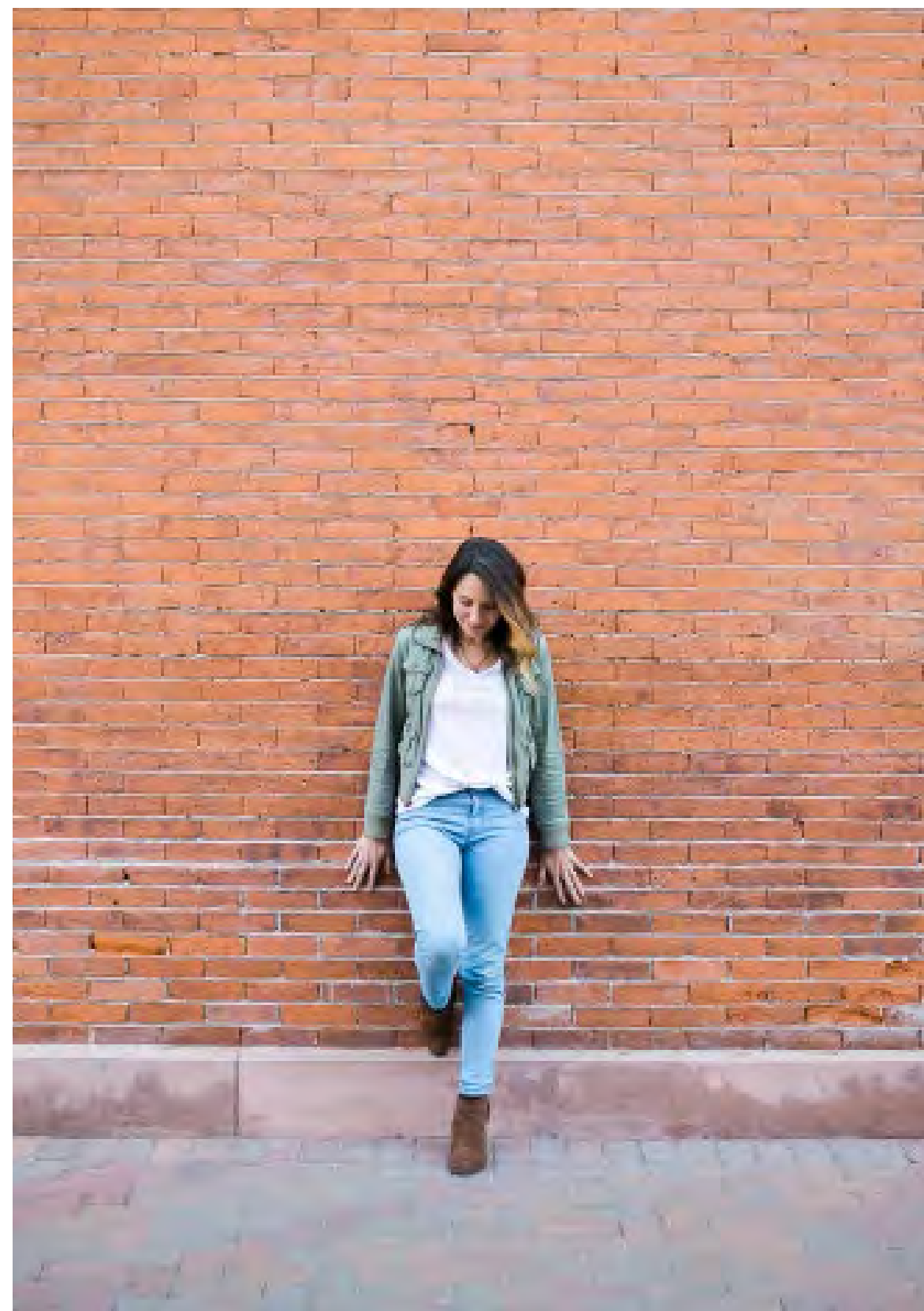
And this is why it's so easy to overcommit ourselves. We visualize next season as being calm and easier than the one we are in when in fact life just gets busier. This isn't a bad thing. My life is the fullest it's ever been, but it's filled with some exciting things I've been working towards - publishing my first book, birthing our second daughter, and renovating our next fixer upper. When opportunities arise today, if they are things I desire I say, “Yes!” today and don't put off until there is more time. *Today is the most time I'll ever have.*

4 Begin viewing disappointments as redirections and EMBRACE them. When I feel I've failed or been rejected from something I do not allow it to shake me - I move forward in anticipation of receiving the thing that was meant *for me*. Each time we “fail” we learn an important lesson. With each agency book rejection, I walked away with a new perspective on my proposal which I then decided to use to strengthen my work. I could have walked away defeated and given up, but I chose to use those rejections as fuel to get me to the place I was meant to be, which inevitably I found.

Take a moment and write down those moments you thought were failures or rejections. Next, write about what lesson you learned or how you were redirected to something better. I know you have examples you can write about! Next time you find yourself in a situation, reflect back to those examples. Remember how you felt in the moment, mourn it for a minute, but then pick yourself up and get ready for something better to come.

I hope you find these tips useful and can apply them in your current and future seasons. Remember that internal peace and being at home is found within - not dependent on external circumstance. I want to challenge you to start getting more cozy within. Find those things that provide inner peace and hold onto them tightly. 🌸

*Kate Crocco is a Confidence and Mindset Coach, writer, speaker, and the founder of The Confident Ladies Club™ Community.*



# Bringing Home the Bacon

CREATING A SPACIOUS LIFE THROUGH PROFIT



by **Morgaine Trine**

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As a business owner you're told to "be profitable." How do you do this? You hustle, working long days and stressing over profit margins. You want to have more space, time, and ease in your business so you can experience the freedom of being a business owner.

But the imperative "make a profit" can feel like another task for your never ending to-do list, taking away from your precious creative time. The true meaning of profit, what it does for your business, and why it's important, is easy to lost in the noise of all the things you should do for your business.

So let's break down what profit actually is, how to price for profit, how to implement financial systems which support profit, and how this work facilitates a spacious life.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PROFITABLE?

Traditionally, profit equals income minus expenses. If you look at it from a monthly perspective, it's the money in your bank account that is waiting for you come next month. As you can see from the profit equation, to up your profit, you either decrease your expenses or increase your income. But, like most things in life, it's not *quite* that simple. Details like your business type and stage of business will determine whether focusing on expenses or income will be the best plan of attack for increasing or creating profit.

The big question: how do you know if you're profitable? It's time to break out the financial report. I promise this isn't nearly as scary as it may sound. Start

by going into your bookkeeping software and finding the "Profit & Loss" report or "Income Statement"; they are one and the same. The last line of the report should say something like "net income"; this is your profit. Take a look at the past several months, without letting fear or judgement bog you down, and get a sense if you're making a profit month-to-month, and of your average monthly profit (or loss).

Real talk: if you've not been making a profit, then it's time to reassess both your expenses and income to see how to improve your profit. If your books show a profit, but you haven't felt the effect of that, it's a sign to implement a profit system so you can truly reap the rewards of having a profitable business. If you've been seeing (and feeling) a profit – congratulations! The rest of this article will only help you build on what you've started.

## PRICE TO PROFIT

Many business owners start with basic pricing strategy: add what you want to take home plus expenses, then divide by number of clients you want to work with or units of product to sell. Voila! Prices. The problem with this is it misses the nuance of pricing, leaving you feeling stressed out and confused as to why you're not making a profit.

So how do you price for profit? A good rule of thumb is that your take-home should be half of what your business makes (different percentages hold true for businesses over \$250,000 in yearly revenue). The key here is that your personal take-home goal is different than your business income goal. When you price your services/products to only meet what you want to take home, you'll always feel stressed about making ends meet; this isn't an effective method for creating spaciousness in your life. To find your business income goal, start with what you want to take home then double it. By design, this doubled amount covers your take-home, expenses, tax obligation, and profit.

With this new goal income, reassess your pricing: take the business income goal and divide by your current pricing. Is it feasible? Are you able to manage the number of clients or products needed to meet that goal? For instance, if you realize your goal should be \$5000 per month (\$2500 take-home) and you're only charging \$200 for your service, this means you'd need 25 clients per month – quite the tall order for your schedule!

If this scenario resonates – whether you're feeling stressed while working day and night, have a full client roster with little time to spare, or are in the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle – that's an indicator it's time to reassess your pricing.

## A NEW TAKE ON PROFIT

The best way to ensure continued profit is to have a system in place. This is where the brilliance of *Profit First* by Mike Michalowicz comes in. If you haven't heard of the Profit First system, your homework is to go out and read the book (or better yet listen to the audiobook – Mike's hilarious!). The PF system turns the traditional

**“It's not enough to just want to make more money; you must give your profit a purpose.”**

equation of profit on its head by sectioning out a portion of your income as profit from the very start.


I won't go into the specifics of his system here, but the reason it's powerful (and works) is because it fits with our natural inclination to spend what we have, instead of trying to alter our habits. Having clear ideas of how your money is allocated in your business gives you more freedom when it comes to making decisions on how to spend your money. For instance, using the PF system if you have \$1000 come into your business, you already know \$300 of that goes toward expenses. This gives you freedom to spend that \$300 on expenses without fearing you won't be able to pay yourself or your taxes.

Regardless of whether you follow Profit First or not, having a system for how you spend your money is vital. While it's nice to have profitable months, the way to ensure that you make a profit *every* month is to be intentional and have a plan.

## GIVE YOUR PROFIT A PURPOSE

The beauty of implementing both a profit system and pricing to support profit is these actions help free up your mental bandwidth so you can focus on other aspects of your business. Instead of stressing over where the next dollar comes from, you can enjoy the benefits of running a profitable business.

The benefit of having a profitable business is spaciousness. It's that sense of ease: having more time, more space, more freedom as a business owner. This shows up differently for everyone. Whether it's spending more time with your kids, being debt free, or going on a fabulous vacation every year, profit gives you the margin in your life to live it as you've always imagined.

You can't be passive with how profit creates this life. It's not enough to just want to make more money; you must give your profit a purpose. Your profit system is important: you're giving each dollar coming into your business a reason for being there, be it take-home, expenses, or taxes. The same holds true for your profit. As a business owner, you will find fulfillment not just in creating a profitable business, but by creating a spacious life supported – not destroyed – by your business. To create more space for yourself, challenge yourself to demand more from your profit. 

*Morgaine Trine is the Financial Strategist and Bookkeeper at Honestly Bookkeeping, a firm dedicated to helping creative entrepreneurs create long-term wealth and build sustainable businesses.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATIE GRACE PHOTOGRAPHY



# HomeWork

3 CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS SHARE THEIR TIPS AND ADVICE FOR BEING SUCCESSFUL AND BUILDING A BUSINESS FROM HOME



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANA BISHOP







by **Robin Verrier**  
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As a prop stylist and photographer for brands creating lovely imagery for their websites, lookbooks, editorials and catalogs, I work from my home based studio and office. This arrangement has its challenges, but I've been able to create a growing business based from my home. Here are a few tips and tricks that have worked for me along the way.

**1. HAVE AN OFFICE/STUDIO WITH A DOOR.**

When I first started my business, my husband and I lived in a tiny (and expensive!) one bedroom apartment. I didn't even have a proper studio to work from, so I ended up taking over the dining room to have a shooting space and prop storage area. Having to constantly see my workspace (remember this was our dining room) was exhausting and it made it hard to disengage from work at the end of the day.

Today, we now have a big beautiful townhouse in the city, and I have separate office and studios. I think it's vital, especially when we work from home, that we're able to turn it on when we walk into this space and then turn it off when we leave it. I treat it just like an office and I don't linger during my down time. I also think this establishes purpose in this space so that when you are in these rooms, studio/office or otherwise, you know it's time to turn on the creative juices and make it happen!

**2. SET A ROUTINE AND HOLD YOURSELF TO IT.**

Similar to my first point, you not only need to have physical boundaries on your workspace but also scheduled times. Just like when you worked in an office, you show up at a certain time and you leave at a certain time. I start my day around 8:30 am and end around 5:30pm Monday - Friday - this is my daily rhythm. I think it's so important to hold yourself to a schedule to keep yourself on track. This way you can plan, perform and be more successful by committing yourself to working when you're on the clock.

