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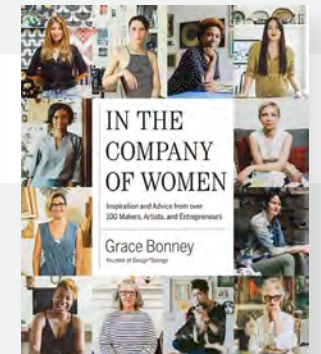
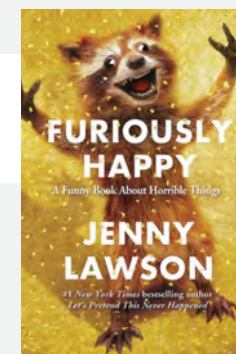
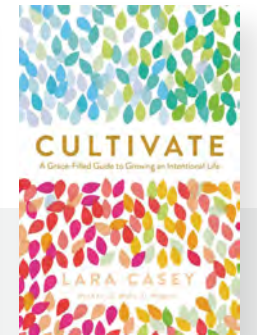
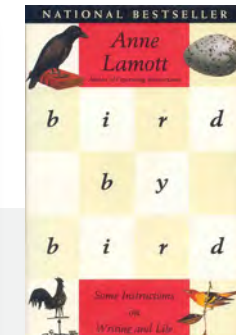
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PHOTOGRAPH BY JON TYSON

live your passion

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

I sat on my couch. Feet up on the ottoman. Fuzzy blanket across my legs, coffee mug wedged in next to me, and my laptop perched on my lap. With a satisfied smile on my face, and maybe a twinge of fear in my gut, I proudly clicked “publish.”

Then I watched and waited. And again the next morning. Then I snuck a peak during my lunch break at work. By the time I was back on the couch again the following evening, I was dumbfounded. Apparently, there was more to the blogging game than just posting from your soul. No one--and I mean NO ONE--read what I had to say.

I felt exposed and raw--and by this point, very very alone. Where were my people? Did I not belong in this online world?

My heart hurt. I felt so empty and sad. I hoped that other women were not feeling the same way. But they were. I asked. And they were just like me--trying to find their people, trying to find their place in this inert, massiveness of the internet.

Heart. The core. The foundation. The “why” for us as creatives and entrepreneurs. That’s the underlying theme of this issue.

My heart is for Belong to be a light in a place where so often we feel alone, less than, under-equipped and hopeless. I hope Belong is a bright spot where you can bask in the knowledge that you matter and that you have a place. (Hence the hashtag #youbelong.)

Do I do this perfectly? No. Am I stumbling through navigating this whole female creative entrepreneur gig? Yes. But at the core, I desperately want you to feel more connected, encouraged, and inspired in your mission to live out your passion--whatever it may be.

C.S. Lewis famously *never* said, “We read to know we are not alone.” He should have. I hope you read Belong and I hope you know you are not alone.

My heart is that you feel that you belong. Because you do. Right here.



Brooke Saxon-Spencer
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Brooke Saxon-Spencer

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BELONG MAGAZINE / ISSUE NINE

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Permission to Be Yourself



by **Brianne Dosier**

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HEADSHOT BY MCKENNA RACHELLE PHOTOGRAPHY

“Being yourself is an act of giving.”

It almost sounds silly to read: permission to be yourself...

Of course you have permission to be yourself! Duh. (Yeah, I'm bringing duh back, like JT brought sexy.)

When I first wrote this line, I questioned myself. How will this line come across? Will someone think I'm rude for saying it? Does this convey what I'm trying to say?

But the truth is... we often don't give ourselves permission to be who we are.

For a long time, I didn't. (*A really long time.*)

I beat myself up for the things I loved to do, listen to, and experience. I used to be ashamed of the thoughts in my head. I would condemn myself for not being able to do something as well as someone else. I hid behind a lot of comparison, a lot of pretense, and a lot of "shoulds." But more on this in a second.

Last year I had a client, and good friend of mine, turn to me after our brand strategy meeting and say, "Thank you for giving me permission to be myself."

These words have never left me.

She wasn't the first client to say this to me—she was the fourth, and now there have been six. It never gets old to be told this, but it never ceases to stun me, either.

No, we don't need someone to give us permission to be ourselves; we have the permission already...but sometimes it takes someone, some event, or some higher calling to make us realize that we do have permission to be ourselves.

Now back to my story: I was always extremely afraid to show who I really was. I had a few key people in my life who tried to bring me down, tell me my thoughts weren't worth much, and that I needed to be more like everyone else. (*Whatever that even means.*) So I didn't feel permission to be myself—quite the opposite actually. I was afraid that when I showed who I really was, people would reject me.

I used to feel like I "should" present myself in a certain way. This was often based on what the "cool" kids liked (influencers, celebrities, etc.), what others said was appropriate or cool, or what the latest trends were. For example, everyone is obsessed with palm leaves right now, and I "should" like them too...but I don't. And that's okay!

If you've been in this boat, or even feel this way now, you are not alone, my friend...but you do, in fact, have permission to be yourself.

If you're struggling to know where to start, start with being really honest with yourself on what you like and what you don't like. Take a moment to think through and write down your values. What do you cherish the most? What fires you up? What gets top priority in your life? When you get really honest with yourself about what matters and what doesn't, it helps build your confidence to start speaking your truth out more boldly.

After you get clear on your core values, it's really important to take a moment and evaluate where in your life you do things just because you "should." For example, I was having this conversation with a friend and client the other day and I asked her what she was working on. She said, "Well I know I should..." <alert, alert>. I let her finish her sentence and then immediately challenged the thought by asking her why she felt she "should" be doing that thing.

If you have areas in your life that you feel like you "should" be doing, check that thought immediately and ask yourself why? Ask yourself, is this something that aligns with my values? Do I WANT to be doing this? Why do I think I should?

I didn't coin this phrase, but I use it often, "*Stop shoulding on yourself.*" Do, like, believe, embrace, and act on things you desire to—not just because you "should." "Should" is never a good reason to start something, but it's often the culprit behind *not* embracing our true selves.

Here's what happened when I stopped "shoulding" and gave myself permission to be me. I got braver. I embraced vulnerability and saw a huge return on that investment. I gained new friends and confidence. I felt better and more alive. I felt joyful and free. I saw my business grow and my relationships grow stronger. And my favorite part... <drum roll please> I saw that I was giving back to my community, my clients, my friends, my colleagues, my audience, etc... I was giving others the courage to be themselves too! Every time I step out and confidently own who I am as a person, I encourage and empower others to do the same.

Being yourself is an act of giving.

If you needed to hear it today: you have permission to be yourself.

Embrace who you are and unapologetically share it with others. 🌸

Brianne Dosier is a business and brand coach at Brightly & Co.

10 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU

Re-Discover Your Why

by **Ashley Beaudin**

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Knowing our *why* both grounds us and gives us drive for what we do. When we know it, we're not only able to stay in alignment with our personal vision, but we're also able to cultivate resilience.

Resilience is one of the most powerful things that we can cultivate as entrepreneurs and creatives, because it is what will keep us going through the bad days, the rejection letters, and the failure. It keeps us rooted in times where we could so easily be swayed by a million different ideas.

Beyond that, the more connected we stay to our *why*, the easier it is to focus on our work and stay in our lane. It gives us an energy and authority in our work because it comes from a deeper place. It comes from within.

One of the most incredible ways I have found for myself personally and for my clients in rediscovering our *why* is to ask ourselves questions. And the key is to ask yourself questions—and actually wait for the answer. Don't be afraid of that awkward silence with yourself, but wait for the answer to rise in your heart.

Take these questions and sit yourself somewhere where you can be alone for even just a few minutes—whether that be on your bed, in your closet, at the beach, or in your car. Grab one of these questions and ask it to yourself. Say the answer, journal it out, paint it, tell a friend—do whatever it takes to just get it outside of you.

And as you do, you'll experience clarity and a renewed connection with that powerful *why* of yours.

1. Why did you start? What was the moment that led you to simply begin?

2. If you could leave the world with one message, what would it be?

3. Who do you want to have the biggest impact on?

4. How do you want to change the lives of those people?

5. When you fail, what do you want to tell yourself to keep going?

6. What beliefs about people and the world drive you to do your work?

7. How do you make the world better by being in it?

8. What points of your story have convinced you that your work matters?

9. If you could see yourself in fifty years, what kind of legacy have you created?

10. What does success mean to you? How does your work fit into that?

Staying connected to your *why* is not about perfection. It is simply about returning.

Once you feel more connected to your *why* again, or maybe even for the first time, there are many ways that you can continue to stay connected and live out that *why* in your blog, creativity, or business. And so, I am also going to give you three tips for that. You ready?

Let's go there.

KEEP THAT HEART HEALTHY.

As we all know, life and business can be full of some crazy challenging situations. So, do whatever you can to keep your heart healthy by actually processing things as they happen, working through any pain, forgiving, letting go, and staying open and brave.

SPEAK YOUR CORE MESSAGE.

Your *why* is powerfully connected to your message. Know what your message is in your business. Know why you're telling that message. Know why it could change everything for someone. And speak it out on social media, in person, and in your business more than feels comfortable.

CREATE A PLAN FOR THE HARD DAYS.

Hard days happen. They don't have to keep you still or small. Instead, make a plan for what you will do when those hard days come around. What will you tell yourself? How will you take care of yourself? Who will you reach out to? Don't let the difficult days disconnect you from your *why*, but have a plan, so you can easily keep going.

Here's the thing, new friend. Your *why* is important. Your *why* is power in your business. It will be the thing that empowers you to keep on going and to focus on the work that really matters for you.

And that's where your greatest impact begins. 🌀

Ashley Beaudin is an inspirational speaker, encourager to women on a mission and the visionary of #theimperfectboss.

Creating a Homepage with Heart



by Jess Collins

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It's true what they say—that “home is where the heart is”—but you don't have to explore the entirety of a home to get a feel for a person's style and taste. You can sense it the moment you step onto their front porch. The same is true when it comes to the design and wording of your website—your homepage gives a striking snapshot into your brand, and it essentially showcases its essence.

Many people believe you have to follow a certain formula to get a homepage looking and sounding right. But often, creating content that is all about structure or SEO will mean you take away from what actually makes you interesting and from what makes you stand out. In house terms, it's the equivalent of ten houses next to each other that are all furnished exactly the same. They may look pretty, but where is the personality? The passion? The person behind them?

I believe that the importance of a good homepage is not about SEO, sounding bigger, or cramming the keywords in so that you're found faster. Because you may be found faster, but you won't sound like you, and the truth is, it's your 'you-ness' that sets you apart.

One of the traditional marketing models that people use when writing copy is called AIDA. It asks, how can I get their **attention**? Get them **interested**? How can I encourage **desire**? How can I make them take **action**?

Personally, I blame the AIDA model for half of the copywriting I read—writing that sounds like every sales cliché you've ever seen all in one small space on a homepage. ‘Buy now, don't miss out! Are you tired of feeling X? Would you like to feel Y? We have the solution!’ This copy feels as outdated to me as the AIDA model itself.

The other half I blame on the revolt against this type of writing—as time has gone on, people and companies have strived to be softer in their sales approach.

However, this often means they try to tell their entire story in such a small space, never really getting to any point, and trying so hard not to sell that I'm not entirely sure what they even offer at the end of reading it.

The difference between writing and copywriting is that copywriting is *writing to sell*. Now, that doesn't have to mean selling like a second-hand car salesman, but it does mean being clear about what you offer and why someone would purchase from you. I created my own model to rival AIDA, called ATIRA to use when writing your website copy. Here's how it looks:

AUTHENTICITY. The number one rule when it comes to copywriting is to be authentic. People can see through the false sales driven tones and the impressive statements. Don't try to impress them, tell them the truth of who you are.

TRUST. Build trust with your audience. This can be difficult to do via a website alone but understand that you're not here to simply make a sale. You can build a relationship with your prospective client. They may wish to sign up to receive your emails, to follow you on Instagram or to read some of your blog posts. It's not so much about an instant sale but a relationship that could result in more in the future.