**3. MAKE IT ORGANIZED.**

Your workspace should facilitate creativity and focus. I like to think that the better the space looks, the harder you'll work in it. So I've made it a total mission


of mine to keep my office and studio spaces organized at all times. Yes, I'll work on a project for a client with props and things everywhere, but I always clean up as soon as it's over. It may sound like an obvious thing to do, but when we work from home, it's important to have standard for cleanliness and beauty in your workspace. No matter what the rest of our house looks like, my office and studio are organized and ready for work the next day. This is a place that needs to stay organized and appealing so when I enter in the morning and it's go time, I'm able to make that project happen.

**4. MAKE IT PRETTY**

To do beautiful work, create a beautiful space. I created a gorgeous giant mood wall (think mood board, but huge!) to adorn the wall behind my desk. I'm able to look at gorgeous and inspiring images while I'm working and it makes the space much more alive and exciting. I couldn't figure out what colors to go with for a theme, so one side is blue and the other is coral.

Add elements that brighten and complement the space. I like large beautiful organizational baskets for holding items like legal and tax documents. They are ready when I need them, but look way nice while they sit there. I also like for my office (and my home as well) to have fresh flowers and houseplants all over. Flowers and greenery and things that make me so happy!

**5. BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY**

This is probably the most important tip to running a business, especially from home: create a network. Working from home can be isolating, so it's super important to create a community with whom you can connect and reach out. One of my best friends has an interior design business and even though we're in different industries, we are constantly chatting about projects, best practices and our goals. We're even in different states. But having that friend who can relate to what you're going through is so helpful. Locally, I have an amazing network of creatives and business owners who I keep up with and meet regularly. Getting out and being around people doing similar things is super important to building your community as an entrepreneur. 



*Verry Robin & Co. helps brands tell stories beautifully through photography, prop styling and art direction.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERRY ROBIN & CO.





by **Myquillyn Smith**

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Here are a few of my favorite tips for a cozy, yet minimalist work space.

**ONE /** Decide if you need to be visual inspired, or visually calmed. I love seeing those exciting work spaces with a huge bulletin board filled with inspiration photos. But if had that in front of me when I sat down to work, I'd be so distracted with beauty I'd never get anything done. Do you work best when surrounded by inspiration images or when all distractions are removed? Decorate the wall you'll be facing in your work space accordingly.

**TWO /** Organize things in the way that you can best find them, not in the way that Pinterest would best showcase them, or the way that your mother-in-law would do it. For me, that means my books are in rainbowetical order. My intelligence has been questioned over this--but I'm visual and I can tell you the color of every book I own, so my books are organized by color. What do you need to rearrange so that you can most easily work?

**THREE /** Add a real, actual lamp. Yes you have that overhead light. Yes that desk lamp gives you extra light, but for your work area, consider adding a beautiful lamp that you love. Warm filtered light is so comforting to work under.

**FOUR /** Take your temperature. Well, not literally, but if you are like me, you sit down to work and an hour later you realize your feet are cold, your hands are cold and your shoulders are tense because you guessed it, you're cold. Close the vents, add a space heater or bring in that luxurious throw. Pay attention to how you are feeling in your work space so you can do your best work.

**FIVE /** Edit. Look around and be ruthless about the things you don't use in this space. I know how easy a little office, extra work closet or spare room can fill up with unwanted items. A clutter free work space will offer less distractions and you'll get more work done, promise! 



For the last ten years, Myquillyn Smith, known online as “The Nester,” has encouraged women to embrace their homes – imperfections and all. In *Cozy Minimalist Home: More Style, Less Stuff* (Zondervan), Myquillyn helps readers see their home’s hidden potential and create beautiful, functional spaces they love.

Myquillyn is a self-taught, design school dropout who took a week-long course so she could be a certified home stager and redesigner. She and her family have lived in 13 different houses, apartments and condos and spent plenty of time getting real world design experience. Millions of women have been inspired by Myquillyn’s blog, *The Nesting Place* and her home has been featured in *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Cottages and Bungalows* and the *Charlotte Observer*. *Christianity Today* named her one of 20 Creative Innovators of 2016. Her first book, *The Nesting Place: It Doesn’t Have to Be Perfect to Be Beautiful*, released in 2014.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MYQUILLYN SMITH





by **Gemma Bonham-Carter**  
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Have you ever sat down to work, looked around you, and just felt so completely uninspired? Your creative juices zapped. Your motivation gone. And your to-do list remaining way too long.

It is important to create a work space that inspires. It doesn't matter whether it's that tiny desk in the corner of your bedroom or a completely dedicated office space, you need to create a space that you love.

Doing this will allow you to work more efficiently, more creatively, and simply enjoy it more. When you have an inspiring workspace, you'll be dying to head over and get into that creative zone of genius.

So let's talk about 5 easy things you can do to create an inspiring workspace.

**1. CLEAR THE CLUTTER**

There is nothing worse than sitting down to a desk that is covered in paper and random clutter.

Start off by taking EVERYTHING out of your workspace. Get rid of the junk you can toss. Then grab the stuff that shouldn't be in your workspace (I'm looking at you, random lipstick and coffee cup) and put it where it belongs.

Lastly, identify the stuff you need to keep. Be ruthless and ask yourself whether that item is something you really use when you are working.

Having some white space in your office will give you the ability to clear your mind, and ultimately allow you to see your tasks for work really clearly too. Take out the excess and give your eyes some space to relax.

**2. GET SMART WITH STORAGE SOLUTIONS**

The key to an inspiring workspace is to NOT have your work "stuff" all around. You want to be inspired by things like artwork and plants, and not the pile of paperwork you need to deal with or random USB keys or phone chargers.

Figure out storage solutions for all items in your workspace. Maybe you have drawers in your desk that you can organize and use to their full capacity. Maybe you have shelves and can line them with boxes and magazine holders.

Only keep a select few items on your actual desk. I personally love a sweet little bowl – think Anthropologie

– for small knick knacks, a nice pen holder, and my planner. Everything else is in a drawer or box.

You need to have a dedicated "home" for every item you use in your work so that it can all go back to where it belongs after you've used it.

**3. ADD LIGHTING**

Having a dark workspace is depressing. If you don't have great overhead lighting in your space, grab a cute desk lamp or standing lamp. Not only will it help brighten up the space, but it can be a way to add a fun pop of colour or a metallic.

Hanging a strand of string lights can be another way to add some extra light and a cute vibe. Hang them over your desk or down the wall. Instant boho chic.

**4. PUT UP INSPIRING ARTWORK**

Don't leave your walls bare. You need to have pieces of art that are inspiring and uplifting in your workspace.

Whether it's a beautiful abstract painted piece in your go-to colours, a bunch of prints with quotes that radiate positivity and motivation, or favourite photographs, do not leave your walls blank.

I love the look of a gallery wall in an office. You don't even need to use frames! Just some washi tape and a rotating collection of prints can be super inspiring.

**5. BRING IN GREENERY**

My last trick to making the most out of your workspace is to bring in some real plants.

If you have space for a potted tree next to your desk, like a fig or fiddle leaf, those look amazing. If you sit in front of a window and have space for a hanging plant in a macramé holder, do that. Or maybe it's all about a little collection of potted cacti on your desk.

Any element of greenery – no matter how big or small - will bring a piece of the outdoors in and help you to find that balance and relaxation. Plus, it helps to purify your air too. Double win.

Here's to inspiring workspaces and all the creative things that happen in them! 🌿

*Gemma Bonham-Carter is the creator of the popular home décor blog and shop, The Sweetest Digs.*

HEADSHOT BY AMY ZAMBONIN



# On the House: Freebies & Opt-Ins



by **Samantha Siffring**

WWW.TBHCOACH.COM / @SAMANTHAHMS

If you've been around the internet business world for awhile, chances are you have figured out that the most popular way to get people to opt into your email list is to give them an incentive in the form of a freebie.

Imagine having a guest over to your home: you offer a drink or snack, right? Think of your freebie this same way.

Many business owners stress about freebies, but trust me, they can be simple, fun, and irresistible to your potential clients!

First, you need to choose the content you will be delivering and how you will deliver it. Here are 7 popular and simple formats you can create and launch in a well spent afternoon:

**PDF Freebies:** The following 3 types are all downloadable PDFs which you can easily create in Canva (canva.com) then deliver through your email service provider.

**PDF Ebook:** These downloadable PDF files can vary in length from a few pages to 100 pages!

**How to:** In the ebook, you will introduce yourself, explain why you are qualified to share this information

(can be as simple as "I used to struggle with this then I learned the secrets I am sharing in this ebook"), then you will share that valuable information.

**Inspiration:** Depending on your niche, this could be a guide to creating a capsule wardrobe, a book of recipes, a manual of how to edit your own photos, and more!

**PDF Workbook:** This is similar to an Ebook, but generally shorter, with guiding questions and areas to type or write in the answers. In a workbook, instead of teaching the reader something, you will guide the reader to find their own answers.

**Inspiration:** I use a workbook in my business to help potential clients identify their niche and brand messaging.

**PDF Checklist:** This is another downloadable PDF that is a fun and easy way to deliver a lot of value in just a page or two.

**Inspiration:** Depending on your target audience, you can use these to share the steps to a successful Facebook Ad Campaign, an ultimate packing list for a trip to Disney World, or more!

## OTHER TYPES:

**Discount Code:** If you sell products or courses, a discount code is a simple way for you to collect the contact information of people who are interested in your products.

**Video:** People are spending less time reading, and more time watching or listening to content – use this to your advantage by creating a video freebie.

**How to:** This can take different forms: a live (or recorded) webinar that people can sign up for in advance and receive a link to watch, or an on-demand video (or series of videos). You can show your face, have your voice with slides, or a mix. You can easily hire someone on Upwork or Fiverr to edit your video for a more polished look.

**Quiz:** These are quickly becoming a very popular freebie option – who doesn't love a good personality quiz?

**How to:** There are several different companies online that offer quiz software you can embed into your website, ranging from free to fancy!

**Email Challenge:** There are many ways to execute a challenge well, but the consistent basics are to send content with prompts every day for a set amount of time, keeping the reader engaged over the course of the challenge. You can send videos, audio, PDF worksheets, or all 3, and even have a Facebook group as a part of the challenge if you'd like. Challenges can be done live or can be set up to deliver when people sign up.

**Inspiration:** A 7 day decluttering challenge with prompts of rooms or areas to declutter each day, a 30 day list-building challenge with steps to grow your email list each day, or a 5 day self love challenge with journaling prompts and self care steps each day.

At this point, your head is probably spinning with ideas and possibilities. Just start with one freebie for now and make your choice with the following things in mind:

**Your audience/niche:** What do they want to know right now? What is one step they need to take before they are ready to work with you? What will give them a taste of working with you?

**Your strengths:** If you are uncomfortable on video, you should not use video for your freebie. Play to your strengths and choose the format that will allow you to shine best.

**What you want to do vs. what you think you should do:** Maybe you are a food blogger and all the other food bloggers put out e-cook books so you feel you should too, but you really want to do a 7 day cooking challenge. Do the challenge. You will put your best into the project you actually want to do, and it will make it more attractive to your potential clients. Follow your heart when creating your freebie!

## THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER:

Before I send you off to create your fabulous new freebie, there are 3 tips I want you to keep front of mind.

1. Make sure what you offer is actionable. Make it simple and doable. If it's complicated or requires a lot of thought, it probably won't be done.
2. Provide quick wins. You want this person to be able to get results easily before they have even paid you for anything – this is some of the best marketing you can do for yourself!
3. Give your best stuff. There is nothing more frustrating than signing up for a freebie that leaves you hanging. Surprise and delight your new subscribers with a freebie that stands alone and gives a lot of value. Again, this will be some of the best marketing you can do! 🌟

*Samantha is the host of the Badass Mother Podcast and a business coach who helps clients build online businesses beyond their wildest dreams.*



# Click to Customer

INSIDER SECRETS TO A WEBSITE THAT CONVERTS



by **Holly Meyer**

WWW.HOLLYMEYERDESIGN.COM / @HOLLYMEYERDESIGN



by **Mallika Malhotra**

WWW.MIKIFOTO.COM / @MIKIFOTOCO



Let's be honest, are you getting inquiries and sales from your website?

Do you wonder why people who visit your website disappear, never to be heard from again?

Does your website stand out, or does it blend in with everyone else's?

It's time to ditch that sad, outdated website for one that converts visitors to paying customers!

Your website is one of the first places a prospect will visit to get to know you and your brand, and you only have a mere 7 seconds on average to convince them to stay. For that reason, your website MUST grab their attention at first glance and compel them to keep clicking through all of the pages.

The goal? To captivate your audience and have them fall so in love with your brand that they are inspired to take action NOW.

What simple changes can you make to your website to keep viewers engaged?

What is the trick to converting viewers into customers?

Brand designer, Holly Meyer of Holly Meyer Design and brand photographer, Mallika Malhotra of MikiFoto + Co join forces to share their winning website formula to create an engaging, eye-catching, dynamic website that books more clients.

Here is a list of the design and photography must haves and must do's for EVERY page of your website that will produce an impactful first impression.

## Home Page / Start Here Page

The starting point to every website and arguably the most important page! The home page must immediately communicate who you are and what you do, plus give your viewer a visual trail to follow. The design layout is essential in guiding your visitor around the website. The visual stories should entice and engage your audience to stick around and keep clicking.

### DESIGN

- Use header text that engages your visitor + describes what they can expect from you (i.e. "Interior Spaces that Capture the Soul – Functional Interior Design for Modern Families").
- Add whatever you want your visitor to know at a glance on this page! (i.e. Headshot, About Blurb, Services Overview, Portfolio, Recent Blog Posts).
- Introduce your free opt-in to grow your list.
- Add a "choose your journey" feature (i.e. "I want to... work with you", "I want to... read your blog...", "I want to buy your course or sign up for your free opt-in").

### PHOTOS

- Win over your audience with a dynamic photo slideshow. Consider this your short highlight reel. Choose 3-5 photos that best represent your brand story and put a face to your business.  
Consider this image mix :
  - 1) Polished portrait of you with eye contact to the viewer
  - 2) Photo showing you at work
  - 3) Image of you communicating a feeling, expression or mood
  - 4) Closeup photo of a branded product (business card) or object that is associated with your brand.
- Turn heads with a strong headshot photo and pair it with the about blurb.
- Encourage the viewer to click the home page gateways with eye-catching, appropriate images that are linked to the service mentioned. Most websites have 3-4 portals. Use a combination of lifestyle images (showing you at work) with close-up product shots.

HOLLY'S HEADSHOT BY TARAH ELISE PHOTOGRAPHY  
MALLIKA'S HEADSHOT BY LAURA LEE CREATIVE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HAUTE STOCK AND SOCIAL SQUARES



**“Your About Me page is highly frequented real estate on your website because your audience cares to know who you are and wants to be able to connect with the human behind the brand.”**

#### **About Me Page**

Do not underestimate the power of your About Me page. This is highly frequented real estate on your website because your audience cares to know who you are and wants to be able to connect with the human behind the brand. Be sure to grab their attention with your personal story, a welcoming image and a strong call to action.

#### **DESIGN**

- Draw your visitor in with the word “you.” Don’t just talk about yourself on this page, but talk TO your visitor!
- Play up your professional experiences + achievements.
- Add “Fun Facts” to connect with your visitor more intimately.
- Use Call to Actions to guide visitors to the next step once they’ve read your page.

#### **PHOTOS**

- Use a photo in your header that communicates quickly and easily what you do.
- Pick a branding portrait that shares your personality. Consider including a shot with some background and environment instead of a sterile headshot with white space. Make sure the color, expression and mood is a strong reinforcement to your story.
- Consider also including a quote that fits with your core values and mission.
- If there is space for additional photos, add some storytelling shots of the things that inspire you or how you are different.

#### **Services Page**

Once visitors get to this page, they are eager to learn more about your offerings and your expertise. This is your opportunity to give them a solid overview of what you do and how you are different than the competition. This page is the gateway to future conversations and the door to book with you. Excite them about the experience to work together!

#### **DESIGN**

- Use bullet points to emphasize what your client’s gonna get in your package(s).
- Show visual examples of what your packages look like/what’s included.
- Add client testimonials to increase brand trust.
- List a starting range so visitors have an idea of the investment (and to cut down emails you need to respond to — only serious clients will inquire!).

#### **PHOTOS**

Share visuals that communicate your entire process! Include images of:

- How you work with your clients (by phone, one to one in person, on laptop, in groups).
- Materials - tools that you use.
- End product / deliverables.
- Expressions telling transformation story and client relationship (trust, joy, friendship).
- Places you work.
- People on your team.

#### **Contact Page**

This page sometimes doesn’t get the attention it deserves. It’s important because it is the designated space to start the relationship with potential customers. Include a contact form and make it super easy for viewers to also get in touch with you. Don’t forget to also include your social media links.

#### **DESIGN**

- Add links to FAQ page, Services page, etc. to cut down on any duplicate questions you’ve already answered.
- Don’t use the word “Submit” on your button (word has a negative connotation). Customize your button and make contacting you a pleasant experience.
- Add a custom message response after the form has been sent to let the visitor know their message is in your inbox. Note your business hours and response time here.

#### **PHOTOS**

- Help convert a viewer into a prospect with an engaging, friendly photo. Pick a branding portrait that has personality and eye contact. Place it right next to the prompt for email information.

Too many online entrepreneurs suffer from website shame and feel confused about how to organize their site. They simply don’t grasp the power of visual storytelling, and they are lost when it comes to choosing what photos to include. Don’t be one of them! By following our winning website formula, you’ll be able to better understand the elements of design and create a click-easy experience for your audience.

We hope these tips help you optimize the pages of your website and give you some guidelines to discuss with your web designer and brand photographer. You are on your way to creating a website experience that connects you with your audience and converts them into paying customers! 🌸

**“Your goal is to captivate your audience and have them fall so in love with your brand that they are inspired to take action now.”**

*Holly Meyer is the brand + web designer behind Holly Meyer Design, a creative studio that specializes in handcrafted visual identities, fully-customized websites, and cohesive marketing graphics.*

*Mallika Malhotra is a brand photographer, business mentor and author of The Brand Photography Playbook who empowers women to stop hiding behind their business and confidently become the face of their brand.*







# Laying Out the Welcome Mat

THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOCIAL SQUARES



with **Kellie Sirna and Stacy Elliston**  
 WWW.STUDIO11DESIGN.COM / @STUDIO11DESIGN\_TX

**Q: Why is making people feel at home important to the customer experience?**

When guests or visitors feel at home, they're immediately more receptive to the experience you're about to provide them with. Home is where we let our guard down and can be any version of ourselves we choose. Invoking that mindset in your customers or guests is a way to captivate them.

When people feel at home, they're more open to being inspired, getting creative, discovering a new side of themselves. You want your guests or customers to feel that they're the masters of their own experience of your space. That's when they can enjoy it the most and engage with your business or home in a way that will be most meaningful to them.

**Q: What are some tips for "laying out the welcome mat" in a space?"**

One of the key tips for laying out the welcome mat is making sure that it's always there. One way to create that welcoming feeling 24/7 is to work with an open play layout. We love blurring the lines between food/beverage and reception spaces at our hotels.

Another aspect of the welcome mat is ensuring a space is adaptable for different needs. We love to create both energetic and quiet physical spaces for people to pick a zone depending on their mood.

Communicating through color can immediately set a welcoming tone.

Adding new elements to older/existing spaces helps to evoke a "home away from home" experience as well. Layering is key. Many of our projects, especially Hutton Hotel in Nashville and Hotel Adeline in Scottsdale, convey that feeling of going on a journey. There's something unexpected for guests to uncover layer by layer throughout the space. This draws guests in further and ensure the experience of exploring a space feels like a journey of discovery.

**Q: What are some tips for "laying out the welcome mat" through a brand's narrative/website design?"**

Captivating and familiar storytelling is key. Everyone loves a good story that feels intriguing yet relatable. Highly visual content and a keen awareness for the integrity of the space whose story you're sharing are two key ingredients.

A human connection is extremely important. People are always seeking a personal touch and part of rolling out the welcome mat is making your guests and visitors feels immediately comfortable with the design narrative you're planning on exposing them to. Whether that means an easy to navigate website or approachable concierge desk, it's vital to facilitate a connection between the guest or customer and the brand from the get-go. 🌸

*Kellie Sirna and Stacy Elliston are principals of Studio 11 Design, a firm focused on international hospitality design, architecture, art curation and styling, and branding.*

# DIY: Home



by **Kara Whitten**  
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## Pom Pom Clock

### MATERIALS

- Yarn (5 to 6 Skeins)
- Pom Pom Maker
- Hot Glue Gun and Glue
- 18" Wood Round
- Clock Movement
- 3.5" Screw
- Hanging Bracket

### INSTRUCTIONS

Begin by making tons of pom poms. I used a pom pom maker in a few sizes to get a variety. Some solids, some mixed. Just play around and make a ton! In all, you will likely need around 50-70 pom poms depending on the size you make them.

Once all your pom poms are made, just use the hot glue to attach them to the wood round.

Then find the middle of the round and screw in your 3.5" screw leaving it sticking out quite a bit so that the movement doesn't hit the pom poms.

Hang the clock movement on the screw (I painted my movement white first, but that is completely optional). The movement that I used just hangs on the front of the clock which make the whole process quite simple.

The last step is to add your mounting hardware onto the back of the clock and hang it on the wall.





## Brass Macrame Hoop Wall Art

### MATERIALS

Macrame Hoops in Various Sizes (the more you have, the bigger your piece of art)  
 Brass Wire  
 Pliers

### INSTRUCTIONS

Begin by laying out your rings on the floor in the pattern that you like. You want to use various sizes so that you can fit them all together like a puzzle. This part is pretty much anything goes. Make a pattern that appeals to you and is the size that you want.

Once you have all of your pieces laid out, begin to attach the hoops to each other using your brass wire. You will need about 5 inches of wire for each attachment point. Just use your pliers to wrap the wire tightly around the two hoops where they meet.

Continue to wrap the wire around the attachment points on all your hoops until all the hoops are attached to each other in one big piece.

That's it! Your DIY abstract wall art piece is ready to hang! You can hang the hoop art on the wall using thumb tacks or monkey hooks. This piece can be hung vertical or horizontal, over a dresser or console table, or even over the mantel. Who knew such a simple technique could be so fun?



## Pom Pom Pillow

### MATERIALS

Chunky, Colorful Yarn  
 Large and X-Large Pom Pom Maker  
 Hot Glue Gun and Glue  
 Plain Pillow Case  
 Pillow Insert  
 Scissors

### INSTRUCTIONS

I used a number of my favorite colors of yarn for this pillow, but feel free to use the colors you like best. This is a great project for using up leftover pieces of yarn that you have from other projects too.

The number of pom poms you will need depends on the size of your pillow, but my pillow was 24" by 24", and I ended up needing roughly 50 pom poms of varying sizes. To make the pom pom making process easy on yourself, I would really encourage the investment in a pom pom maker (or 3). This project was the first time I used one, and I was surprised how much easier it made the pom pom making.

Simply open the pom pom maker and begin wrapping your yarn around each side as shown above. When full, close the flaps and cut your yarn down the middle. Then tie a piece of yarn around the middle of the pom pom maker and open to release your pom pom.

The final step is to trim up the pom pom to create your round shape. Now repeat this process 50 more times! You can make all solid color pom poms or vary it by adding several colors of yarn to one pom, or make a two tone with one yarn color on one side and one color on the other. I love the variation of the pom poms and think it gives the pillow lots of visual interest.

Once you have all your pom poms made, use your hot glue gun to glue the pom poms to the pillow. Add a large blob of glue and then spread the pom pom open a bit and adhere it to the pillow as close to the center of the pom pom as possible. If you glue it on so that the glue is just on the outer edge of the pom pom, the pom pom can loosen easily and get pulled off. But by spreading the pom pom open a bit a gluing it as close to the center as possible, the pom pom will stay firmly attached.

Work your way around the pillow covering every part of the front of the pillow case. You may need to glue the pom poms to each other a bit to cover every spot. Once done, let your glue completely cool, then you are ready to display your work of yarn art proudly.







# 5

## SIMPLE WAYS TO ADD Style TO YOUR HOME



by **Kim Stoebauer**

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*We talked with designer/real estate agent, Kim Stoebauer of The TomKat Studio and asked her to share her favorite tips style to your home. These ideas are simple and attainable, and projects you can accomplish this weekend! Happy styling!*

Do you spend hours on Pinterest dreaming of having a perfectly styled home? Do you scroll Instagram and swoon over incredible remodels and new builds? Stop dreaming and get to work! There are so many things that you can do to add style to your home without overhauling the whole thing. Take on one project at a time and accomplish more as time and budget allow. At The TomKat Studio, we believe that you should **love where you live** and we are here to help you with some simple ideas to make your house a home.