INTEREST. Genuine interest comes from getting to know you—not from a quick sales message on your website, but from getting to know you on a deeper, more authentic level. That is why it comes second to trust.

RELATIONSHIP. Building a relationship is key with your customers, allowing them to converse with you and learn from you, and not just making a quick buck.

ACTION. Only once a relationship is established does action occur, once there's an element of trust and understanding.

Atira is also the name of a Native American Earth Goddess which I love. Her earthly manifestation is corn, and I believe that by following this model you are sowing the seeds for a better future with stronger client relationships. The importance of the ‘know, like and trust’ factor is major in modern marketing.

To create a homepage with heart, write the truth. You may be a college dropout who has gone on to achieve great things—don't gloss over why you dropped out of college! That grit in your story might be just the thing that your customer connects with. Don't try to sound a certain way—write as you. No six figure claims, no trying to sound like the next (insert current online sensation), just stripped back and honest.

Don't try to say it all. One of the biggest mistakes is trying to say as much as you can on your home page. This should be the sales blurb to who you are and what you offer—like the back of a book getting you interested in the story, not your life story. Think of it as a breadcrumb trail to work with you, not a whole loaf of bread dumped on their face!

Lastly, don't be afraid to sell. People (especially female entrepreneurs) often don't want to appear pushy or salesy so very often sell nothing at all, it almost feels as if they are apologizing rather than standing in their strength. But your homepage is quite literally YOUR home. If people wish to enter it, it's your space to say as you choose. I believe in selling with soul; as long as it's authentic and gimmick-free, sell away! You can be a heart-centered, entrepreneurial creative but still show off what makes you special and sets you apart.

The most important thing is simply to be you—write from the heart. If you could have a cup of coffee with your ideal client, what would you say to them face to face? How would you sound? What would you want them to know at the end of the chat? Then distill that and put it into your copy so that it's personal, warm, honest, candid, and spoken from the heart.

Finally, write with courage. After all, as Brene Brown says, the root of the word courage is *cor*—the Latin word for heart. Courage originally meant “to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart.”

So go on, show yourself.

I would love to see your #HomepageWithHeart so please tag me on Instagram (@theferalwriter) to show off your work! 🍷

Jess Collins is a writer who creates courageous content for authentic brands.



The Art of Selling with Heart



by **Carolyn Keating**

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When it comes to selling, even the most confident and self-assured can quickly find themselves at a crossroads when it comes time to sell their products or services. Nobody wants to come across like the stereotypical pushy, sleazy salesperson that's portrayed in almost every bad car commercial and made-for-TV movie we've ever seen.

We all know that growing our sales is what is going to keep our big business dreams alive. But how, when so many of us cringe at the thought of selling, do we find a way to make those sales in a way that feels authentic and good to us?

It's completely ok if selling doesn't come naturally to you or you find it seriously scary—I've been there too! I know the butterflies-in-your-stomach feeling that comes when you sit across from a buyer and try to sell them a product you love. (*Will they like my products? Will they like me? Will I seem too desperate or pushy?*) I know that feeling of pure excitement and elation of making the sale and the crushing disappointment when someone decides to pass.

The greatest compliment I received during my sales career was that I was not a 'salesy' salesperson. Hearing those words was something I'll never forget, because it meant I was selling in a way that not only felt good to me, but also to my customer. It was my "AHA!" moment, and I realized that I had finally found my formula for Heart-Centered Sales.

Selling with heart means finding the balance between people and profit. It means that you're selling in a way that feels natural, organic, and good to you. When you focus on the customer and their business needs first, you just *feel* better! I'm sharing 5 of my favorite strategies so you too can grow your business through heart-centered sales.

TALK TO YOUR BUYERS AS YOU WOULD

A GOOD FRIEND: While it can be super intimidating to sit across from a buyer, it's important to keep in mind that they are people with good days and bad, just like you and me. Don't be afraid to get a little personal, tell a joke or share a funny story and ask questions to learn about them as people. While this is business, it's so important to let your personality shine through. I'm a big believer that it's the nonbusiness moments that ultimately help forge a deeper connection and set the foundation for heart-centered sales.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHEL ROUHANA OF HAUTE STOCK

PRACTICE YOUR PITCH: By planning your talking points in advance and actually saying them out loud, you'll not only feel more prepared, but the conversation begins to feel much more natural. (I can't tell you how many times I've had full-on conversations with myself or my dog in preparation for a selling appointment!) Oftentimes, when we think of a sales pitch, we envision the full-on presentation that comes at the end of a webinar, event, or from the salesperson in a store. You know it's coming and you sort of dread it. The thing is, your pitch doesn't have to be a hard sell! When your pitch is heart-centered, it doesn't sound much like a pitch at all, because you are letting the conversation be your guide. While you are talking about what is going on in their business and learning about what is or isn't working, you'll naturally get to a place where you can make suggestions and recommendations. When this happens, you are setting yourself up to make the sale simply because your products fill a void, meet a need, or offer a solution to a problem that your customer has already mentioned. It allows you to approach the sale from a place of offering support or a solution for their business, rather than trying to force a sale.

ASK FOR THE SALE IN YOUR OWN WAY:

Oftentimes when we craft our sales pitch, we leave out this very important (and very uncomfortable) part. While some people will gladly tell you when they are ready to place an order, others need some help getting there. Asking someone to place an order feels weird and unnatural, which is why we tend to not do it. With heart-centered selling, you'll develop a creative way to ask, in a way that feels organic to the conversation and good to you - not forced or pushy. A few of my favorites include:

"So, what do you say we write this up?"

"I'm so excited to hear you love the (name or print) collection! Would you be interested in trying a few pieces in your store?"

When you find a way to ask for the sale that feels right for you, the ask won't come across as pushy and your customer will walk away from the conversation feeling good about their interaction with you.

TELL THEM WHAT NOT TO BUY: Buyers and customers can tell when you're just trying to make the sale versus when you're truly invested in their business. One of my favorite heart-centered sales strategies is to tell your customer what NOT to buy. I love it because this shows your customer that you're in the relationship with them for the long haul. Yes, doing this may result in a smaller order from time to time, but the long-term payoff of gaining their trust and establishing a partnership is well worth it.

If your customer eyeing an item and you know for a fact that over the counter sales have been poor, tell them, and point them in a different direction. Sometimes you'll find that even when you provide a recommendation your buyer or customer might not take your advice, which is totally okay! If they order the item anyway and it doesn't perform to their expectations, they won't hold it against you, and they will be much more likely to listen to your suggestion next time.

If you are a service-based business and a potential client is considering a package that is high in price but not necessarily the best fit, do the right thing and guide them to the option that is the best fit for their needs. As a customer, I always appreciate a genuine recommendation and can always tell when someone is simply after my money.

MAKE THE PURCHASING PROCESS

EASY What happens after a customer has committed to the sale will set the tone for your future together. How easy are you making the next steps for them? Is your communication and follow-up strategy clear and consistent? Do you ship your products on time? Amazing customer service really boils down to one thing, how you made them feel during their interaction with you, your products and your business. Develop your company's core values around putting the customer first, and you're setting your biz up for success!

I really believe that when you let your heart guide your sales efforts, you will elevate your customer's experience and see a shift in how they perceive your brand and products. Happy selling! 🍷

Carolyn Keating is the founder and product-based biz consultant at Wholesale For Creatives.

Pitch Perfect



by **Stacey Ferguson**

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Chances are, if you're a creative, you've got some amazing ideas brewing for hosting an event. Perhaps you're already hosting events (if so, hooray!) and you'd like to add to the experience by working with event sponsors. Whether you're simply exploring the concept, or whether you're ready to dive in headfirst, when it comes to sponsorships, there are some important elements that you must consider. Here goes!

DETERMINE YOUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

Understand that sponsors are in business to make money. To this end, they are eager to spend their marketing dollars where they feel it will bring them the greatest return on their investment. In order to make sure that your event fits within a potential sponsor's marketing plan, you must be able to show them that sponsoring your event will bring them value.

Here's the good news: you absolutely have a unique value proposition—all you have to do is clarify it and find the best way to present it. Consider this quick fill-in-the-blanks tip:

My event is all about _____.
I do things differently! If you're into _____
and _____,
then my event is the only place you can get it.

Ta-da! Once you're able to complete that paragraph, you're in business. Now, what should go into those pesky blanks anyway? Consider the purpose of your event for the first sentence. Why are you hosting it? What is your ultimate mission? For the next sentence, it would make a lot of sense to include details about who is going to be in attendance at your event; after all, as fabulous as you are, sponsors are interested in your audience--so the more details you can offer about them, the better.

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT SPONSORS (AND THE RIGHT CONTACT!)

Let's say you're 100% clear on your unique value proposition and you're raring to go--how do you know which potential sponsors to reach out to?

Here's a tip that will save you a ton of time and energy and will allow you to get down to business: figure out which brands share your target audience--those are the brands that are most likely to become a sponsor partner.

For example, if your blog, business, or event caters to millennial women who live on the East Coast and who are interested in DIY, crafts and décor, then make it your business to find out which brands are looking to market to that very demographic. It will make for an easier pitch on your end. The more synergies you can identify between your audience and that of a potential sponsor, the better. Remember, they're looking to decide where to spend their marketing dollars, and you want to make that decision as easy as possible.

This may require that you do some research finding out as much as possible about your readers, clients, attendees. You can do this in the form of surveys, focus groups, and the like. If you can gather this data and create a one-sheet or a media kit, then you're ahead of the game. If a potential partner asks you for demographic data (and they will) you have something professional and researched to present that will set you apart from the rest.

Now, once you've made your list of brands that share your target audience, you'll want to reach out to them. But WHO is the right point of contact? It can be so overwhelming and you can feel like you're going down a rabbit hole. Here are some very clear titles for you to look out for:

- (E)VP, Marketing
- (E)VP, Communications
- Accounts Manager
- Marketing Manager
- Brand Manager

Plug these titles in, along with the brand name, on LinkedIn and scour the results. You'll be surprised at how easy they are to find. Tried this approach and struck out? Head over to the Press or Media page on the brand's website. Look for a contact name on a press release or media advisory. That person can almost certainly point you in the right direction.

Stacey Ferguson is the co-founder and chief curator for Be Blogalicious.

How to Pitch and What to Present:

Alright! You've got your unique value proposition, you're clear on who your audience is AND you've determined the brands that share that audience. What's more, you've identified the right contacts at the brand--all that's left to do is to reach out. But how?

START WITH EMAIL. Craft a professional, polite and to-the-point email sharing a few sentences about who you are and how you can provide value. In the email, show the brand that you have done your research on them by including some key points as to how your brands would complement one another. Close by asking for a phone call as well as including your media kit or link to your event page where they can learn more. Be sure to leave your contact phone number, and by all means, make sure that you are emailing from an email address @yourdomain.com.

DO FOLLOW UP. Just imagine how busy these brand managers are and how much email they are fielding. Give them a week or two and send a follow up. Ask if there is any additional information that you can provide that would be helpful. Offer a valuable tidbit about your event (perhaps a video recap) or about your audience (perhaps an article discussing how influential your audience demographic is). Ask again for a call or meeting if they are local. Rinse and repeat. But know the line between being persistent and being pesky.

One more thing to remember: like most things in business, sponsorships are largely relationship based. The brand must know, like and trust you in order to invest in your event. The more you can do to increase your credibility, the better. Evidence of experience, testimonials, photos and media coverage are all elements that can assist in boosting your credibility. Finally, get out there and network! Influencer events, PR agency conferences, and blog conferences are all great places to connect with brands. Grab your business cards and get to work! ☺



PHOTOGRAPHY BY AVNER ROAD

The Case for Branding from the Soul



by Lilah Higgins

WWW.THEHIGGINSCREATIVE.COM / @THEHIGGINSCREATIVE

The message blinked at me early, my eyes still sore from deep sleep. It was a tag via Trello from a recent client with a simple line in all caps “@thehigginscreative - I’M OBSESSED.” I laid my head back on the pillow, relishing in the moment of satisfaction, enjoying the soul-connection my design work had created.