### 1 OPEN SHELVING OPPORTUNITIES

We absolutely love styling open shelves and they add such a great focal point to any room. Start by locating an open wall in your home and determine how wide your shelves should be. Shop for shelves that compliment your style and colors or have them custom made and stained to match your home. Great sources are Ikea, Etsy and Amazon. Once your shelves are hung, it's time for the fun part... shopping and styling. I like to start with a graphic typography sign or framed art that fits the mood of the room. Then add items that make sense in your space, for example, stacked bowls and plates in the kitchen or coffee mugs at the coffee bar. Add small plants, books, candles, canisters and other objects that you love. Want to add more character? Display items that have meaning to you and your family, like trinkets from a trip or treasures found in your grandmother's basement.



*Kim is a designer, stylist, and realtor. She is a happy wife + mom of 2, living the dream in Chandler, Arizona.*



## 2 MAKE YOUR BATHROOM A SANCTUARY

The bathroom should be a sanctuary. Whether it's your own master retreat, or a secondary bathroom for guests, upgrade the space with small details that make a big difference. Fresh, white rolled towels are not only convenient, but add a tranquil, spa-like feel to any bathroom. Splurge on luxurious soap, lotion and bath salts so when it comes time to relax in the tub, you are prepared. For the perfect peaceful spa feel, add scented candles and a small speaker for playing calming music.



## 3 USE A TRAY TO DISPLAY

Small trays are easy to find at local home décor stores and vintage markets. Trays help define the space and hold together the arrangement of objects you've gathered. For instant style in the kitchen, add a tray next to your kitchen sink and fill with hand soap, dish towels, a candle and small plant. Add an interesting tray to a coffee table creates a defined space for decorative items displayed. A tray filled with bath necessities on a table or bench next to the tub is not only pretty, but functional, keeping everything within reach.



## 4 PRETTY PILLOW PERFECTION

Gorgeous throw pillows can change the look of a space in an instant. Don't be afraid to mix patterns and be sure to incorporate various textures to create a more interesting arrangement. Try to make sure the pillows you select all tie together as far as the color palette. Use an odd number of pillows for a more attractive composition. On a large bed, we like to balance the arrangement by using a couple of pairs of pillows plus one statement pillow in the center. On the couch, create a set and duplicate it on both ends.

## 5 BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

Old and used books are easy to come by at second hand stores. Books can be used in many ways around the house to create interesting and attractive displays. For a handsomer look and style, remove the book jackets to reveal the embossed titles. When searching for the perfect books for your home, keep in mind colors and titles. Find tones that complement your style and that pair together well. When browsing book spines, try to find titles that resonate with you or have significant meaning. When perusing books, I always notice the various typography styles on the spines and choose the font styles I love. Once you find a set of books you love, try different things with them, like stacking a few under a small plant or mug, to add interest and height. Fill boxes and baskets with books that you find. Before you know it, you'll have a big collection!

I hope you enjoyed reading these easy ideas for adding style to your home! Looking for more ideas? Be sure to visit my blog at [thetomkatstudio.com](http://thetomkatstudio.com) and follow me on Instagram at @tomkatstudio. 📖





ORGANIZED HOME

# Pare Down the Paper Clutter



by **Melissa Michaels**  
 WWW.THEINSPIREDROOM.NET / @THEINSPIREDROOM

Paper clutter is a common struggle! The less paper in your life, the less you have to sort and manage. Choose paperless systems whenever possible, but beyond that, start with a paper organizing system that is easy to manage and functional rather than complicated and fancy.

**RECYCLE IT.** As soon as an item comes in to your home, take care of it. If you don't need it, recycle it immediately. Keep a recycling basket handy wherever you tend to handle paper so you never have an excuse to toss items on the counter or floor.

**POST IT.** Post important or time-sensitive stuff (such as concert tickets, sporting event passes, or restaurant coupons you intend to use) in your family command center.

**SORT IT.** We can get inundated with tons of school papers! Sort through these every day and toss what you don't want. We use the super-simple system of taping school papers, lunch menus, and calendars to the back of the pantry door. You could use a cute bulletin board for this purpose too.

**REMEMBER IT.** This is especially important when it comes to bills! I keep a basket for all incoming bills (when paperless billing isn't an option). I open the bill, toss out inserts and envelopes (we pay online), and stick the paper bill in the basket. Twice a month, after I pay the bills, I put the paperwork in a "paid" file drawer, which I recycle at the end of the year.

**SHRED IT.** This one is a lot of fun! When I went on a yearlong epic paper decluttering mission, I bought a giant paper shredder and went to town. I shredded the contents of boxes filled with old receipts, bills, school papers, notes, credit cards, statements, and jumbled-up papers of the most random stuff. I recommend this method if you need to get ruthless.

**FILE IT.** Get a file box or use a file drawer to set up a simple filing system for papers you may need to access in the current year. Label a folder for each category, such as tax documents; insurance documents and medical records; mortgage and car loan documents; important receipts; and warranties. Don't make your filing system too complicated. Only keep on hand what is essential in the current year. Papers you need to save longer (such as tax documents and titles) can be moved to a separate filing system. 🔄



*Melissa Michaels is the creator of the popular decorating blog, [www.theinspiredroom.net](http://www.theinspiredroom.net). She is also the New York Times bestseller *Love the Home You Have*, *Make Room for What You Love*, *The Inspired Room* coffee table book, *Simple Decorating*, and *Simple Organizing*.*

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COZY MINIMALIST HOME:

# Enough



by **Myquillyn Smith**

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One of the best parts of Cozy Minimalism is this odd sensation you begin to experience—one that most people never allow themselves to feel. It's called "enough."

Many people never know they are allowed to say they have enough. It almost seems un-American. Enough doesn't mean everything is perfect; it simply means you have enough because you've met a goal. Whether in your home, at work, in your closet, on your dinner plate, or in your schedule, you get to say, "That's enough." You not only get to say enough, you have to say it. A big part of our job as grown-ups is to recognize when we have enough and call it out. We don't say we have enough because we don't know how to get more; we say "enough" because we don't want or need more. We've decided to end the quest for more because there's something we want more than more.

More for the sake of more is just as empty as less for the sake of less. The race to the bottom is just as meaningless as the race to the top because the focus is still on the race. Constantly focusing on how little we can live with is just as much of a distraction as focusing

on how much more we can acquire. Minimalism and materialism aren't all that different when the focus is all about how much we have. It's not about stuff at all. It's about changing our focus.

Once you realize you have enough, you're free to see how much extra you have—and then you'll want to start sharing it. This is what happens when you finally realize you've had enough all along, and you just didn't know what to do with it. When we realize we have enough, we're freed to give the rest away. For those of us who have always felt a call to making home, feeling like our house is done and ready for people releases us from obsessing about our home. We can finally move on.

In the years since I CoMi'd my house, I've discovered that when I have less, I am able to contribute more. Buying less stuff and having less stuff means I have more time and money to contribute to other things like nonprofits, our church, and people we believe in. Less is the gift to myself that keeps on giving. ☺



For the last ten years, Myquillyn Smith, known online as "The Nester," has encouraged women to embrace their homes – imperfections and all. In *Cozy Minimalist Home: More Style, Less Stuff* (Zondervan), Myquillyn helps readers see their home's hidden potential and create beautiful, functional spaces they love.

Myquillyn is a self-taught, design school dropout who took a week-long course so she could be a certified home stager and redesigner. She and her family have lived in 13 different houses, apartments and condos and spent plenty of time getting real world design experience. Millions of women have been inspired by Myquillyn's blog, *The Nesting Place* and her home has been featured in *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cottages and Bungalows* and the *Charlotte Observer*. *Christianity Today* named her one of 20 Creative Innovators of 2016. Her first book, *The Nesting Place: It Doesn't Have to Be Perfect to Be Beautiful*, released in 2014.





# Host Before Your Home is “Ready”



by **Erin Dollar**

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“Want to come over for dinner?” Until recently, I could count the number of times I’d uttered that phrase on a single hand. Actually, more like a single digit. I’m lucky to have cultivated a group of friends that I enjoy spending time with — no easy feat in my thirties, when it seems like everyone’s schedules are booked solid until 2030. Despite reveling in my growing social circle, inviting pals to visit me at home (or *worse*, inviting them over for a *meal*, which I would also have to *cook*) risked exposing an embarrassing truth: my home is... a work in progress.

The pressure for perfection has always crept into modern life, but social media certainly hasn’t helped. It’s keeping up with the Joneses, version 2.0. Now I can enjoy the pleasures of comparing my daily life to my peers’ neverending highlight reel displayed on Instagram, or scroll through beautifully manicured interiors on Pinterest until I’ve convinced myself that my 1-bedroom flat with gorgeous natural light is actually a disaster area, barely fit for human habitation.

Practicing gratitude seems like the obvious answer. I’m privileged to live in an apartment in a beautiful,

safe neighborhood, with room for my pets, and organic produce in the fridge. I get it: anxiety about creating a Pinterest-perfect home is a first-world-problem of the highest order. But to deny that social media has raised the stakes for many of us, if only in our minds, seems unfair, too. The expectation that we’ll broadcast the best moments of our lives has added pressure to project perfection during moments that might have otherwise been relaxed. The thirst for likes and follows pushes some of us to share only slivers of the “Instagram-worthy” parts of our lives, lest we come across as our actual, messy selves.

I felt the urge to start hosting more parties, dinners, and casual weekend hangouts at my house, eager to spend time with friends, but I always put it off. “I’ll invite friends over another weekend,” I thought, after I’d had time to scrub our bathroom to within an inch of its life. I’d throw a party next season, when I replaced the sofa with arms that had turned into scratching posts for the cats. Admittedly, as a textile designer who creates home decor, the fear of judgement is likely tied to my job... Shouldn’t someone who makes throw pillows for a





living have a beautifully decorated home??

In the midst of my angst about how to get my apartment up to snuff, a vintage art history book opened my mind to other possibilities. I spotted a photo from a dinner party thrown by Picasso, and something about it caught my eye. Granted, Picasso was a problematic fave™ on his best day, but it was obvious that the man did not give one iota of his attention to cleaning up for his guests. Clutter lined the room where his guests were seated. Paintings were stacked and leaning against every wall. According to historians, this is just the beginning of Picasso's transgressions as a host. After promising to throw a lavish dinner party for Henri Rousseau, rumor has it that Picasso gave the caterer the wrong day, leaving Gertrude Stein to wander the local shops looking for last-minute cheeses and sardines.

Scanning the faces of the guests, I wondered if any of them cared that Picasso had such a blasé attitude towards hosting. He managed to gather some of the brightest artists of the era around his table, and I'm betting that they had a memorable time, even if the room was a little rough around the edges.

It comes back to that old cliché that people may forget what you did, but they will remember how you made them *feel*. As I open my home to friends, I've

started to focus on how I can make them feel welcomed and relaxed, rather than making sure the apartment is spotless. Brainstorm ways that you can work around whatever "trouble spot" in your home is keeping you from hosting. Not enough dining chairs? Keep the party more casual and host a board game night while you eat in the living room. Don't own the Le Creuset cookware to prepare that 20-step Boeuf Bourguignon? Throw together a simple salad and catch up with friends over take-out pizza. Mismatched place settings are eclectic, and simple flowers and cloth napkins at the table help guests feel welcomed.

Keep in mind that your friends are coming to see you, not just to see your home. Your friends will feel most comfortable if you're relaxed, rather than fussing about cleaning up, or pointing out the areas of your home that still need work. Waiting to host until your home feels perfect robs you of the opportunity to bond with your friends over cozy meals at home. Don't miss out on juicy catch-up sessions and thoughtful conversations around the table. Your home does not need to be perfect for you to host a memorable party or get together. 🍷

*Erin Dollar is an artist and the textile designer behind Cotton & Flax, a modern collection of home decor made in California.*





# Simplicity & Style at Home

HOW TO GET ORGANIZED AND UNLOCK YOUR CREATIVE GENIUS



by **Melody Mesick**

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The home should be a space to rest, re-energize, and most importantly, create. However, most homes are riddled with clutter, piled up to dos, and utter chaos that leave its inhabitants feeling stretched thin.

Here are 5 steps to reclaiming a simplified, stylish home so that you can create more time and space for your creative endeavors. 🍷



# 1

## Create a Vision

Consider how your home can best support your life. Whether it's setting up a much needed workspace or finding more inspiration to cook, identifying your goals will help shape your gameplan.

**PRO TIP:** Choose one big, outrageous goal, and create a list of all the ways your home can help you reach it.

# 2

## Simplify your Stuff

Decluttering your home is therapeutic. By ridding your home of unused relics, you will release old, unhelpful emotions and create space for your future aspirations.

**PRO TIP:** When deciding what to get rid of, ask yourself, "Would I buy this today?" If the answer is no, it may be time to let it go.

# 3

## Create Order

Grouping like with like and designating a home for everything will immediately make you feel organized. This order and simplicity boosts mental clarity, focus, and energy.

**PRO TIP:** Label where items are to be stored to keep your family and roommates accountable.

# 4

## Streamline your Storage

Maximizing your storage will make your home more spacious and easier to navigate. Consider where you need more space for your belongings, and add in shelves, drawers, and/or baskets.

**PRO TIP:** Pick cohesive furniture and storage items to create a 'streamlined storage' look and feel.

# 5

## Add your Style

Your home should reflect your unique style and preferences. By adding in personal touches and prioritizing beauty, you will create a home that leaves you feeling inspired and joyful.

**PRO TIP:** Put the pieces you love on display, and appreciate them often. Success isn't measured by how "Instagram-able" your home is, but how it makes you feel every day.

*Melody Mesick is the co-founder of SIMPLY SPACED, an organizing service and lifestyle company focused on transforming cluttered minds and spaces.*



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PHOTOS BY BEN + JOELLA



# Home on the Road

ENTREPRENEURSHIP OFFERS THESE CREATIVES THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THEIR BUSINESS (AND LIFE) ON THE ROAD.



# Bree Pair

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My husband and I were living in Houston and experiencing wanderlust. We found ourselves in a place of only taking vacations to go see family. Now, we love our family, but we were ready to go and see things all around the country. So we started making a bucket list of all the places in the United States we wanted to visit, and that list grew very quickly very fast.

We discovered the idea of traveling around the country by RV when we both read an article about another couple that had done it, and we couldn't get that idea out of our heads. Could we actually do that? What does that look like financially? Would we sell our home?

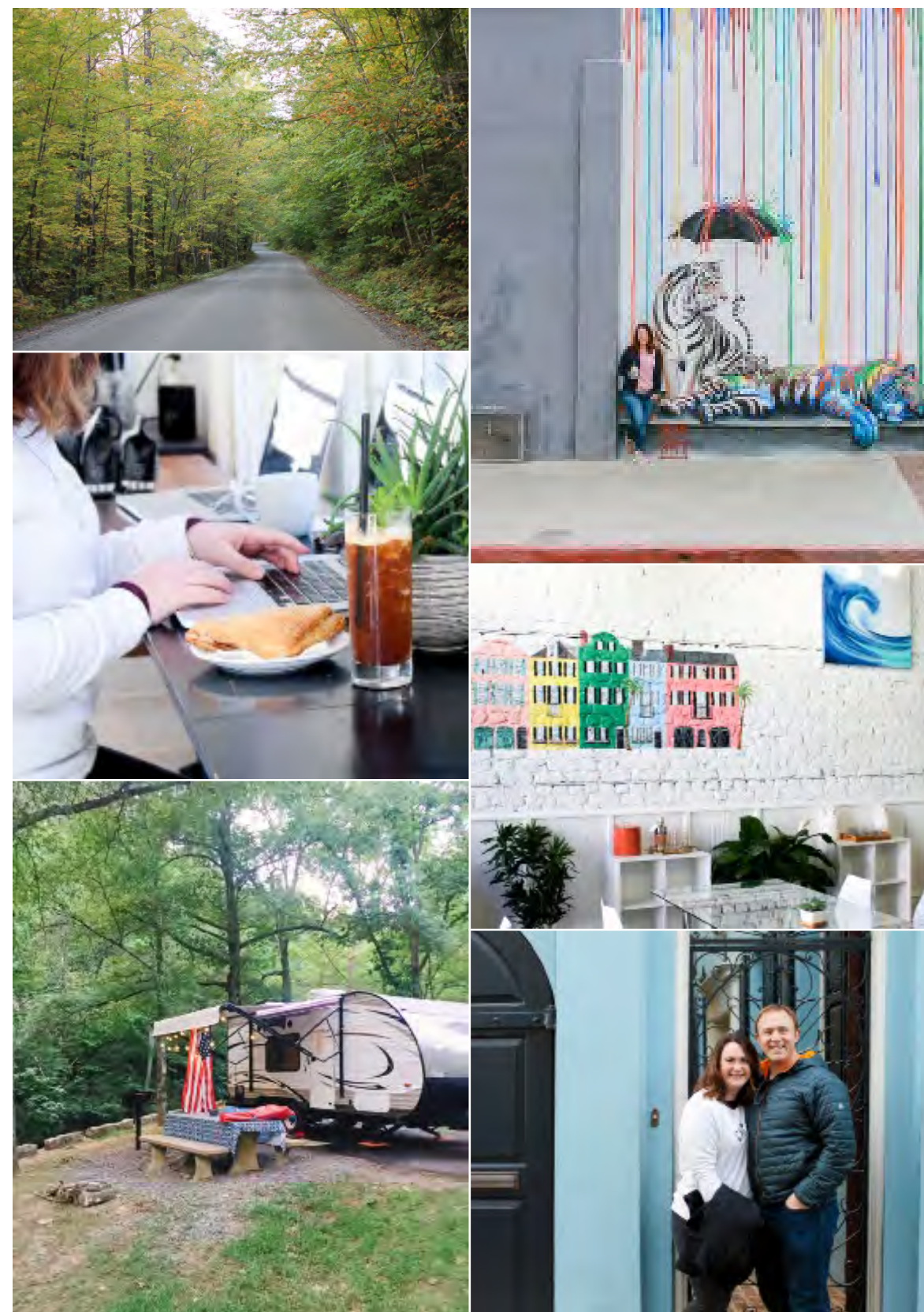
Well... we did it. We saved for over a year, sold our home, my husband quit his job, and we headed out on the adventure of a lifetime. We have now visited almost every state - we're just missing 6!

I am so lucky that I can work from anywhere as a creative entrepreneur, although it can be challenging while you're traveling all the time. We were able to have a flexible schedule and had to remember to carve out

hours to work, which is hard when you're constantly traveling to see so many beautiful things. Fortunately for both of us, we are big coffee drinkers so we had the best time exploring local coffee shops all over the country. Strong wifi became our best friend and our worst enemy at times, especially when we just wanted to stay in and work from our new little home. We made it work and learned to stay in places for longer periods of time when there was a lot to see, but still a lot of work to get done.

Sometimes you need a break from the hustle, and we were so fortunate to be able to do this before we think about starting a family. Almost everyone we met along the way told us that we were so smart to do this before kids and before we retire, not after. It wasn't always easy, but I've got thousands of pictures and so many memories that we will never forget. Plus, we have the best story to tell about how anything is possible, and that yes, you can travel around the world in 108 square feet and live to tell about the adventure.

*Breanna is the CEO of Thrive, a company that educates and empowers bloggers and influencers.*







**“It wasn’t always easy, but I’ve got thousands of pictures and so many memories that we will never forget.”**





# Victoria Van Ness

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My path to traveling entrepreneurship wasn't a planned one. My journey began when I was 18 and had dropped out of college, quit my job, and broke the lease on my apartment to travel with my boyfriend, an acrobat in Cirque du Soleil.

Naturally, everyone around me thought I was crazy...I just wanted to see the world.

I left with two suitcases in hand and moved to Canada. I didn't have a plan or a job, so naturally, I did what any girl would do and I started a blog. My blog showcased what I was wearing, eating, seeing, and doing while living away from home in cities like Montreal, Brussels, London, and Paris.

The blog then turned into a source of income for me.

Fast forward a year. I moved to NYC and began a career at Bloglovin' (now Activate.) I had no legitimate work experience, but I was hired because of my blog. I was on the Community Team where I learned a tremendous amount about social media and influencer marketing. Without expecting it, that job catapulted me into the industry I'm in today.

After over a year at the company, I decided I wanted to start traveling again. So I did. I spent a couple of months on the West Coast and back to Canada again. All the while, I was working remotely as a marketing manager at an influencer marketing agency based in NYC. The agency actually represented a client that I worked with through my blog, and I asked if they were looking. It was great because they let me work from anywhere.

Now, a year later, I'm living in Japan and I own my own agency, Cheat Sheet co. We focus on influencer and social media marketing for small brands. Putting my experience on paper, I realize my whole career has really just been stepping stones to the next opportunity, and it all comes full circle. In three years, I've traveled to 16 cities with no plans of slowing down and no plans of planning anything. I've come this far without thinking more than 3 months ahead in the future and I really like doing life this way.

*Victoria Van Ness is a 21 year old traveling entrepreneur + blogger.*

PHOTOS BY JOE MCADAM



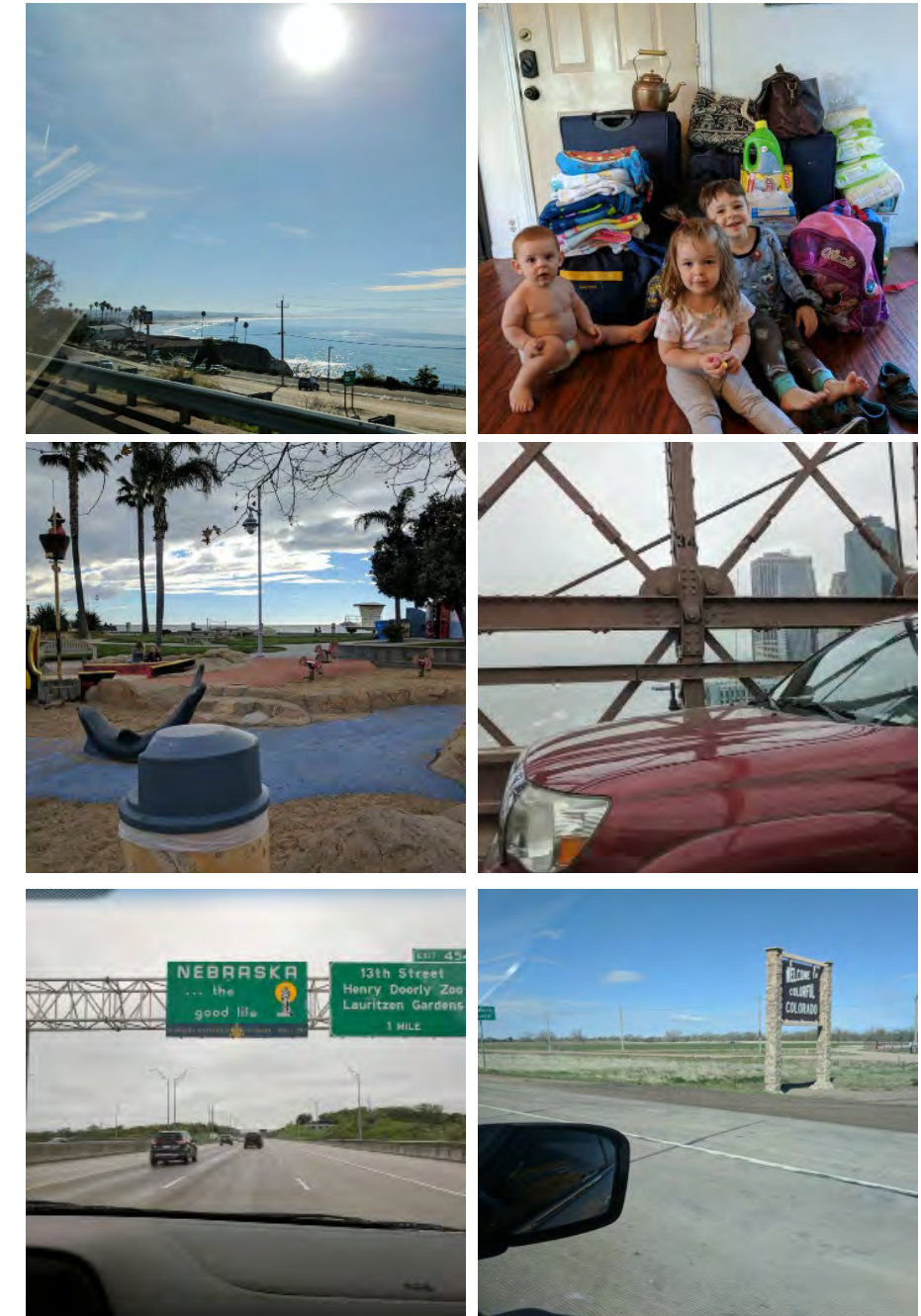






# Kyrsten Sherwood

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Starting in October 2017, our family of 5 sold our 2100 square foot house and took to the road in our very tiny, 15-year-old sedan.

The back seat was filled with three side-by-side-by-side carseats which were filled with three small kids aged 3, 1 and 3 months.