This type of reaction is, without sounding too proud, a common one from my clients. Often, they will give me feedback in tears or shouts of glee and multiple emojis because what they see in my work is that someone (sometimes finally) understood their vision and captured it in an image.

But good branding is two-fold. It must capture emotion in the presenter and evoke emotion in the receiver. This exchange is usually the first step in a wildly successful relationship between company and consumer, provider and client, maker and customer.

But sometimes there’s a disconnect between the two and the result of this disconnect can be spotted in poorly composed branding. A poorly composed brand is usually frenetic, misshapen, and confused about who it’s even talking to. In this case, it’s not only that you have misleading graphics or mismatched colors, it’s that you may have a misled and mismatched vision for your company.

So what is the source of creating an emotionally connected, not to mention effective, brand?

It starts with the core of the movement, the mission, or if you’re service based, it starts with you.

You see, the goal of an effective and holistic brand isn’t only to sell a product, turn a profit, or create an emotional experience, it’s to facilitate what we all need: a soul connection.

If you’re a human, it’s innate in who we are, to want to belong.

At the core of everything we do, we are driven by this need. We want to connect, we want to feel validated, we want to make a mutual bond with another person.

A brand that doesn’t have this at its core is easily passed by, unnoticed, or sometimes even hated.

When we make a purchase or investment, we are doing two things: solving a problem and contributing to our view of ourselves.

Outside of the essentials you need to survive, think of the last thing you bought for fun, or bought just because you wanted it. I bet it makes you feel a particular way: important, loved, beautiful, smart, organized, the list goes on.

That’s because an artist somewhere sat down and decided what they wanted you to feel when you opened that package or used that product or bought that course.

If it didn’t, you probably aren’t enjoying it or savoring it as much as you could if a little more thought had gone into the branding.

Something about the experience of buying that item gave you a sense of purpose and belonging—to a club, in a social status, in effectiveness towards a cause.

We all want to feel that connection, and it should be our goal to create those connections in all of our client and customer relationships—and that should seamlessly bleed into the messaging and visuals of our branding.

My mantra when visually branding a client or a company is, “It’s not brand surgery,” because it’s so easy to make it complicated. It’s easy to overthink color choices and lines in a logo and the way a customer might interpret the typography you settled on.

As with the story of my client at the beginning, she claimed obsession. Something about looking at the colors and logos I put together made her scream, “That’s me!” But it was a simple image with simple lines—what made her so obsessed with it?

You should know, this particular client came to me with little to no idea of what her brand should look like. She knew how she wanted her clients to feel and she knew how she was going to accomplish it, but she didn’t know what visuals would support those ideas.

But in the draft I sent, her immediate reaction was recognition. She felt that soul connection, and it was set. She finally had the visuals to support the ideas in her head and she could put her work out there to find mutual soul connections.

At the risk of sounding too “woo-woo,” branding is composed of feelings much more than it is data and sales

numbers. But the success of a brand is measured in how well its target market connects with it—physically, by making a monetary exchange, and emotionally, which is the thing that keeps them coming back.

An effective brand is one that the company is proud of and the customer trusts.

This is where the art of good branding truly begins to work for you and show a return. Because what’s better than a happy customer? A customer that shouts out your work to the world and comes back for more.

“Good design, when it’s done well, becomes invisible. It’s only when it’s done poorly that we notice it.” – Jared Spool

What happens when you are successfully meshing art and strategy? People stop seeing the visuals and start seeing the message—which in my experience, is far more powerful. Good branding gets out of the way and highlights what drives your company and what makes your clients want more and more of that vision.

Maybe your company is all about giving back or you’re a one-for-one structure. Maybe you stand for professionalism and you want to promote a well-run machine. Maybe you target the underdog or provide a premium experience. Whatever your vision is, without visuals that work and express that vision, no one is going to find those soul connections and turn from observers to consumers and consumers to referrers.

Before you qualify your own endeavor as not needing a grander vision, consider this: with our advanced technology, access to goods, and the competition in the marketplace—people are curating their spending. They’re longing for an experience instead of simple consumption.

My generation wants more from our money. We want to feel important and a part of something larger. We’re soul connection hunters, if you will. And to win souls is no simple feat. There must be a grand design in mind for why the consumer should invest with you instead of a similar company. Your vision and how well you portray it in your branding could make or break that decision.

Bridges must be built from your vision to your buyer—and every step must be strategic, intentional, and as they say, on brand.

When art meets strategy, you’ll be a step closer to facilitating this exchange. Pair art and strategy with consistency and you’ve sown the seed of a stellar brand. Take a look at some of your favorite empires, and you’ll more often than not find a similar concept at the core.

A beautiful brand is nothing if we don’t allow the soul of our vision to show through it. Same with a wonderful vision without the visual legs it needs to reach the right people. It’s diving in (or hiring out) the skill of meshing art and strategy that ultimately cultivates these soul connections, causes a sense of obsession with the hunt, and moves us forward as our companies tread the waters between divine and tangible. 🌸

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISTEN STEINGRABER

Lilah Higgins is co-founder of The Higgins Creative, a brand agency for consultants and coaches who empower women to live their best lives now

Brand Photos 101

WHAT THEY ARE. WHY YOU NEED THEM. HOW TO CREATE THEM.



by **Brit Chandler**

WWW.SOCIALSTRATEGYCO.COM / @SOCIALSTRATEGYCO

Elevating your brand can often feel overwhelming and frustrating. You have so many different channels to manage and keeping each platform looking polished, cohesive, and professional might feel like an uphill battle. But there is one key element that can make or break your brand, on and offline. These magical elements are your brand photos, and they can instantly take your business to the next level.

WHAT ARE BRAND PHOTOS?

Whether your customers are scrolling through your Instagram feed, paging through your product lookbook, or reading your blog, they are constantly coming in contact with your brand photos. What exactly are brand photos? A gallery of quality photos that represent your business' brand, tone, voice and vibe. Most often, they are styled photos that showcase your business by incorporating your different business elements. Brand photos usually highlight your workspace, your products, and/or your artwork.

WHY DO YOU NEED BRAND PHOTOS?

Photos are incredibly important pieces of branding when it comes to first impressions. When a potential customer lands on your Instagram or website for the first time, they will process visual content in 0.25 seconds, which some sources suggest is 60,000x faster than processing text. This means that intentional brand photos will instantly elevate your brand's credibility--but on the contrary, darkly lit images taken on the fly will quickly give off the impression of being a lower end service or product provider. Taking the time to create cohesive brand photos (or hiring a professional) will keep your many business channels consistent and polished. These channels include your website, your social media channels like Instagram and Pinterest, your Etsy Shop, your printed or emailed marketing materials, and so much more!

HOW TO CREATE BRAND PHOTOS:

While I always suggest investing in professional photographs if you have the means to do so, it may be difficult if you are just starting out as a small business.

Taking your own brand photos can be easy if you plan them out strategically. Start by using a color palette. If you had a graphic designer create a brand for you, you will likely already have one. If you don't have one, create your own by choosing 2-4 colors that fit your brand's look and feel.

Pro Tip: Use colors that are often seen in your products, workspace, or even your own wardrobe.

Next, gather props that include physical aspects of your business. These elements can be products, yourself, your desk or workspace/home, ingredients, or the supplies and materials used to make your products.

Pro Tip: Think about what you'll be talking about on social media to get an idea of what to include in your photos.

Once you have everything gathered, plan your photo shoot. Choose a bright day to photograph the elements and spaces. The images captured will be a photo bank of consistent, branded images. These images will be great to pull from when you are scheduling social content (or let's be honest, posting on the fly), writing a new blog post, creating marketing materials, etc.

Pro Tip: Use the same editing filter or preset on all your images to truly get that cohesive look. This way, when you take additional photos down the road, you can use the same filter to keep the new images on brand. I really like the free VSCO cam app for my iPhone photos, and I use the paid VSCO Lightroom presets on my professional photos.

While taking your own brand photos may seem daunting, it's a small step that can make a big impact on your brand and business. They say, "Dress for the job you want, not the job you have," and I feel that brand photos can have the same effect on your potential clients' mindset, and most importantly, on your own mindset. 🌟

Brit Chandler is a lifestyle brand photographer and social media consultant at Social Strategy Co.

When Your Heart's Just Not In It

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE FEELING BLUE



by **Ashly Hilst**

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Being an entrepreneur is bit like having a split personality.

Some days I wake up to the sun shining bright in a metaphorical blue sky. I'm unstoppable and overflowing with ideas, hope, and inspiration. I type words with the confidence of Shakespeare and walk the tightrope balance of my life as a mother and entrepreneur as if I were born under a big top. I am doing what I love and doing it well. I'm exactly where I want to be.

Then there are the other days. The days when the cursor blinks at me judgmentally, and my email inbox is stubbornly empty. The days when I feel lost and like I'm doing everything wrong. The days when I just don't want to do it anymore.

The truth is, some days my heart is just not in it.

The solution seems obvious to most of us: power through. Feelings are just feelings, and we all have bad days. The best thing to do is put your head down and wait for the clouds to pass. Plus, there is a lot to do, and if you don't do it, who will? We don't seem to have much choice in the matter.

But maybe the reason we sometimes feel like we have two personalities is because we aren't letting ourselves be human. We are made up of both head and heart, but when my heart lags behind, experiences disappointment, fear, and self-doubt, I sucker-punch it in the face and keep running, determined to finish at any cost, relying on my head to make up for the loss. I see my heart as a liability and my head as an asset, so when my heart cries out that something's not right, I ignore it and shudder along, forcing myself through the bad day or bad week or bad year.

This solution might work for a while, but it's not sustainable. Continuing to ignore my heart only leads to burnout, depression, and increasing self-doubt as I fake it all day long. The truth is my heart doesn't need to

be forced or ignored, like an annoyed parent prodding along a reluctant toddler. My heart needs me to hit the pause button and sit down with it; it needs to be heard (much like toddlers actually...).

It's time for a perception shift. What if the days we feel depressed, let down, and uninspired are more important than the days we feel upbeat and ready to take on the world? What if the days when our hearts are not in it are the days we need to tend to our heart most carefully instead of simply ignoring it? Next time you feel you've lost all your fizz, don't power through. Here are four ways to tend to your heart when you just aren't feeling it:

1 DO SOME SELF CARE.

I know, you've heard about all you can handle on self care. You feel like you might punch the next person in the throat who suggests you need a bubble bath. But the thing is, everyone's talking about self care for a reason. Taking care of yourself might be the hardest part of adulting, but it's also the most necessary if you want to keep your wits (and your friends...and family...) about you. And actually, self-care is about more than pedicures and spa days. Self care can be as simple as remembering to drink water and eat meals.

When you feel like you're the worst #girlboss ever and you worry you chose the wrong path, don't panic. Take a walk, call a friend and vent, schedule a day off, read a (non-work-related) book, drink lemon water, buy yourself an ice cream cone. Your heart might just be telling you that you need to stop dreaming big and bossing all day and take your gummy vitamins...which is pretty sound advice.

2 MAKE SOME HEART SPACE.

Therapy is expensive, so let me just share some insights with you and save you thousands of dollars: it's not healthy to ignore your feelings. Oh, and don't scrunch up your "negative" feelings in a teeny square (or put Sadness in a circle) because apparently you can't pick which feelings you want to feel. You can either feel all of them or none of them.

So when your heart isn't in it, don't, for the love of your bank account, ignore it. Instead, make room for your heart. Sit down in a quiet corner with a cup of tea and ask your heart what the trouble is. Then listen as it pours out emotions like a 15-year-old. You can also try journaling to help get what's inside out (this piece was in no way sponsored by Pixar). If journaling isn't your thing, try just listing your feelings (if you're new to this, you can find lists of feeling words on the internet that are helpful).

3 DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

It's easy to get into a creative rut (or even just a bad mood) when we become stagnant. To prevent (or fix) this, be intentional about breaking your routine and doing something different. Go work outside or at a coffee shop for a change of scenery. Take an unexpected day off. Go on a spontaneous road trip, run through a field of flowers (this may or may not be on my bucket list), or have a dance party in your living room. Be silly; laugh; surprise yourself. Say to your heart, "I hear you. I know you aren't feeling it today. So what do you want to do?" Then go do it. It sounds a little silly, right? But also sort of delightful. I promise you it's worth doing.

Tend to your heart carefully. We are all so good at being grown up and responsible for our businesses that we forget to be grown up and responsible for ourselves—probably because being responsible for ourselves looks like irresponsibility because it's dressed simply and sounds like fun (and there are never any quantifiable outcomes associated with it). But part of being an adult is caring for what has been given to us: our talents, our passions, and our hearts. Don't discount the state of your heart. Care for it and watch how that care overflows into your daily life and then into the lives of others. ☺

Ashly Hilst is a developmental editor for writers who need support and guidance as they finish their book.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HALEY THOMAS OF BLACKBERRY SQUARE

The Heartfelt



by **Rachel Allene Heckmann**

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HOW TO SHARE YOUR PASSION WITHOUT SMOTHERING YOUR AUDIENCE

I've always been a feeler. Growing up, my sisters always rolled their eyes when I would get emotional, because it occurred so often. I would feel sad when we fought. I would feel sad if our "game" didn't go as I planned. I was able to cry on demand when we played "house" and my grandma (played by my sister) was dying. You see, expressing emotion has never been my struggle. My struggle has always been taking control of those emotions. They used to control everything about my life, and I always felt that I was subject to whatever my emotions wanted to do.

With the help of some counseling, mentorship, chats with mom, and aging, I learned that I could actually take control of my emotions. This didn't mean they wouldn't be there. In fact, I pretty much have #allthefeels all the time, but it meant that I could make a choice about how they affected me.

When I was starting my online business, I knew that my personality and values would have to be infused into everything I did. I wasn't willing to run a business with the persona of perfection and resilience in the face of anything. The truth is, I am not perfect and I'm not immune to disappointment or discouragement. I get emotional, scared, fearful, and anxious all the time.

And having to hide this from my audience and clients just wasn't going to work for me. It just didn't feel like me.

I've always been one to tell others how I feel. And if I don't tell them, well, you can almost guarantee that my demeanor will give them a clue. It's just how I function.

As a business owner, I have learned to let this characteristic be a defining factor in my business. And surprisingly, it's been a building block in my brand growth. My commitment to keeping it real, being heartfelt, and sharing my emotions is something that my business is defined by. And I truly believe that it has helped me run a sustainable and successful business. It's built a trusting relationship with my audience. They care more about my brand and about me as a person, so when I launch a product or service, they are excited regardless. They are there for me, not just a transaction.

This past February, I decided to launch a challenge (#theheartfeltgrid) to help other businesses learn how to run heartfelt businesses on Instagram. My goal and mission was to teach other businesses about sharing their personal stories and struggles and how it could build a profitable and successful brand at the same time. I hosted an online Instagram challenge where, each day, the participants were challenged to do something different and out-of-the-box with their Instagram posting and engagement. The majority of the challenge focused on giving away, encouraging others, and being brave. This contrasts and contradicts countless marketing techniques and strategies of always asking something from your audience. We are inundated with ads non-stop. And when we follow other accounts and are constantly asked to go read a blog post, watch a video, purchase a course or product, we get fatigued. We tune out the voices. So, when it's time to launch a product or service, we are greeted with an audience that has shut down, become numb to good marketing strategies, and not in a position to invest in what you're offering them. Maybe there's a different way to approach marketing your business and brand?

When you learn how to invite others into your story by being heartfelt and honest, you are giving others a space to do the same.

When you give back to your audience and find ways to serve them, you are running a business that is built on others being first.

When you choose to use your experiences to uplift, encourage, and empower others, you are choosing to run a business with purpose.

The entire purpose and motivation behind #theheartfeltgrid challenge was to empower business owners to see their business and online platform as something more meaningful and fulfilling than just receiving a paycheck. When we can step outside of ourselves, we can impact the lives of others. And that's truly what matters. Life is about the lives we touch, the connections we make, and the love we give and experience.

“When we can step outside of ourselves, we can impact the lives of others. And that’s truly what matters. Life is about the lives we touch, the connections we make, and the love we give and experience.”




At the end of your life, you won't care about how many Instagram followers you had in 2017. You *will* care about the impact you had, the relationships you built, and the growth you experienced.

How can you let this truth change the way you run your business?

When you make decisions from the heart, you are more likely to make an impact. For me, running my business has always been more than the size of my paycheck. It's always been about my heart and the hearts that I can touch with my platform, and gifts, and skills. *Oddly enough, this business mission has been the most profitable choice for my business strategy.*

YOU have something to share. You have a heart that the world needs to learn from. You have experiences and gifts and skills that will impact others. Are you willing to set aside your fears to impact others in a positive way? Are you ready to impact hearts and extend love to the masses?

When we function from this place, our impact is greater, stronger, and long-lasting. Are you ready to run a business with heart? I thought so. 

Rachel Heckmann is product shop owner, educator, encourager, + strategist teaching entrepreneurs to run a heartfelt and profitable business.

At the Heart of Diversity

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY



by **Reina Pomeroy**

WWW.REINAANDCO.COM / @REINAANDCOMPANY

Dear Creative Community,

We have a problem.

There is an invisible but not unspoken problem in our industry.

I've tried so many times to start this message hoping that it would strike the right chord and that I can do this issue justice. I don't intend to be the sole spokesperson for this message and I hope that you'll join me.

So bear with me as I try to express to you why I believe diversity is a much needed discussion right now-how diversity can personally impact you, and how you as a small business owner, no matter what your identity is, can also make an impact should you choose so (and I sincerely hope you do).

You have a say. Most of us have privilege--there are different ways each of us have privilege, but you probably have it in spades. If you've been educated, are a racial majority, are well manicured, have money, you're more than likely privileged. If you have even some of these luxuries, it is a responsibility (and honestly, it's a choice) to create safe space and platforms for others who don't have the same luxuries to also thrive. It is only when we support others that we can all succeed.

I hope you'll understand my tone: I am not lecturing. I am coming at this topic with an understanding of each side and the frustrations on both sides. I am coming at this topic with a ton of love. Because what we want right now is to be heard. All of us. We want to be understood.

But let me be clear. I am advocating for diversity. I am advocating for different voices, experiences, and thoughts to be taught and heard. I am NOT advocating for injecting the creative entrepreneur's version of affirmative action and choosing a token, so that at face value, it seems that you've considered diverse voices.

Creatives are naturally diverse; we are painters, graphic designers, photographers, calligraphers, writers, and myriad other creative contributors. That's not where our conversation of diversity ends. We're also an international bunch. Thanks to the internet, we can talk to people literally on the other side of the

globe and collaborate with them. There are people who are different races, religions, ethnicities, education levels, sexual or gender diversity and all other types of differentiating qualities.

DIVERSITY IS MORE THAN RACE:

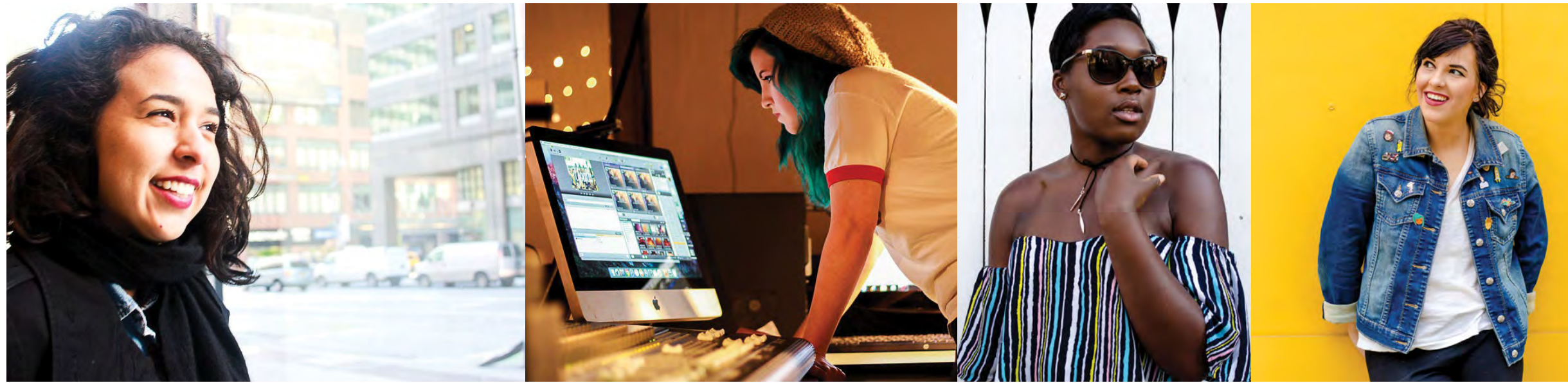
- Different races and ethnicities
- Ages
- Educational levels
- Backgrounds
- Physical ability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Location
- Accent and fluency in the English Language
- Relationship status
- Life experience
- Body shape + external beauty as deemed beautiful by society's standards

Recently, a few conference line-ups or collaborations have featured rows and rows of beautiful, smiling, white women. My initial reaction was to ask myself, "Where are the women of color?" I wanted to demand racial diversity. And although I remain strong in my desire to hold organizations accountable for creating and encouraging racial and ethnic diversity, I am able to acknowledge the intersectionality and multiple dimensions of diversity that may not be as visually obvious as race. You don't know which of the women might be queer, have different political persuasions, or have education (or not). You don't know if somebody is part Hispanic or Middle Eastern. You can't actually tell much of the time.

Don't make assumptions. As we strive for inclusive excellence we must look at race and ethnicities, but also consider other identities that contribute to diversity of ideas and experience. It is important that we ask ourselves how our various aspects of diversity interact with one another and inform our perspective.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEESI PHOTOGRAPHY

“We have a say every day that we own and run our businesses. In small and big ways, we can make a difference to have a colorful array of voices be represented.”



And I get it, because it's frustrating to me, too. I never feel like I belong (hello, Asian minority category,) which is why I think it's worth having an open, uncomfortable conversation that doesn't end in a shouting match. These organizers aren't intentionally trying to make people feel marginalized.

To my friends who have and who will in the future create events, opportunities, and showcases of a group of women to come together, HELL YES. For so long, women have undercut each other, they have hurt each other. I'm so proud to be in an industry that lifts others up. But that's where it seems to stop. We need to expand the circle of connections, friendships, and alliances to grow beyond who is similar to us: in creed, in looks, in upbringings. I implore you to think about whose voice you might need to also encapsulate. Nope, I'm not asking you to bring in everybody because that's simply impossible. But consider, just for a second, somebody who might have a different perspective, and by chance, that person will look a little different than you. No guarantees, but that might just be the case.

I don't claim to know all the conversations that happen behind the scenes or what logistics you're fighting with, but this is a request (and please pin this on your heart) that you dig deep to find not just one but several people who bring diversity to your work. In the meantime, make friends with them too! I don't want to be brought in because I'm the token Asian gal. I want you to bring me in because you know me for specific piece of content/energy/expertise I might bring.

For my minority (or if you feel like you're not being seen, heard, or underutilized) creative friends, we have an uphill battle. Gosh, I know how unfair it is, how frustrated you must feel. But here's the thing, we have to come alongside people who might not hear the advice I had for them above, and to educate with a lot of love and not out of anger or bitterness. For the most part, your racial/identity

counterparts haven't excluded us out of malice. They just didn't understand that there was a different way.

Work harder to make sure that you are known for a message you want to share. Be a megaphone louder than your counterparts around you. Not in an aggressive way, but in a way that shows people you mean business. Put yourself out there, challenge yourself, pitch effectively, create powerful relationships, serve others, and make sure you are known: not for your race/ethnicity/looks, but for your knowledge, your content, your expertise.

You can't be diverse all by yourself. You're diverse when you mix with other people, opinions, other points of view, other experiences. But you cannot be diverse on your own. Tokenism hurts our industry. Often token minority members have expectations that are placed on them that do not serve our community at large. Suggest other women and advocate for others when you feel like there are opportunities to do so.