The trunk held the last of our possessions - our minimal wardrobe, our kettle and pour over coffee makers, our computers and iPads (we're a tech heavy family), laundry detergent and only the few things we'd need in order to live in someone else's home for a month.

And the front seat held my husband and me. We were taking off at 4 in the morning, heading from Olympia, WA to Phoenix, AZ and pursuing our dreams of chosen homelessness and living on the road.

## WHAT EXACTLY IS DIGITAL NOMADISM?

Digital Nomadism can be anything from trekking around a continent with nothing but the possessions on your back to driving around the country pulling your camper home to what we did, which was traveling around the country and living full time in Airbnbs and hotels, and it can be really anything in between or outside of those limits.

Digital Nomadism to us is freedom, the release of guilt and letting go of the restraints that society puts on us.

It's a large step toward true, self-sufficiency and independence, and it's exhilarating.

## WHAT'S ONE OF THE HARDEST FIRST STEPS TOWARD BECOMING A DIGITAL NOMAD?

Since there are a million ways to become a digital nomad, I'll focus solely on our story and one of the first steps that we took.

We sold, donated and tossed 90% of our belongings, including our home.

*(Pro Tip: If you decide to donate possessions, donate to 1. local thrift and second hand stores, rather than Goodwill - support your local economy and 2. homeless and women's shelters)*

Society beats into us that we need a 2000 square foot house with a fence and a dog and 2 children (one boy and one girl) in order to live a fulfilling life. It says that success equals working 40 hours a week in a job that has upward growth potential and children who are enrolled in a structured learning environment at the age of 4-5 so that they can prepare themselves for said job.

HEADSHOT BY ALYSSA RYAN PHOTOGRAPHY



# “Digital nomadism is a mindset, a set of beliefs and actions that release oneself from society’s firm grip on expected obligations and consumerism and structure.”

It says that we need 600 TV channels, Netflix, a DVD collection, waffle makers, mountains of plastic toys, fondue sets (for that one time that you have friends over), a walk in closet filled with clothes you haven’t worn in ten years, spare bedrooms with queen sized beds, sterling silver cutlery and traditional china, and so on.

And we decided to take the exact opposite approach.

If you haven’t read the book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* by Marie Kondo and you’re interested in the digital nomad lifestyle (or just living a more fulfilled life), I suggest you go and get it right now.

Essentially, her message is that the only things you should keep are things that spark joy in your life. That when you pick up an item, you can ask yourself the simple question of, “Does this spark joy?” and you will almost immediately know the answer.

For those who happily live the life of the 40 hour workweek and whose children love and excel in school and who have the large home (we would love to have again sometime in the future), with room to entertain and boxes of holiday decorations, etc. - we mean absolutely zero judgement! We firmly believe that everyone should live the life that they choose and that they’re most drawn to, and there is zero shame in living this kind of beautiful, traditional life.

But for us, it turned out that all of the possessions we had acquired over the years didn’t really actually do much for us. In fact, most of our possessions and the fact that we felt stuck because of our ownership status added to the growing depression and anxiety that we were feeling.

Because on top of not necessarily needing all of the things in our lives, each item brought with it either some form of maintenance or emotional baggage. The more toys that the kids have, the more toys you and they have to pick up (unless you’re okay with your home feeling like a landmine went off constantly, which is how our house ALWAYS was and it drove me insane).

The more electronics you have, then higher your electricity bill is.

The more items that you hold onto because someone special gave them to you or because they represented a special time in your life, even though you’ve never used or even liked them and they’ll only date and gather dust and take up space in a closet or an attic, brings guilt - not joy.

And how long does it take to look through a closet full of clothes that don’t fit, you don’t like or won’t work for an occasion in order to find the same 4 shirts that you wear every day anyway?

We took the approach of - instead of always needing more, what if we ultimately needed less? What if we essentially didn’t need anything or hardly anything at all? What kind of freedom would that grant us?

So, it all went. And so did we.

## WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?

Welcome to unschooling, my friends!

While we traveled, our kids were actually under school age, so this was something that we didn’t have to

deal with at the time, though honestly now that we’ve done even more research about the world of unschooling, I wish they had been!

Now that they’re quickly approaching traditional school age, we’ve had to assess how we want to mold and set the stage for their childhoods, what environments we think they’d best thrive in and how much we value our own time (because, like, free daycare sounds really danged nice).

And ultimately, we’ve decided to unschool.

This means that, instead of having the kids learn in a structured environment where children are divided up into groups based on the day that they came into this world, rather than the speed and ways that they naturally enjoy learning, and where they learn facts needed to pass standardized tests, and undertake social, emotional, familial and self-worth stresses of traditional education, our kids will learn through general life lessons, they’ll learn through what they’re interested in and be encouraged and motivated by their passions.

*(Again, while we absolutely feel that the current school system is flawed and while we empathize with not only the students, but also the teachers, staff, parents and everyone involved, we absolutely don’t blame anyone for choosing or needing this lifestyle! We believe that there are absolutely some benefits to traditional schooling as well as we understand that many families just aren’t able to do what we’re choosing to do. Again, we firmly believe that everyone should be able to live a life that works for them and (more importantly) that they strive for without judgement — we simply would like to offer an alternative perspective for those who aren’t pleased with their current lifestyle.)*

A general example of what unschooling looks like in our life:

Our oldest son (now 5) is really into video games. He has about a million Nintendo games, he’s been learning to build things and dive into imaginative play in games like Minecraft, Portal Knights and Roblox, and when he’s not playing games himself, he’s watching Youtubers play games. Which means that he’s also always on the hunt for the next game to try out himself (which my husband and I empathize with as gamers ourselves, haha).

Well, seeing as we aren’t flushed with cash and that even if we were, we wouldn’t necessarily care to spend all of our income on more video games, we’ve asked our son if he would like to earn his own money so that he can buy whatever games he’d like (within reason, obviously).

Which has led us down the rabbit hole of creating a small business WITH (not for) our 5 year old son.

Through the starting stages of this business he’s learning basic math (inventory), finances (expenses, profits, taxes), chemistry (how different ingredients interact with each other), fractions (measuring out recipes), marketing (adding value to others’ lives), graphic design (designing labels and his brand), and SO much more.

*(If you’d like more info, we’ll be unveiling his business as well as blogging the behind-the-scenes of it all on our new lifestyle blog *Raising Abundance* (currently under construction).*

*Kyrsten and her husband help creative entrepreneurs to start and scale their small businesses through their *Launch Brand Grow Community*, *The Modern Conference* where they help people to create community-building virtual summits and their *Raising Abundance* lifestyle blog.*

This, my friends, is the power of unschooling. This same concept can be applied to literally any interest that our kids have - our now 3-year-old daughter isn’t interested in video games in the least. She prefers painting, drawing, playing with dolls and action figures and she taught herself how to play *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* on the piano (how???) - and they learn eagerly, quickly and intentionally because they’re intrinsically motivated by their own desires, passions and interests.

## ARE WE STILL TRAVELING OR IS DIGITAL NOMADISM A PHASE?

I have this inner dialog about whether or not we can still call ourselves Digital Nomads.

After traveling full time for about 8 months in 2017, we’ve spent 2018 living in the same apartment in Scottsdale, AZ for just about a year. Now we’ve signed another lease for another year in a different part of town.

Does this mean we’re no longer nomadic?

Well, I’d venture to say yes and no. Technically, we’re no longer nomads in that we haven’t been traveling from place to place constantly or living in another person’s home full time like we once were.

That said, ironically, as I’m writing this piece, I’m sitting on the couch at my parents-in-law’s place in Washington state and we’ll be here for a month and a half. Not because we’re necessarily trying to save money or do the living-with-the-parents thing, but because we’re choosing to. Because why not? *(And because having babysitters is awesome, omg, please give us some adult time).*

A month ago, we stayed in San Diego for a week in an Airbnb.

We’ve been talking about staying with or near my sister for a month or so in Austin and/or my parents in Alaska and/or staying in an Airbnb in the midwest for a month, just because.

While we were deciding on where to live for this next lease, our chosen options were Phoenix, Austin, Seattle, Nashville (we’ve never been yet!) or San Diego.

While we aren’t currently moving around, we’re still living an unconventional life of travel and living with the mindset of *location is an option*.

We live solely off of the finances from our online businesses, which vary widely from month to month. We live minimalist and frugal lives (most of the time) and we encourage learning through play, entrepreneurship and pursuing interests to our kids.

We might one day buy the white-picket-fence home but for now, we enjoy the flexibility of choosing how long and where we’d like to live each year and staying in a place where we aren’t responsible for the overhead and maintenance of broken plumbing or mowing the lawn.

Digital nomadism is a mindset, a set of beliefs and actions that release oneself from society’s firm grip on expected obligations and consumerism and structure.



# Ben & Joella

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Hello there! We're Ben and Joella. We're film photographers, creatives, and entrepreneurs. And this is the story of how we went from a 2,000 square foot Scandinavian farmhouse on a corner lot to living in a home with 4 wheels and a grand total of just over 200 square feet. These are our reflections on life, work, and the meaning of home after a year on the road.

Flash back to a little over a year ago. We're were driving down Highway 1 just outside of Los Angeles, soaking up the sunshine, enjoying the ocean views, and pondering our future. Ben was the first to ask: "What if we moved here for a few years?" After all we had friends in LA, we love the food (yes please to fresh avocados all the time) and most of all, we craved the opportunities this creative epicenter offered.

You see, at the time we'd been building our photography business together for five years. And it had finally outgrown our hometown and so we found ourselves at a crossroads. Maybe you entrepreneurs out there are the only ones who understand the nagging desire for more. Because in so many ways, it didn't make

sense. Why leave a home we love? And I guess, to oversimplify, it was because we had to try.

At the time, we were just heading into the crazy of wedding season. So one morning while showering and getting ready for that day's festivities, the idea hit me. And before I could stop myself, I just blurted the thought out: "What if, instead of moving to a new city, we just live in an Airstream and travel!?" Crazy, right?? Ben thought so too. In fact, I think he thought I was joking at first. But the idea was intoxicating.

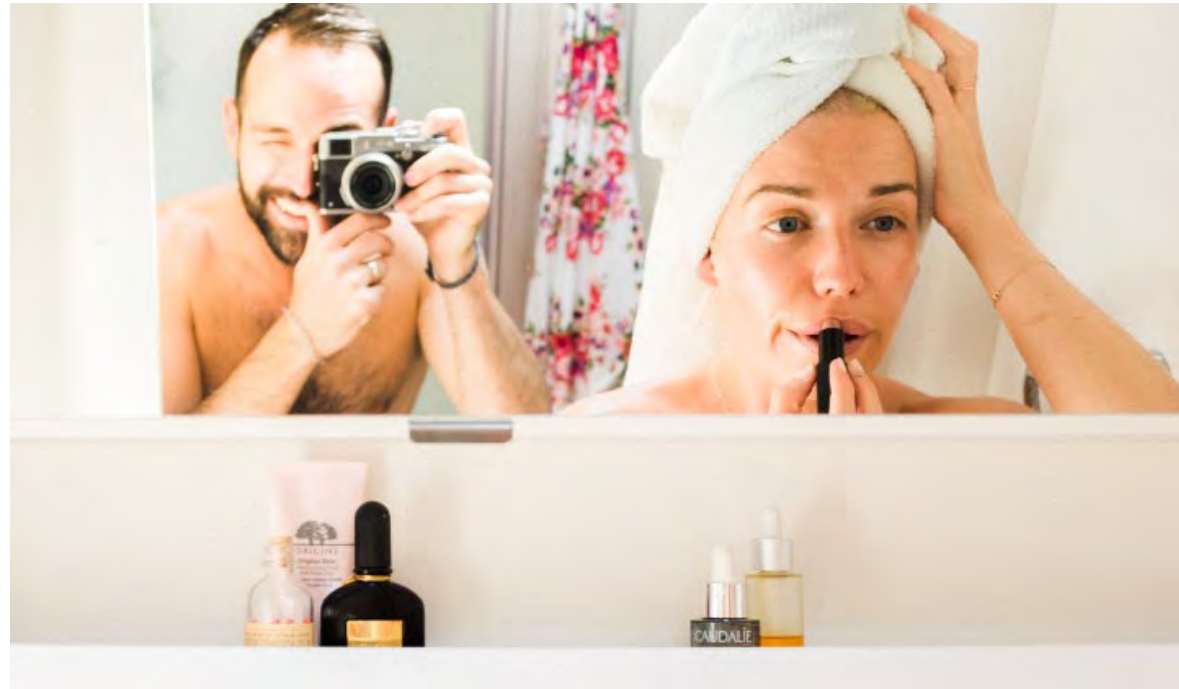
Over the years we've joked that it's a liability to have two people in the same house with the same passions because there's no voice of reason. We're the couple awake in the middle of the night bidding on Ebay because we don't have anyone telling us that, in fact, we don't really need another camera. And that certainly seemed to be the case here. So without a voice of reason, we closed our eyes and jumped. And the idea was simple. We would sell everything and set out on a two year road trip with only three goals.