My ally friends: If you're in a place of privilege and you have a platform, I encourage you to share your voice. If you're in a place where you can create collaborations, make sure you're considering all types of diversity. I know you want to do something about this.

But here's the deal: there is a right way and a very wrong way to address the issue of diversity (or the lack thereof). Going public with your disdain is not the answer. Shaming somebody's work and blasting them on Instagram to rile a crowd is not effective. It hurts people, makes them feel shame, and ultimately hurts the cause of creating a conversation around diversity and inclusion. If you witness something that doesn't sit right, address it via email, a private message, or a call, where you can have your thoughts heard more thoroughly. Call them out, but I implore you to choose your mode of conveying that message carefully.

Additionally, you can turn down speaking engagements or choose to create your own opportunities

for minority women to elevate your voice in lieu of tearing somebody else's project down. You can choose to change who you feature on your website. You can use stock photos that represent different races, hair styles, body types, that invite inclusion. Are you a photographer? Have you ever considered doing stock photos with hands that aren't white?

At the core, I'm not asking you to choose a line up of one white, one black, one Asian, one hispanic, one LGBT, one (insert minority group here). I am asking you to set your intention to finding the best person to connect with for something and when you do, to scan people who might represent minority groups as well or to choose intentionally who you work with because they're interesting people.

An invitation:

All of you are welcome in my corner of the creative community. It's the reason I named my business Reina + Co. I hoped that we would build this so that others who didn't feel like they belonged anywhere could have a safe place to land, to have the tough conversations when the going gets tough.

It impacts the way I hire, the way I build community, the way I collaborate with people.

I've turned down speaking and guest posting opportunities when I didn't think the organizer was willing to consider diversity of thought and experience, or when they wanted me as a token minority person. We have a say every day that we own and run our businesses. In small and big ways, we can make a difference to have a colorful array of voices be represented.

There are kick-ass people of all colors, races, sexual orientation, body shapes, hair color/textures... I hope you're as excited as I am to embrace diversity in a different way. ☺

Reina Pomeroy is a coach for right brained and heart centered creatives who want sustainability and profitability at Reina and Co.

Love & Pancakes



by **Melissa Bahen**

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My family really loves our Norwegian heritage. Like, on a scale from 1 to 10, we're at an 11. We celebrate Norwegian holidays like Syttende Mai and Midsommar, we have homemade Norwegian costumes for our kids, and we once built a giant Scandinavian maypole for a family reunion.

Most families who love their heritage as much as we do have a treasure trove of beloved family recipes handed down from generation to generation, but we don't. We don't have a single Scandinavian recipe passed down from our Norwegian forefathers. I'm not sure of the exact reason. My mom thinks my great grandma, Asta, maybe just didn't like to cook. I've never been under the impression that my grandpa, Poppy, likes to cook, so even if his mom did enjoy it, Poppy probably wasn't too focused on getting her recipes. And Asta passed away when my grandpa was a teenager, so neither my grandma nor my mom and her siblings ever got to have any cooking experiences with her. They never made Norwegian Christmas cookies with her in the kitchen or had meatballs and gravy for Sunday dinner in her dining room.

Whatever the reason, the lack of old family recipes from the Andresen side of the family has always felt like a hole in our beloved heritage.

There is one almost-shining exception to my claim of having no family recipes: Tante Tilda's pancakes. Mathilde was my grandpa's aunt, his mother's oldest sister, and she stepped in as a surrogate grandmother for my mom and her sisters and brothers when they were little. She worked as a cook in the McCormick Mansion in Salt Lake City not too far from where my mom's family lived, and Tante Tilda would let my mom and her sisters come visit her in the kitchen and help her make pancakes.

My siblings and I have heard about Tante Tilda's pancakes for our entire lives, and they have always sounded amazing: cooked in butter, drenched in maple syrup, small enough that you could eat dozens of them. But there's one little catch (and this is the part where the "almost-shining exception" comes in): no one ever got Tante Tilda's pancake recipe.

I really wanted to include Tante Tilda's recipe in my book, but since no one ever wrote it down, it was a bit of a culinary puzzle. I decided that the only option was to create a new recipe that tasted as close to Tante Tilda's as anyone who ate them could remember.

My mom very clearly remembers standing on a chair next to Tante Tilda in the kitchen of the McCormick

Mansion. She remembers pouring maple syrup into a pot on the stove, adding a big pat of butter, and watching the butter melt into the syrup's dark, shiny sweetness. She remembers small, silver-dollar sized cakes that were eggier than our typical buttermilk pancakes, but thicker, fluffier, and significantly smaller than crepes.

Armed with my mom's memories, I chose a random silver-dollar pancake recipe I had found on the internet and made a few times with some success, and got to work making it over into the childhood treat my mom remembered.

My mom and I got together one morning when my children were at school. I whipped up a batch of test pancakes, had my mom try them, and wrote down every way she could think of that they were wrong. They were too eggy and not fluffy enough. They weren't buttery enough. They were too small.

I fiddled with the recipe, made up another batch, and again wrote down their shortcomings. This second batch was less eggy and certainly fluffier, but the pancakes were a little too dense and needed to cook hotter and faster.

We went through round after round of test batches, tinkering with the ingredients, the cooking time, the temperature, and more until finally, after eating dozens and dozens of silver-dollar pancakes, we hit upon a winner. The recipe my mom and I created together tastes just like the pancakes my mom remembers helping Tante Tilda make all those years ago. They are small and light with a texture pleasantly located somewhere between chewy and fluffy. They are deliciously buttery and taste amazing covered in sticky maple syrup.

One of my favorite things about writing *Scandinavian Gatherings* was how it gave me the opportunity to find that missing piece of my family's heritage, to fill in the culinary blanks that had been empty for so many generations.

For a long time, my family didn't have any traditional, beloved Norwegian recipes passed down from grandparent to parent to child, but my children and their children and all the generations of my family from here on will. They'll grow up eating meatballs and gravy with dilled new potatoes on Syttende Mai. They'll grow up with the rice pudding recipe my Nana brought home with her from Sweden. They'll grow up making gingersnaps every Christmas. And they'll grow up standing on a chair next to their grandma helping her make Tante Tilda's famous Norwegian pancakes. 🍩

Melissa is the creator of the blog Lulu the Baker, where she writes about simple food and modern country life. She's also the author of Scandinavian Gatherings: From Afternoon Fika to Midsummer Feast. She lives in the western Oregon countryside with her husband, four children, 2 bunnies, 7 chickens, and 4 beehives.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARITY BURGGAARF FROM THE BOOK SCANDINAVIAN GATHERINGS BY MELISSA BAHEN; REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM SASQUATCH BOOKS.

TANTE TILDA'S NORWEGIAN SILVER-DOLLAR PANCAKES

Makes 4 ½ dozen 3-inch pancakes

INGREDIENTS

Maple syrup, for serving
 Butter
 1 ½ cups plus 2 tablespoons flour
 1 tablespoon sugar
 1/2 teaspoon table salt
 2 cups whole milk
 2 eggs

Special equipment:

Large nonstick or cast-iron skillet

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small saucepan over low heat, heat the maple syrup. Add a pat of butter and allow it to melt into the syrup while making the pancakes. Keep the syrup over low heat until the pancakes are ready to be served.
2. Heat a large nonstick or cast-iron skillet over medium to medium-low heat.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt. In a large glass measuring cup, whisk together the milk and eggs. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients, and whisk until smooth.
4. Place a thin pat of butter on the hot skillet, allow it to melt and bubble, and spread it around with the edge of a spatula.
5. Working in batches, scoop the batter by the tablespoonful onto the skillet. Cook the pancakes for 30 seconds, or until they are golden on the bottom. Flip and cook them for 30 seconds more. If the pancakes don't turn golden after 30 seconds, increase the heat. If the pan starts to smoke or the butter begins to turn dark brown, reduce the heat slightly, wipe the pan out with a paper towel, and add a new pat of butter.
6. Serve the pancakes hot with the buttered maple syrup.

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Only Love Today

HOW A THREE-SECOND PAUSE LETS THE HEART SPEAK AND SPARES US PAIN



by **Rachel Macy Stafford**

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I wish I hadn't taken my husband's coffee pot and smashed it in the sink. I knew it the moment I steadied my shaking hands against the metal basin filled with jagged slivers of glass.

Regret hurts.

I wish I hadn't squealed my tires in the gravel parking lot simply because things weren't going according to plan. I knew it the moment my baby in the backseat began to cry.

Regret burns.

I wish I hadn't run through the pouring rain, cussing and screaming about not being able to find my vehicle in a lot of thousands. I knew it the moment my daughter looked up at me with fearful eyes and asked if I was okay.

Regret aches.

I could go on. My list of overreactions is long, and it is shameful. I'd always liked to have things go *just right*, but during my highly distracted, stretched-too-thin, over-committed and under-rested years, overreaction became my middle name. And regret was right there beside it. *Regret follows on the heels of overreaction every single time.*

These unbecoming incidents—the coffee pot, the tire squealing, and the parking lot confusion—have resurfaced in my mind lately. Although they happened years ago, I can remember them clearly now, more clearly than ever.

I remember being so upset I was unable to think straight. I remember coming so undone that I couldn't get myself back together. I remember detesting myself in those moments. I remember wanting to run away. But most of all, I remember not wanting to be that volatile person anymore. *Regret can be a powerful motivator.*

How did I begin to choose calm over crazed, reasonable over senseless, composed over fuming? One of my strategies was making a conscious effort to spot the “flowers” instead of the “weeds” in situations and in people. Another tactic was adopting a mantra to silence my inner bully. Whenever a critical thought came to mind, I immediately interrupted it with the healing mantra: *only love today*. Another tactic was to envision



my angry words like a car crash, inflicting damage to the person on the receiving end. But it wasn't until one week ago, after thinking about several embarrassing outbursts from my past, that I realized there is something else I do. I give myself a three-second preview of how a situation *could* play out if I choose controlling hostility over peaceful compassion.

It was my children's first day back to school after a two-week winter break. The school bus was due to pull up to the corner in four minutes. My daughters were doing their last minute gathering of shoes, coats, water bottles, and lunches.

“Don't forget it's Tuesday,” I called to my eight-year-old daughter as she headed for the boots lying next to the door. “Tennis shoes for P.E.,” I added.

My child stopped dead in her tracks. She turned to face me, gripping her right arm with her left. “Mama, my arm hurts today. Could you write me a note that says my arm is sore?”

You want me to write a note now? You should have thought of it sooner.

Sore arm? Let me guess—too much Wii? I am not writing a note for that.

You will be fine. Come on, we need to go. The bus is coming.

I thought those responses. I thought them all, but I didn't say them.

Because as I was thinking about all the things I *wanted* to say, I gave myself a three-second preview of what those responses would do for the situation. From past experience, I knew those particular words would not help the situation, they would only cause it to deteriorate.

But here's where the real beauty happened:

While taking that three-second pause, I noticed something. I noticed there were real tears welling in my daughter's eyes ... real tears she didn't want to fall ... real tears she was actually pushing back with her fingers.

That three-second pause was just long enough for me to realize this sadness, this pain, this worry of my child's was real. A note to the P.E. teacher was very important to her that day.

Grabbing a notepad out of the junk drawer, I scribbled a quick note to the P.E. teacher and handed it to my child.

I never knew I had the power to hand someone a little bit of peace ... a tiny corner of comfort ... a permission slip to regain composure ... but now I do. My compassionate reaction to my child's situation held the power to save a morning, to save a heart from pain.

“Thank you, Mama,” she said quietly. I actually saw the color coming back to her face.

I thought of my child's sore arm throughout the day. I knew our conversation could have easily gone another way. And although I don't always make the right choice with my words, I knew I had that time. *Regret was not my companion that day.*

“How did P.E. go?” I asked my daughter when she got home from school.

“Well, when I got to P.E., I saw they were doing something I could do, even with a sore arm. So I tucked the note in my pocket and played,” she told me.

There was a time in my life when I wouldn't have given my child that note. My response to her 6:55 a.m. request would have been underlined with control, exasperation, anger, and insensitivity. We probably wouldn't have made it to the bus, and, most likely, we would have parted on bad terms. She probably wouldn't have had the opportunity to make her own good choice in P.E. that day. There would have been no winners in that battle.

By the grace of God, things are different now. I now know every challenging situation does not have to be a contest to be right ... to “win” ... to have things go the way I want them to go. The goal of each situation is to

speak in a way I can be heard ... to *listen* in a way the other person can be heard ... and to walk away feeling at peace with the way the situation was handled. *Regret, it's nice to see you go.*

My list of overreactions is long and it is ugly, but **today matters more than yesterday**. I've started a new list—a list of compassionate responses I've offered. This list inspired me to write a hopeful reminder—a reminder that three-second pauses have the power to save a morning, spare some pain, and prevent regret from being a lifelong companion. May it bring someone else hope too.

I Am My Response

I am my response to my child's mismatched outfit and the crumpled report card at the bottom of her backpack.

I am my response to my spouse who returned from the store without toilet paper but remembered the tailgate snacks.

I am my response to my anxious parent who repeats the same worries and insists on giving me coupons I do not need.

I am my response to my colleague with sad eyes and frequent absences.

I am my response to my fifteen-minutes-late hairdresser with a sick child.

I am my response to my neighbor with heart-heavy problems and little family support.

I am my response to the irate driver who cut me off and made an obscene gesture in front of my children.

I am my response to the waitress who got my order wrong.

I am my response to myself when I forgot the one thing I most needed to do today.

I am my response to spilled coffee, long lines, and middle-of-the-night wake ups.

My responses are not perfect ... they are not always ideal ... I am human after all.

But if I strive to offer responses underlined with grace,
understanding,
kindness,
empathy,
and care,
That is something.
That is something.

Because my responses are more than just words.
They represent
who I am,
who I want to be,
and how I will someday be remembered.

Today I will not respond perfectly. I know.
But if I strive to communicate with hints of kindness
and traces of love,
That will be something
That will be something
That could mean more than words. ☺

Rachel Macy Stafford is an author and blogger known for her blog *Hands Free Mama*.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURIE UNGER



WOMEN MAKING IT HAPPEN

The words “follow your heart” often result in a dramatic eye roll because that just seems like pie in the sky, right?!. This very well may be the case in some instances, but I have met hundreds of women who are doing just this. Though this feature doesn’t even come close to introducing you all the incredible female creatives and entrepreneurs that I want you to know, it’s a start.

Some of these women I’ve actually met in person. Some of them I’ve only befriended online. At least half of them I’ve actually never spoken to. But there is something that drew me to them. They encouraged me through their passions to follow their hearts and make things happen in their own ways—ways that I hope will inspire you wherever you are today—whether you’re just tossing ideas around in your head, trying to figure out how to get started, craving a little motivation or just needing to be reminded that you’re not alone.

FOLLOW YOUR HEART

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB LAKE

Follow Your Heart



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LIZ MILLER OF INK WELL PRESS



Tonya Dalton

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In October of 2013, nothing seemed to feel right; I felt a little bit like a stranger in my own skin--I was normally a very happy person, but I was having a hard time shaking the low I was feeling. I had utterly and completely lost my passion and drive for my business. The thought of closing up shop was scary--was it even worth the risk to pursue something so unknown? How could I turn my back on a thriving business to follow a passion when that business paid my family's bills? And what WAS that passion?

I gave myself a deadline and in those days I dug deep. I looked at my life from all different angles and crafted my personal mission statement. Taking the time to be still, listen to my inner voice, and let my mission guide me made all the difference.

I decided to open inkWELL Press--a company that designs organizational products focused around productivity and planning. It wasn't enough, though, just to offer products. To fulfill my mission, I knew there had to be a part of the business that centered around education--teaching others how to find their own priorities and helping them create their own productivity systems.

Everything I offered, designed, or created had to be filtered through that goal. I would create a laser-focused brand centered around my vision. The only catch? I was not a designer. This was yet another hurdle to overcome. But I was emboldened by my mission statement. Yes, it took ten times longer to create that first planner, but I loved every minute. Even when I felt lost or didn't know what I was doing, I knew I was following the path I was meant to follow.

And that's where I am today. I've continued to grow and expand beyond planners. Now I have a podcast, courses and even a community centered around that mission. And most importantly? I spend each day following my passion, waking up feeling excited for each and every day. ☺

Time Management Tips

MAKE A DAILY PLAN

- Don't plan your entire week ahead of time
- This allows you to adjust each day to make it as successful as possible
- Create a plan for each day that morning
- Put items on your to do list you can actually accomplish in a day

PRIORITIZE YOUR TO-DO LIST

- List your daily tasks by priority each day
- Categorize them as important and/or urgent
- Prioritize based off your mission and goals - not the time a task takes
- This allows you to focus in on the most important tasks to move you forward

BATCH YOUR TASKS

- Group similar projects or tasks together to maximize this benefit
- This helps get you in the zone - it takes 23 minutes to get fully focused on a task
- Ideally you should set 2 - 4 blocks of time aside each day for batched tasks
- It will act as a springboard to help you push productivity to the max

TAKE BREAKS

- You need to move your body and walk around
- At a minimum, you should stand every 90 minutes
- Attach an activity to standing
- For example, when the phone rings, stand to answer it

NO SCREENTIME UNTIL BREAKFAST (OR LATER!)

- Don't let your phone or computer dictate your day
- When you check your phone first thing, you allow it to control the destiny of the day ahead
- Create a plan for how often you will check emails and schedule that into your day
- Emails can feel like a priority, but usually it's someone else pushing their priorities onto you

Follow Your Heart

5 Tips for Taking Better Pictures Now

1. TELL YOUR STORY

Always know the why behind your photo and make sure your photo is faithful to your why. Ask yourself if your audience will understand what you're saying with your image if you aren't there to explain it.

2. CLEAN IT UP

When you're shooting your photo, remove anything in your frame that doesn't support your story. Cluttering up your image will clutter up your story, and your core message will get lost.

3. USE NATURAL LIGHT

Lighting is everything when it comes to great photography. Soft window light offers some of the most beautiful light and it suits many situations--plus it's free!

4. BRIGHTEN YOUR SHADOWS

Does your image feel too heavy? Brighten your shadows by reflecting light back into your frame. White foam boards from the craft store are cheap and lightweight. Place them next to your subject opposite to your light source.

5. SHOOT A LOT

Practice, practice, practice! The best way to improve your photography skills is to learn from your own experiences. Don't be afraid to experiment and make mistakes. Sometimes the best breakthroughs happen by accident.



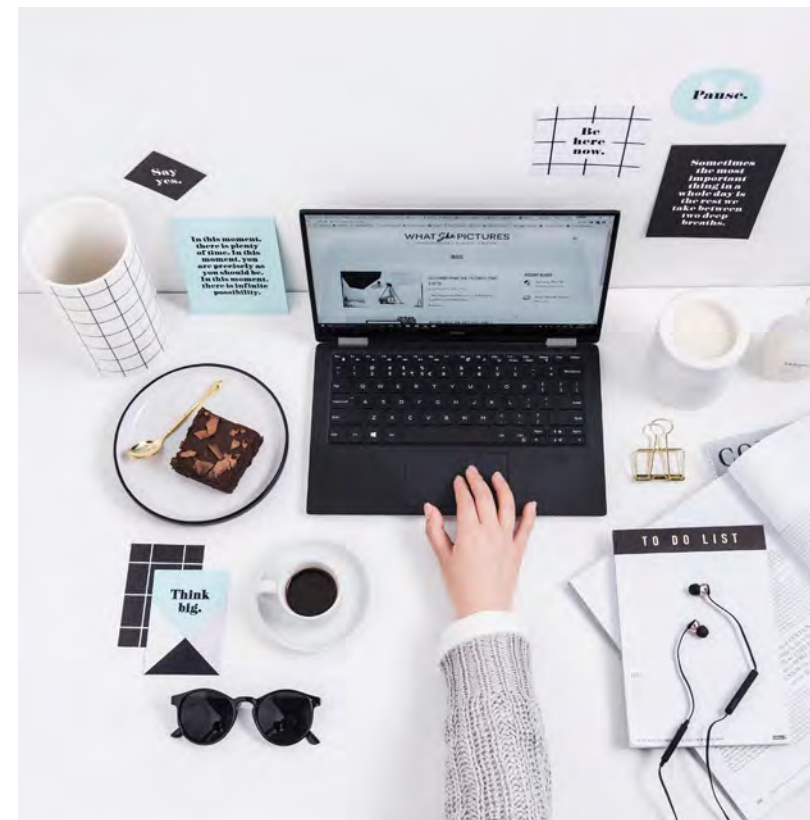
Connie Chan

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I've wanted to be a photographer since I was in the 7th grade and my teacher made an off-hand compliment about a holiday snap I shot. It's amazing how a few words can ripple through someone's life. When I was older, I thought that a career in commercial photography would be the perfect way to combine a creative career with earning a good income. But after many years working in big-money advertising, I knew that the long hours, countless meetings, and high stress weren't for me.

So I took a new job in the growing field of e-commerce. There the hours were stable, the mood more relaxed, and trying new ideas was always encouraged. My work/life balance started to actually become balanced. It wasn't long before I was drawn to social--particularly Instagram--because it was all about photography and connecting with real people. This was a community where I could focus on creating and sharing ideas instead of just selling products. Perfection was no longer the goal, and that suited me just fine.

Today, my favorite clients are boutique brands where I may be chatting directly with the founder herself. As a content creator, I get to spend time getting to know my clients including what drives them to do what they do. That sort of passion gets lost in the ad agency world, but in social, I'm immersed in it everyday. I love turning my client's vision and ideas into beautiful images that embody their brand story. I love what I do because I get to be creative everyday while helping talented people accomplish their goals. 🍷



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CONNIE CHAN/WHAT SHE PICTURES

Follow Your Heart



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GINA ZEIDLER



Laura Kashner

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A few years ago, I found myself in a place of burn out, overwhelm and saying yes to way too many things. My work was uninspired, I was tired all of the time, and my family was not getting the wife and mom they deserved.

One late night at the computer, I was working on a client project, and got thinking about white space. White space, or negative space, in art and design exists so our eye can be drawn towards what really matters in the composition. It's space that allows your eye to have a breath of fresh air, so it can easily navigate and focus on what's important.

I thought to myself, as my eyes were staring at my computer screen, "If white space is so important to me as a designer, why am I not making it a priority in my life?"

And that is exactly what I spent the next year or so doing. Making enough white space in my life so my eyes and my heart could focus on what truly matters to me.

What surprised me most was how this new margin in my life influenced my creative work and how it allowed me to create on a joyful, clearer, deeper, more intentional level. I felt a freedom in my work that had been missing for many years. I knew others needed this freedom too, and I was determined to find a way to celebrate white space in both art and life.

In 2017, I've made a pivot in my business to turn this idea into a magazine that celebrates well-designed art and lives. My hope is to spread our mission across the industry and create a publication that leaves you feeling inspired and refreshed. I've poured my heart into these pages that are about to hit the press and even though the world says launching a magazine is stressful and challenging, I've never felt more freedom and peace. Thank you, white space, for truly changing my life. ☺

Finding white space in your life...

HAVE FIVE MINUTES?

Take a walk outside without your phone. No music, no podcasts, no emails—just sunshine, nature and fresh air.

HAVE AN AFTERNOON?

Head to a local shop, gallery, or boutique and just browse. What jumps at you? What is something new that you haven't seen before? How are items displayed? What color palettes are being used? Don't take notes, just observe.

HAVE A DAY?

Take a digital detox. Hide your phone, turn off your computer and TV, and don't say "Alexa". Read a book, organize your makeup drawer, head to lunch with a friend, work on that DIY project that has been on your list. Create something with your hands and don't show anyone.

HAVE A WEEKEND?

Roadtrip somewhere new. Hop in the car and drive. No schedule, no plans. What feels good? Do that. Document your time, but don't share on social media until you've returned home. Focus on who you are with, not where you're going and when you'll be there. Relax, enjoy, breathe.