*Ben and Joella are hubby and wife film photographers who spend their days working side-by-*

PHOTOS BY BEN + JOELLA







1. Meet as many people as we could. Not pesky cold-call style emails, but face to face. Magazines, ad agencies, brands. Everybody.
2. Push ourselves as much as possible creatively and build an insane portfolio of work. If we want to be the best, we have to earn it. And have the photos to prove it.
3. And lastly, the travel would be like an audition for cities. A little like the movie *Away We Go*. At the end of two years, we would know where we wanted to move next. Go rent the movie, you'll see what we mean.

But as with all things, the road is never as straightforward as you plan. We thought we were sacrificing our comfort and our home for our work. But the past year has taught us otherwise. Our space might be small, but it feels like home. Our gratitude and affection for our Airstream still surprises us. No matter where we are, we have the joy of coming home at the end of each day. We named her Rosie, by the way. Because she allows us to see the world with rose colored glasses.

This all started by leaving one home and daring to imagine our life in a very different type of home. We brought with us one small wedding photography business and a whole lot of big ambitions. And our months on the road have been a learning experience for sure, but the travels have also given us so much creativity. Six months ago launched another brand we never saw coming: *The Accidental Travelers*. It's a travel media business with a blog, podcast, and YouTube channel. It's all designed around the message that travel changes you for the better.

Travel teaches us as adults what the playground taught us as kids. Life on the playground molded us and stretched

us and made us brave and taught us that, with a little work, we'll find somewhere we belong. And travel does all those same things for the grown-up versions of ourselves.

So in no particular order, here are some things that our first year on the road has taught us. You need less than you think. In fact, a few luxuries go a long way. A cozy blanket for chilly nights, luxe linen sheets, and some jewelry and perfume lovingly arranged in the bathroom. It doesn't take much to make a space feel like home. Especially when home is teeny-tiny and has four wheels. Which is good because nearly all our storage is devoted to cameras anyway.

The world is mostly good and happy. Forget what you hear on the news and the garbage people sometimes spew on social media. When you're constantly out there meeting people, you realize that the world is almost entirely made up of kind and funny and decent people.

Sometimes you have to leap before the universe shows you the way. We don't get all the answers before we step out. Sometimes we have to step out first, take the leap of faith, and then one-by-one the answers begin to come our way. Be brave, trust the process.

And last but not least, as cheesy as it sounds, home really is where your heart is. It's amazingly satisfying to have our home with us wherever we go. But more than that, Rosie has taught us that we're so much more than four walls on a corner lot in one city. Our home today allows us to feel so much more connected to each other, to our mission in life, and to the world around us as a whole. And we're finding that we're far more alternative than we ever thought we'd be. From where we sit today, we wouldn't be surprised at all if another alternative home is in our future. Whether that be a teeny flat in a European city or a floating home with sails and a keel.





# Home Away from Home

AN IMMERSIVE MASTERMIND EXPERIENCE

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It was day 3. Still in our pajamas, we had just finished breakfast, grabbed our coffee or tea, and made our way over to the white IKEA table that housed all of our notes, workbooks, Affirmator™ cards, pens and a big box of tissues from Day 1. We were physically tired from our Disneyland excursion the day before, but each of us also felt a renewed sense of freedom and joy.

As we sat down at the table, everyone looked at me, asking with their eyes...what was next?

I paused, looked each woman in the eye, and asked one simple question, “How are you?”

One by one, each woman let go of all she had been holding onto: the pain, the rejection, the fear, the anger, the jealousy, the hurt, the loneliness, the disbelief and the frustration. And cried. It was all there, on that white Ikea table — her fears and pains that seemed recently dislodged from their hiding place (*probably while riding Space Mountain the day before*).

As a group we embraced each tear, we supported these unearthed feelings, we gave perspective when necessary, and held space as each person dove deep. It was on this day that each woman let go of her loneliness, embraced a new outlook, and left that table feeling empowered and ready to take new action.

**This was the breakthrough moment. This was the transformation.**

Who knew that just by using these three little words, “How are you?” that each woman would begin to break through her own barriers and face past hurts that were holding her back. Obviously, those words weren’t the true catalyst for this moment,

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATIE GRACE PHOTOGRAPHY

**“My favorite part of this experience was the empowerment of getting to know yourself more than you ever have before.”**

VICTORIA MARTIN OF  
NORTHWEST NIBBLES





**“I would recommend this experience to someone who wants to have fun and rediscover the fun in themselves.”**

**MORGAIN TRINE OF HONESTLY BOOKKEEPING**

*at my messy white mid-century mod desk, with books and worksheets strewn about all over the place). My crazy idea was that I wanted to treat myself to Disneyland every. single. year. It’s my happy place and my “home away from home.” Plus I hadn’t seen the sun in days (#Oregonlife), and after living in Southern California for four years, I missed going.*

I mean, let’s be real here. I am a #disneyfanforlife and proud of it. Disneyland to me is like coming home. I even attended a specific school (Biola University to be exact) just because it was close to Disneyland. My first purchase when I moved into school was a Disneyland annual pass, and for four solid years I went there as often as I could. Even the years prior to that my family and I would go for fun and special occasions. Needless to say, Disneyland has an extra special place in my heart.

It was in that “crazy idea” moment that I realized I wanted to help others experience Disneyland the way I do. I wanted to bring them to my “home,” show them an amazing time, and allow them the opportunity to immerse themselves into a brand like no other.

This is where the Brightly Immersive Mastermind was born. Originally, it was just a retreat, but then it blossomed into a 6-month mastermind because I saw the extreme importance of the deep connections that were formed over a longer length of time.

Most people go to Disneyland with their family, so we were going to become a family and experience Disneyland in that way. And to make things even more family-like, we always stay in a beautiful, homey house near the park, where for one (possibly two) full days we legitimately stay in our pajamas all day long, no makeup required, and we talk, we eat, we cry, we brainstorm, we hug, we play, we write, and we dream.

**At this immersive mastermind, you’re home.**

but after having 3 months of meeting and 2 days of retreating together, this moment was allowed to happen. I was a witness to beautiful transformations on that day, and this is the *why* for this immersive mastermind.

Why? Because it’s exactly what each of us needs. We may not want to face those painful past thoughts and emotions, but they’re necessary to move forward.

To be honest, when I say the word “mastermind”, it doesn’t feel big enough to express the experience. Perhaps “sisterhood” would feel more appropriate.

The goal was to set this mastermind apart from others by not just giving you a place to grow your business and brand, but by cultivating a safe space for you to connect, to belong, to flourish, to be home, fully loved, and accepted right where you are.

This immersive mastermind was born out of a crazy idea (which are *always* my favorite) that I had one afternoon while I was sitting in my light filled “office” (i.e. 2nd bedroom that also acts as a storage/music room,





### WHY IS IT CALLED AN IMMERSIVE MASTERMIND?

The idea behind this mastermind was to physically take the group into a brand where they could have an *immersive* experience. There's something incredibly magical about being *immersed* in an unforgettable experience with a guide to help you see what most everyone else overlooks when they visit and be able to apply the same principles to your own business and brand. You have your group to brainstorm with, get insight from, and see things from *their* perspective, which always leads to better learning. Plus, you get to have a blast while doing it.

**Business should be fun, and play is an integral part of learning that we neglect.**

So this immersive mastermind definitely makes time for play. But also dives deep and gets the work done, *don't you worry.* <wink>

### TO GIVE YOU A TASTE OF HOW THIS IMMERSIVE MASTERMIND IS SET-UP, HERE'S WHO IT'S FOR AND HOW IT'S BEEN PUT TOGETHER:

The mastermind is for driven, supportive, and inspiring creative women who are ready to push past their limiting beliefs, embrace their true self, upgrade their mindset, and take their business/brand to the next level.

- Each group is very small —five people maximum. This is unlike other big retreat style Masterminds (10 or even 20+ people) for the sole purpose that we get much deeper in our connection to each other, to ourselves, and to our businesses.
- Each group is made up of differing businesses, but at similar levels (this is important, as it helps us get out of our own “niche bubble” and learn from differing perspectives).
- You can only join this Mastermind via an application process. This helps gather like groups of women and sets the tone for each group.
- The only requirement is that you be open and accepting of differing opinions. You're there to help one another grow and you must be willing to hold a safe space for others to process at their pace and give what you can for the betterment of the group and each individual.

Between the magical, immersive location, the incredibly beautiful home and the three months of connection before and after, you are bound to feel like you've found a home base.

These women become your “home.” They become your tribe, your people, your sisters.

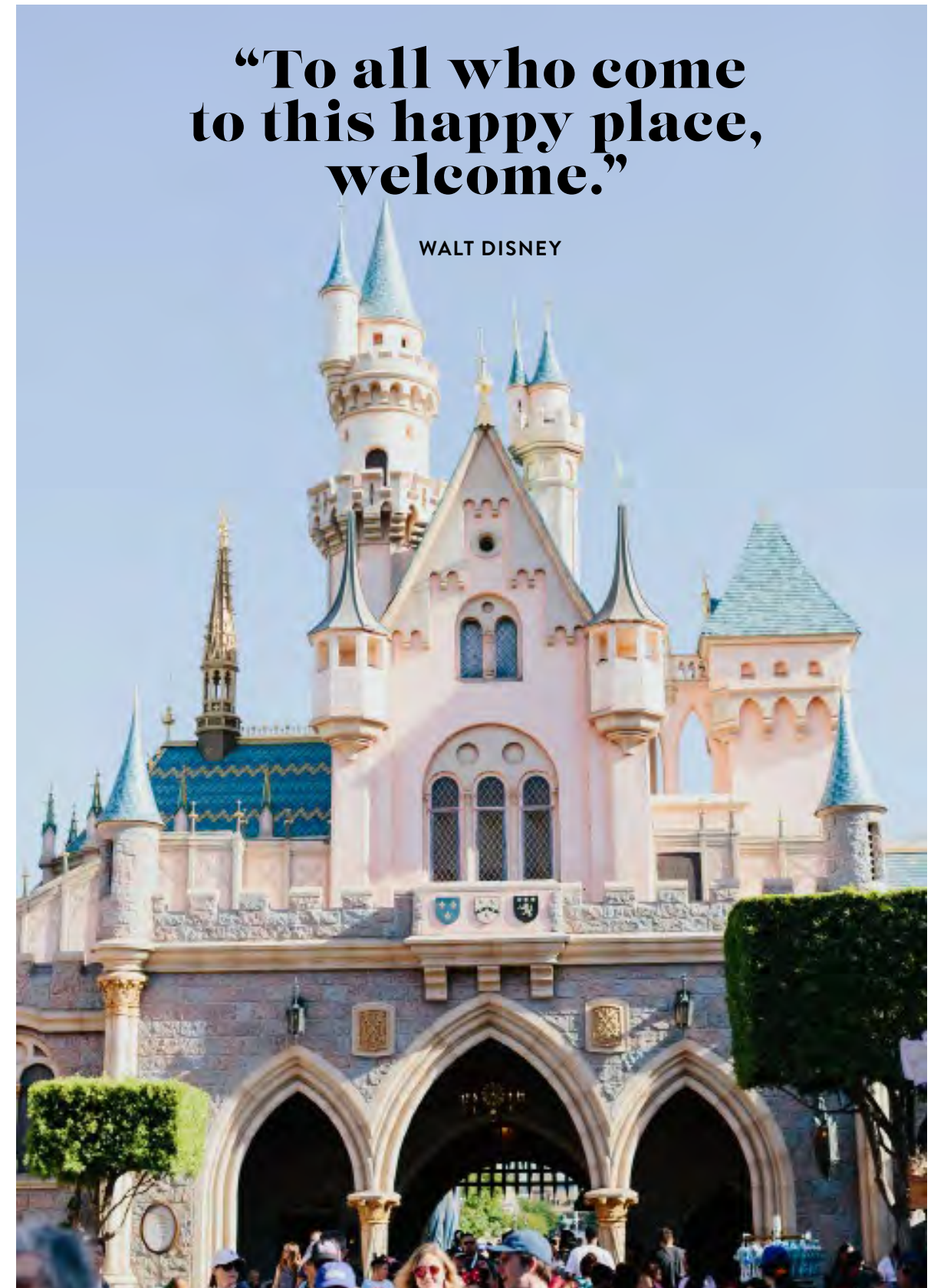
We're not meant to walk in our businesses alone, which is another reason why the word “immersive” is so important. In this immersive mastermind, you become immersed in love and community. You have a place to belong.