Follow Your Heart

Two Tips to Start Following Your Heart Now

SPEAK UP! SAY WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND.

It's so much better to say what's on your mind and have an impact on the people around you, your company, or your career. You may be impressed with how smart you really are and how much people love to hear your point of view, despite that voice in your head that's full of fear.

It was by speaking up and sharing my opinion that I was consistently promoted faster than a lot of co-workers while I was still working the 9-5 job. It was that quality that gave me the push to start Yes Supply. It's not fitting in that helps you make an impact, it's standing out and connecting with your intuition. Say what's on your mind!

Don't let the thought of someone disagreeing with you scare you into silence! As women, we've progressed too far to let our negative self-talk stop us from standing up for our thoughts and beliefs.

The world needs more women who speak up, who believe in the validity of their thoughts and ideas, and who are willing to stand up to bullies and make a change. I think women often fear that if they speak up, or disagree, someone won't like them.

TAKE A LITTLE RISK. I find myself drawn to the people who take a little risk, who are a little controversial, and who have a point of view. Why be boring?

I listened to my intuition, and when there was something I was unhappy with in my life, I never settled. I was always willing to shake things up to live the life I wanted.

When I couldn't be creative at work, I set up a blog so that I could have an outlet to say and do what I wanted to and challenge myself.



Reese Evans

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Hey! I'm Reese, and I'm the founder of Yes Supply, a platform to inspire, motivate, and mentor creative females to find their passion and purpose in life, and only take yes for an answer on the way to their dreams.

I came up with the idea for Yes Supply when I was in one of my biggest lows in life. I was working in a job that I absolutely hated, I was crying on my way to work, and I felt stuck wondering how I'd gotten there. On the personal side of things, I had low self-confidence and had no one in my life who could give me any advice or feedback on how to make a shift. I was always the person in my group of friends who people came to for advice. I didn't really have anyone in my life who was doing something that I dreamed of doing who could give me advice to help me live a life I wanted.

One day, after a particularly tough late night at my job, I'd had enough. After months of failed job-hunting, I realized that if no one was going to give me the opportunities that I wanted and the steps to help me create the life I knew I was meant for, I had to create it myself.

I got out a journal and created my ideal day, my ideal life, and my ideal business on paper. I didn't know if anyone would actually sign up for what I was about to create, but I was about to find out.

It took me a while to find the courage to share what I wanted to do with the world. I hesitated and procrastinated, and I was held down by my worry of what people might think. I worried that people would think my idea was silly or that I was cheesy, so I kept it to myself for a long time.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEORGE PAPAZOV

But now that I am living my dream life, I am SO happy I took that first step through the fear to make my dream of Yes Supply a reality.

Once I started to share what I was up to, it started to pick up steam. Now Yes Supply is a community that has worked with thousands of women worldwide to help them turn their ideas and dreams into a reality.

I want to encourage women every single day to figure out exactly what it is they want, empower them to only take yes for an answer in creating it.

The vision of supporting women and helping them see that they are the creators of their own life constantly fuels me and inspires me to keep doing what I'm doing. Years ago, I was working in a job I hated, and I felt like I was in a complete rut. But when I really stopped a few years ago to consider what was holding me back from the life I wanted, I realized it was me.

Yes, I could have blamed lack of money, education, or support for not making it happen, but the biggest thing was my own self-doubt, keeping what I wanted to create a secret, and not reaching out for help where I needed it.

I want to help women connect with people who have created their dream life, and I hope they realize that yes, there are obstacles that everyone has to face - but if you're determined, and if you don't give up, you can create your own future. I want to help women get rid of the self-doubt, fear, and negative self-talk that often holds us back.

I do this through creating live events that connect women, the Yes Supply Collective (an online community for women), and a variety of coaching programs and courses that help women turn their dreams into a reality.

The Yes Supply Collective is full of the motivation and inspiration needed to create the mindset and confidence needed to build a life of YES, plus REAL actionable business advice and tools to take the steps to make it happen.

The women that I've worked with one on one and in the online community setting have seen HUGE transformations in their lives, which reminds me every single day that I am living my purpose. We've helped women find their passion and purpose in life, we've helped them find the confidence, tools, and mentorship to go after their dreams, and we've supported them along the way.

There's nothing better than when I hear that we've helped another woman leave a job or path that drains her to go after a life she loves. 🍷



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passion

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Follow Your Heart



Jennifer Lake

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For more than fifteen years, I've had the pleasure of working full-time in public relations in Chicago. PR is not for the faint of heart, but I've always known that I'm wired to work in a communications-focused industry. It gives me the opportunity to work with so many people, brainstorm creative ideas and implement amazing campaigns. Plus, the agency that I work for, Zapwater Communications, is truly a phenomenal place. The team is crazy talented--I'm constantly amazed at the work they do and the results that they get for brands. Furthermore, our President has been an amazing mentor for me, and he continues to find ways to encourage our entire team to push the limits of creativity. I absolutely love my job.

About eight years ago, I decided to launch a bridal blog called "Third Coast Bride." At first, it was just meant to be a resource for friends and family to follow along in our wedding planning process. However, the site quickly took off, and I started gaining more readership, advertisers started calling, and I was starting to get brand partnerships. While it had many similar aspects to my current site today (e.g. puns as the blog post titles and bold imagery), SO many aspects of the site were a MESS. I cringe thinking back to my posts. How in the world did I have even one reader other than my mother-in-law? Lol. After my husband and I got married, I quickly realized that a bridal blog was not necessarily a long-term, sustainable business. I was passionate about wedding planning when I was actually doing it. Afterwards, I didn't really have anything to write about. I spent a few months trying to find the energy to do blog posts, but my passion for it quickly fizzled and so I decided to stop and not renew the domain.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB LAKE



MURAL #1: DRIPPING PAINT MURAL IN PASADENA (ARTIST: RISK ROCK)

Two years ago, I decided to take the leap back into blogging with a more sustainable business model. Style Charade was born, and I was incredibly fortunate to have many fellow bloggers who took me under their wing to mentor me like Liz Adams of Sequins + Stripes and Kit Graham of The Kitchin/Windy City Blogger Collective.

Their advice and help really gave me a solid foundation to work off of from day one. Furthermore, I joined the rewardStyle affiliate program, and that's completely changed my blog and business. I'm truly indebted to their team for their support and encouragement. Style Charade feeds my soul every day, especially since it gives me the chance to connect with readers, brands, and bloggers. I love how it creates community and fosters a dialogue unlike anything else I've found in life. Also, I've discovered a renewed passion for content creation - especially photography. Our photo shoots give a window into my personal style, and I find so much joy in creating images that make people smile.

Murals are such a fun way to showcase an outfit. Plus, I love how it increases awareness for the talented artists who create them. I feature Wall Guides on Style Charade for various cities so that readers can find the murals that I showcase on the site and my Instagram page. I definitely plan on creating more guides down the road.

While it's hard to pick favorites, here are five murals around the country that make the perfect backdrop for any fashion photo. 🌈



MURAL #2: "THAT PINK WALL" IN LOS ANGELES (CREATED BY THE PAUL SMITH STORE ON MELROSE)



MURAL #3: PALM LEAF MURAL IN CHICAGO (CREATED BY EDEN IN CHICAGO RESTAURANT)

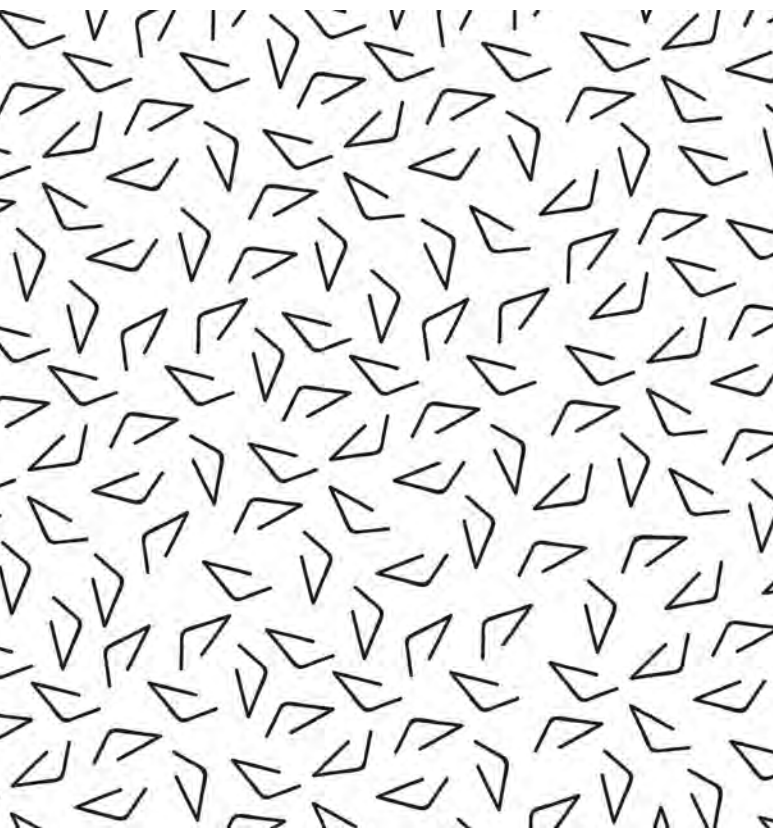
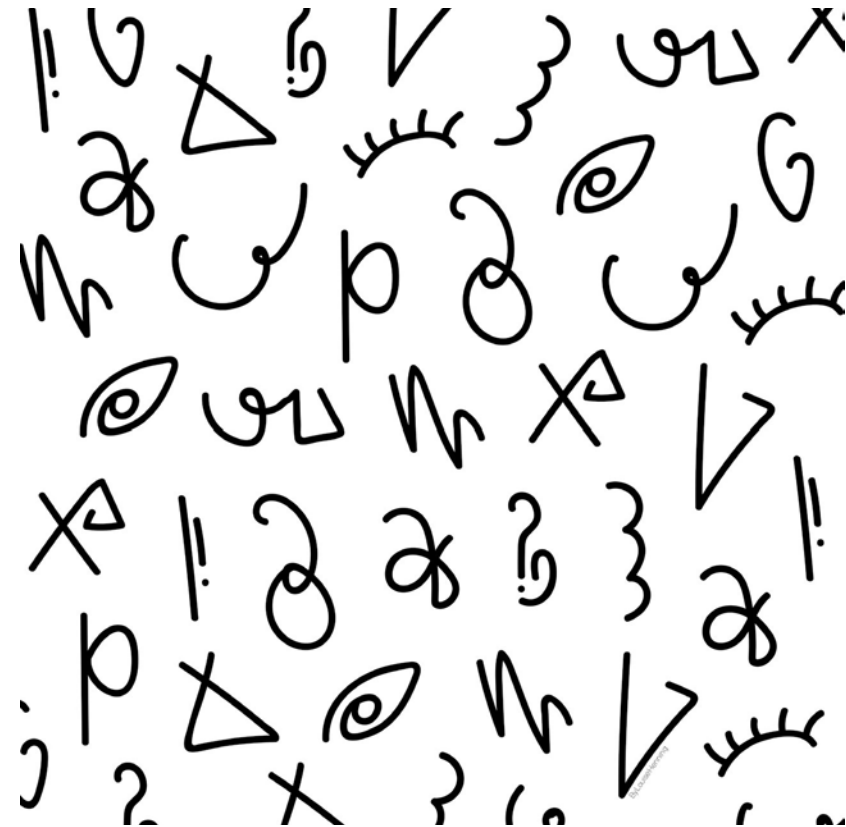


MURAL #4: PASTEL MULTICOLOR MURAL IN MIAMI (ARTIST: ANTONIO RUBALCAVA)



MURAL #5: MULTICOLOR OMBRE MURAL IN DUMBO, BROOKLYN (ARTIST: MOMO)

Follow Your Heart



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE HENNING



Louise Henning

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4 Ways to Inspire Creativity:

1. TRUST YOUR GUT AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF. Have in mind, "What makes you different or weird – that's your strength". When you feel good about yourself you attract good things. Try to think of your qualities as assets. My restlessness helped me a lot when I began using it in the right way.