*Brianne is a Life & Business Guidance Coach for female entrepreneurs, Speaker and the host of the Brave Fear Podcast.*



Whether it's this one or another, an immersive mastermind is a great place to uplevel yourself and your business.

To get more information about or apply for the Brightly Immersive Mastermind, go to [www.brightlyandco.com](http://www.brightlyandco.com). [🔗](#)







# Girl Trip

WWW.GIRLTRIP.CO / @THATGIRLTRIP

Girl Trip is an expression of who we are. The desire was to create a space for others to experience the power and healing from community. The women on the Girl Trip team have a passion for hospitality and each serve according to their gifts - collaborating in creating tablescapes, floral arrangements, seasonal food, paper goods, photographs, and video for women on these trips. For four days we respite, following a very minimal schedule.

It's a beautiful thing to watch how women come together. In between meals, some remain in their pajamas until the afternoon, sipping on coffee and conversing with others. You'll see women having quiet time, taking afternoon naps, playing a game with one another, or enjoying the outdoors. A splash of creativity is incorporated through a workshop to learn a new skill and be inspired by art. In the evenings we share and listen.

Every woman who attends Girl Trip is completely unique and comes for different reasons - you may want to self-care, to spend time away from your kids and be refueled, you might feel lonely and seek connection with others, deepen your relationship with the God, or simply want to have fun in a dry season. Whatever the purpose, whoever you are, you are welcomed with open arms at Girl Trip.

Taking advantage of the fall season, this recent trip cozied up in a Portland home. Twelve women gathered around a charcuterie-filled table and began to open their hearts to one another. You'd think it would take time since most of them were strangers, but the walls came down and they glided into safety and sisterhood so easily.

The next few days together were spent eating seasonal inspired dishes like warm, pumpkin walnut loaves, cinnamon soaked pears, and butternut squash carbonara. One creative afternoon, Old City Mailroom taught the art of calligraphy. Then, squished comfortably in a circle on the floor, they listened to each other release her story - her praise, hopes, dreams, fears, and doubt. When we speak out loud from our hearts, no matter how pretty or messy, light can enter in. Girl Trip cultivates vulnerability and from it flows truth. Girl Trip holds so many sweet little moments to share and cherish.

Girl Trip is a retreat where women gather to rest, create, and grow in relationship with God. They gather because they want to practice the way of Jesus and do what He did. By example, He taught us how to live in communion with one another, to share all that we have - whether it's a warm bed or an encouraging note and to love fully. [🔗](#)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MADELINE METCALF

















# Haven Conference

WWW.HAVENCONFERENCE.COM / @HAVENCONFERENCE

Since its founding, the engaging Haven Conference has had a mission: to empower the creative DIY Design & Lifestyle Influencer community with knowledge, confidence, connections, and inspiration.

In the world of DIYers, gone are the days where we budget and wait for someone else to do what we can do ourselves. We are daydreamers. We are visionaries. We are frugal. We see something done, and we ponder how we can do it for less. We want something done, and we ponder the tools we need to make it happen. We acquire the tools, and we teach others how they can do it too! Does this sound like you?

Then haven mavens are your people! the haven conference is a place to celebrate our diy spirit, improve our skills, and improve our blogs!

It is where we gather together to share, learn, and inspire. it is where we mingle with sponsors, try new products, learn new skills, and take some risks. most importantly, the haven conference is a place for community. there is always time set aside just to mingle and share our skills and our stories.

The Diy/Home Blogging Niche Is Special, And We Encourage You To Form Connections With Those In It! You Are Guaranteed To Walk Away From Haven Refreshed And Inspired.

Haven originated in the creative mind of Beth Hunter (Home Stories A to Z). After pondering the idea for a time, Beth approached several potential team members about joining her to produce Haven, but she was met with hesitance on the part of the others to jump in and go for it. Not to be dissuaded, however, Beth tucked the idea into the back of her mind. It was not until some time later that Beth and several cohorts, including Rhoda Vickers (Southern Hospitality), met at a large blogger conference and talked about how fun it would be to produce and host a yearly DIY design niche blogger's conference.

In the following weeks, Rhoda met Kristin Stockdale (Stockdale Design), Haven's event coordinator and sponsor liaison. Their meeting was like magic—after chatting for hours, they enjoyed brainstorming about how to logistically curate a specialty conference. It

was evident that God's hand was at work in bringing the Haven team together: Beth, Rhoda, Kristin, & the additional five co-founders: Kate Riley (Centsational Girl), Mariann Parsons (Miss Mustard Seed), Sarah (Thrifty Decor Chick), Chris Carey (Just A Girl), and Traci Hutcherson (Beneath My Heart). Excitedly, the group began planning right away, and a friend, Layla Palmer (The Lettered Cottage), assisted with logo creation and name selection. Originating in 2012, the first Haven conference consisted of a lot of love from both friends and family, as the budget was on a shoestring. That is the essence of Haven, DIYers creating beauty on a dime!

Without its loyal sponsors, Haven absolutely could not exist. The Haven sponsors steal the show in spoiling the #HAVENmavens (Haven attendees). Intricate and beautifully designed booths and displays are installed, and attendees are offered not only support, but also fun, practical swag. Having full faith in the Haven concept and a strong belief in the power of social influencing in the marketplace, The Home Depot has been the headliner sponsor. Joined by Ryobi, RustOleum, FrogTape, and many more. The Home Depot has transformed lives of Haven Mavens by the relationships initiated and built at Haven.

Haven has been attracting many of the brightest DIY design and lifestyle influencers for over seven years. During this time Haven has been encouraging participants to try new products, and has propelled attendees out of their comfort zones into becoming more successful business owners. Haven is known as a safe place for all who seek design inspiration and growth.

The conference is like going to a dream work conference, meeting mentors and idols, filling up the inspiration tanks and coming back ready to implement all of the new information into a reality.

Over the years, with various personal/business opportunities presenting themselves, the initial Haven team has shifted a bit. With the vision of the original co-founders, Stockdale Design is fully committed to continuing the #HavenHustle by:

- encouraging attendees to use those power tools!
- empowering participants with intentional influencer business sessions
- creating fun events for networking and connection with fellow Haven Mavens
- providing a year-round source of support for Haven Mavens



Believing in the power of collaboration, generosity and loving this community, Kristin of Stockdale Design is thrilled to continue Haven. She, along with her team, aims to change lives by inspiring individuals to pursue passions in the areas of Design, DIY, and Lifestyle.

Kristin is thrilled to continue Haven with exceptional sessions our attendees have come to expect, along with several enhancements. The communication will improve with the re-launch of the Haven blog and monthly newsletters. The Haven Conference line up will contain two tracks for both the seasoned influencer as well as the novice. There are also several other surprises up their sleeves to share as they evolve. The intention is to support #HAVENmavens with intentional information and tools to meet their goals and aspirations.

Some of the big plans include curating smaller retreats that focus on an educational theme while celebrating our DIY spirit and exploring new towns together. They also are aiming to create year-round learning webinars to keep the Haven wheels in motion and incorporating exciting collaborations between you and potential opportunities. 🔄





# Creatives Meet Business Experience

WWW.CMBXP.COM / @CREATEMEETBIZ



Before there was CMBXP, there was Creatives Meet Business (CMB). It started with small group, roundtable events, bringing together creatives from different backgrounds to learn from each other and from industry experts on all kinds of topics - from taxes and accounting to goal planning to social media. It then moved into the podcasting scene to help share the insights from the events with a wider audience. The Creatives Meet Business Podcast packs tons of information into the just 15 or so minute episodes. It's recommended to have a pen or pencil handy when you listen.

With CMB founder Ashland Viscosi seasoned in the production of events, conferences, and festivals, it only made sense to move CMB into a new realm: the Creative Meets Business Experience (CMBXP).

The Creatives Meet Business Experience, or CMBXP for short, is an opportunity to cultivate your future. Through three days of workshops on just about any topic you can imagine - from hand lettering to developing your business budget - along with nightly themed happy hours, the opportunities to create a better future for yourself are limitless. Stepping into entrepreneurship and learning that it's you who is wearing all the hats can be incredibly intimidating, frightening, isolating, insert ALL scary adjectives here! CMBXP helps attendees learn how to juggle the hats of entrepreneurship and grow and develop a meaningful community of peers.

The event gathers nearly 200 artists, creatives, entrepreneurs and small business owners in various venues in Austin, Texas with the purpose of creating a better future for themselves. Badgeholders attend workshops across four programming tracks (artistry, business, marketing, and storytelling) that most align with what they are looking to learn or how they wanted to grow.

The most magical part of the experience is best said by a CMBXP attendee: "What is so inspiring is the community and camaraderie that emerges between complete strangers over the course of three (very full) days. There is conversation and sharing happening in every spare moment and we all share in the excitement of being a part of this Experience. CMBXP feels more like a 'camp' than a conference."

At the recent conference, attendees celebrated the close of the experience the only way best way founder Ashland Viscosi knows how - with a three-course brunch from Austin-based dining club, The Elephant Table. Even the flowers in the centerpieces were edible! Brunch is an annual tradition to close out CMBXP, because, honestly, who doesn't love brunch?!

Our futures are largely defined by the relationships we create, and CMBXP helps attendees become and feel connected and create meaningful relationships. ☺

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASHLEE NEWMAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND DAVID BRENDAN HALL PHOTOGRAPHY





PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID BRENDAN HALL PHOTOGRAPHY



# Belong Market Guide

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[www.rootpretty.com](http://www.rootpretty.com)



Ombre Cement Planter / \$14  
[www.kailochic.com](http://www.kailochic.com)

Buffalo Plaid Fringed Throw / \$129  
[www.schoolhouse.com](http://www.schoolhouse.com)



Rad Bromeliad Removeable  
Wallpaper / from \$7  
[www.samanthasantana.co](http://www.samanthasantana.co)



Meredith's Jars of Joy / \$20  
[www.meredithsjarsofjoy.com](http://www.meredithsjarsofjoy.com)



Amethyst Lavender Blue Butterfly Bath  
& Shower Bomb / \$12  
[www.didwithcazoshay.com/shop](http://www.didwithcazoshay.com/shop)

Pinboard in Minimalist Grid / from \$52  
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Desert Star Dhurie in Black  
/ from \$189  
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Modern Script Fountain Pens & Journal / \$12.99  
[www.ooly.com](http://www.ooly.com)



acrylic styling blocks / \$38 for 12 blocks  
[www.sourcedco.com](http://www.sourcedco.com)

Monotask! Letterpress Print / \$5  
[www.thomas-printers.com](http://www.thomas-printers.com)



Custom Rubber Stamps / \$16.95 and up  
[www.helloworldpaperco.com](http://www.helloworldpaperco.com)



Coffee-Themed Notepad / \$10.50  
[www.etsy.com/shop/NzalambaArtWorks](http://www.etsy.com/shop/NzalambaArtWorks)

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The Starlight Journal: An Illustrated Bullet Journal for Organization + Inspiration / \$60  
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# Belong Market Guide



Silk Bracelet / from \$31  
[www.silkphilosophy.com](http://www.silkphilosophy.com)



Fearless Graphic T-Shirt / \$24.95  
[www.mycentsofstyle.com](http://www.mycentsofstyle.com)

## about the artist

Frisky Britches / \$14/month  
[www.shopfriskybritches.com](http://www.shopfriskybritches.com)



The Sophie / \$119  
[www.evystree.com](http://www.evystree.com)

“Las Paletas Mameys”  
Backpack / \$100  
[www.taylorleepaints.com/backpacks](http://www.taylorleepaints.com/backpacks)



Casey Kleeb

Casey Kleeb is a full-time graphic designer working at an architecture firm in downtown Fort Worth (Cowtown!), Texas. She lives on the “hip” side of town with her husband Nick, kitty, and dog Kaskae. Hand-lettering has been her side-hustle since Typography class at University of Alaska and she does it whenever she can, both for personal art as well as freelance.

You can find Casey out on a patio laughing with friends and family, with a glass of wine and good cheese at arm’s length. Follow Casey—probably talking about The Great British Bake-Off or dancing to the latest Drake—on Instagram, @caseykleebs.

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