2. FIND YOUR COMFORT SPOT. For me it's my apartment, because it has all I need for me to be creative. It is quiet, it makes me calm and this is where I get most of my ideas. When in my comfort spot, I let my imagination run free, and I just create whatever comes to mind.

3. WORK OUT. Doing yoga, lifting weights, going for a run--it doesn't matter as long as it is something you like. I recently realized that working out actually makes me more creative. When getting rid of all the stress and thoughts distracting my brain, I feel much lighter and I see everything clearer.

4. FAIL. Almost all of my ideas comes to me after having created a bunch of stuff I do not really like. At the end of the day, those good ideas wouldn't have come to me if I didn't come up with the bad ones first.

I started drawing when I was home for a few months, exhausted from work. The only thing I felt like doing was drawing, and I think that's where it all started. At the time I did not see anything good coming out of it, but now, a few years later, I am so thankful for that time.

I lived in San Francisco for a year and I had the opportunity to meet a lot of people running their own businesses. That inspired me to just go for it and do whatever makes me happy. Because in the long run, that is all that matters. If you are not happy, you can't make anyone else happy.

I have always felt some kind of restlessness within and I have learned to be friends with it, use the energy it gives me, and have it help me create. It's like I have energy locked up in a box that needs to get out, and when I create, I open that box and let some of that energy out. It makes me feel calm. 🍋

Follow Your Heart



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAMICE



Katell Schmitz

WWW.REVERIELANEDESIGNS.COM / @REVERIELANEDSIGN

I have always felt the deep desire of ambition burning in me. I knew I wanted to do more and be more than what seemed to be offered to me, I just did not know I would have to create it myself. Growing up, I had all sorts of 'dream jobs': a doctor (until I realized numbers despised me as much as I feared them), a fashion stylist, a U.N. interpreter, etc. With all that bundled together, I decided to study Applied Modern Languages, and later on, for my Masters, I went for Cultural and International Project Management.

Fast forward to present day. I do neither of these things I received degrees in, nor any of the things I once dreamt of doing. That being said, I get to do a little bit of them on some level through my business, and that brings so much joy. That's the beauty of owning your own business and creating something on your own terms. I get to be a brand's *doctor*, if you will. I certainly get to style, not clothes but a lot of other things. I use languages all day long by living in the United States while being from France and having French as my native language. Finally, Creative Direction is the perfect marriage of branding and project management which allows me to use what I have learned in school.

Today, I know with a mighty certainty that I would have been miserable in any of these careers singularly, although I spent hours daydreaming about them for years. Having the opportunity to piece together and do what I absolutely love, while caring for my babies and knowing that it's all a product of initiatives I took, is the most rewarding and satisfactory feeling. As an entrepreneur, it is undeniably my definition of success! I believe the path to success isn't straight, obvious, or shaped the same for everyone. I love to use this French

word to express my sentiment about my entrepreneurial journey: *épanouie*, which, literally translated, means 'blooming'/'glowing'. I got where I am today--this glowing and blooming situation--by believing in myself and going fiercely after my dreams and holding on tightly to the promises God had given me.

How can you start following your heart and get to your dream today?

I am a serial motivator and encourager. I just can't seem to leave dreams alone and let them go to the dream graveyard. My whole business concept is fueled with helping others (a bonus if they are women!) go after their dreams. I even have a derivative of the French word for 'dream' in my business name: Reverie Lane Designs. That's the reason why I would like to share with you five not-so-secret things I have learned over the last seven years about chasing one's dreams. Hopefully they'll facilitate your entrepreneurial journey as well.

1. MINDSET: I just finished reading *You Are a Badass at Making Money* by Jen Sincero, and some of the principals got me really thinking on the whole idea of entrepreneurship and the mindset shift that it requires. (I was also wishing that I had read it when I first started.) It took me three years of doing branding to decide to start my own business and a whole extra year to see any consequential results, because I lacked confidence and needed some very serious mindset work to believe myself, first and foremost, that I could make it and invite others to believe in me as well. Following your dreams begins with mindset, with the inner work.

2. CLARITY: Zeal and enthusiasm are great things, but without clarity they might lead you to a *cul-de-sac*, and nobody needs that. Be clear on the dream you're wanting to pursue, otherwise you'll be chasing something else and calling that your dream. I like to do the 'future self interview' exercise, especially before making big decisions. This is how it goes: pick a long term or medium term period of time (three/five/ten years from now), know where you want to be and how you want to feel at that point, ideally, and ask your future self questions to help you trace back your steps. Questions like: what does [business name] do today? What three evolution phases can you distinguish from three/five/ten years ago? What mistakes did you make? How do you balance your time between business and personal life? Of course these would be hypothetical

Bonus Tip!

I know I have mostly been talking in the context of entrepreneurship, but your dream ultimately doesn't have to be entrepreneurial. Your business can support your dream but not be your dream itself. It can fit in that dedication section by putting in the work that eventually enables your dream to happen...that's perhaps the subject of another conversation!

answers and might make you feel slightly cuckoo, but it really does work. You will clarify your dream by imagining yourself smack in the middle of it, and you will also discoverer and develop your ability to anticipate and equip yourself to create that dream.

3. DEDICATION: It's true what they say: time is money. Productive time is money earned, that is. And wasted time is lost money. In this entrepreneurial journey, that matters. It all comes down to hard work, dedication, and grit. At the beginning of chasing that dream especially, you must put in all the work hours you can. There simply is no secret or way around that. You will see faster and better growth of your dream by doing the work and being extremely dedicated to it. A good way to do that is to start by evaluating a number of hours per day or week and tuck them into your day. Stick to the regiment until you see results and push some more until you can delegate the work. The work will always be there and putting in the work will always take you to the next step and the next step. It's not about enslaving yourself, it's about aligning your actions and efforts with your desires and dreams.

4. COURAGE: Take risks again and again. Remember, you just have to get it right once. I think when it comes to owning your own business, having courage and being willing to go after our fears as much as after our dream is key. The entrepreneurial road is scary, it asks a lot of you, and it doesn't always feel comfortable. Having courage and a daring spirit are what separate the great ones from the ones who just do alright. I know you want to do more than alright! So lasso that courage and be on your way to your dream! 🍀



WITH **ANDREA LOGAN WHITE**

WWW.ANDREALOGANWHITE.COM / @ANDREALOGANWHITE



Q: Andrea, what is your hope for those who read the book? Share with us the message of the book title?

The title, *Perfectly Unfinished*, defines my struggle of feeling like I could never attain perfection, along with the high expectations that I held for myself. Over the years, from my travels, speaking, and work, I have heard from so many others that face this same

struggle at various times in their lives. I fought the lie of perfectionism for many years and until I came to the realization that I will always be a work in progress.

Q: Like many young girls and women, you struggled with feelings of unworthiness and perfection. How did/do you suggest girls/women deal with these feelings in a healthy way?

Let's face it, beauty and vanity is everywhere. My struggles started when I was a young girl living in a small town outside of Chicago. No media influenced me, but my lack of nurturing triggered low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. My advice is to talk and share your heart with trusted friends. Get in a small group with authentic people that share your same faith, that will love and encourage you. Be mindful of social media and the downward spiral and false perceptions they can convey. Be aware social media is filtered, and often is an illusion.

Q: After high school you moved to LA to pursue a modeling/acting career and found yourself immersed in the fast life of compromising jobs, parties, drugs, and promiscuity. How did these choices heighten your feelings of emptiness?

After high school, I moved to San Diego with my father and brother. I immediately found a part time job and started modeling in San Diego while going to college. I was invited to a party in Los Angeles by an agent and that is where I met Hugh Hefner's girlfriend and soon after we became roommates and rented a house together. I moved up to L.A. the day after I turned 20 with a \$350 in my account and a dream in my heart. I was blindly swept up in the wrong crowd and I nearly died because of it. That lifestyle has a false illusion of perfection, happiness and acceptance. But as someone gets further involved in the drugs, partying, men, etc..., you discover it only covers up and intensifies the emptiness. In my book, I share my story about how low I felt until one day I cried out to God in my car while I was at a stoplight in Hollywood.

Q: You dated several celebrities and often found yourself torn between their worldly desires and trying to maintain personal integrity. What is your message to women feeling the pressure to compromise their values for acceptance or a relationship?

RUN!! Don't give into the pressure to compromise your worth for a man or a career.

Q: Despite professional treatment to overcome your eating disorders, there were times you fell back into old patterns. What helped you break these unhealthy patterns?

During those times I tried to bring the darkness to light. My advice to others is don't isolate yourself. Especially if you suffer from depression. I learned to confess my faults to my close friends and admit when I was struggling. I became my own advocate and turned my persistence to never giving up. Simplify your life. Journal. Sometimes you have to have a good cry. Make sure you treat yourself the way you would treat your best friend. Focus on the things you love about your life, your body. Keep notes in a gratitude journal.



Q: After you married and started a family, old insecurities and eating disorders created chaos in your life and marriage. How did you confront these issues? Do you still struggle with these issues today?

I think one will always battle those insecurities but now I have a peace through it and reassurance I didn't have when I was younger. I've been blessed with a husband that loves me despite all my flaws, and our three children, so I realize there is no place for self-hatred or negativity. Young children will mimic everything you do and say. In some aspects, they have been my biggest healers. I make sure I tell them no matter what you do, I love you no matter what and there is nothing you can do to make me stop loving you.

Q: You have starred in several feature films. Do you find acting and producing enjoyable or a challenge and how has this affected your self-esteem?

I love it. I find the older I get, the more I realize what really matters. Sure we all have days when we don't feel so great about ourselves, but I remind myself this is NOT about me and my exterior.

Q: Do you have women you'd consider your "tribe"? How did/do you connect with other women in life-giving ways?

Yes and I love them!!! Many of them I met at church when I was a new mom, in a group called MOPS. I still have my childhood friends and friends all over the country that I keep in touch with also. We aren't afraid to show our flaws, and talk, pray, cry, and laugh. Laughter is so healing, and life is hard. Almost all my girlfriends are going through their own storm, and we comfort each other. I try to be transparent on social media to other women I don't know, because I want them to know they aren't alone, and no matter who you are, NO one has it all together.

Q: How do you think that being in community attributes to your dealing with issues of perfection and unworthiness?

It allows you to just show up, to be authentic and just come as you are. ☺

Andrea Logan White is a wife, mother, actress speaker, writer and co-owner of Pure Flix Entertainment

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTINE COMINA

How to Get to the Heart of It



by **Chrystal Evans Hurst**

WWW.CHRYSTALEVANSBURST.COM / @CHRISTALHURST

My college-aged daughter called me to ask for my advice. She had a major decision to make and wanted me to lend my ear and my thoughts. As I listened to her explain her dilemma and share the pros and cons of the decisions before her, I realized in either case that her choice was not an issue of morality, black and white or, right and wrong but more of a preference. This decision involved knowing what she wanted. The weight of the decision came because the choice would carry major implications regarding the direction of her life moving forward and she simply wasn't sure about which direction she wanted to go.

I understood her plight, I'd been in her shoes before.

I recall feeling that weight when going to deciding where to go to college. I also have felt that weight when choosing between two job opportunities, settling on where to live, and making major purchases. Relationship decisions had been hard too. Should I bring things to an end, take a break, or press through?

When my daughter asked for help with making her decision, I answered her -- offering her a piece of advice she didn't expect.

I asked her when she'd felt most closely connected to the best of the girl inside. I asked her to tell me when she felt as if she was honoring her God-given design. I asked her to think about the last time she looked at her life with expectation and anticipation.

She took a few seconds to ponder my question - a question that didn't seem connected with getting an answer at all. But after a few seconds she was able to answer. She gave me a time two years before. A time that she was about to graduate from high school. She

was excited about the next stage of her life and had an awareness about what she might want out of her journey.

Glad that she had been able to pinpoint a particular time in response to my query, I then told her to present the decision she needed to make to that girl -- the girl that had high hopes for her life and that had a handle on what she expected to get out of life. That girl, the girl from a few short years before had a sense of clarity and hope about her expectations for her future and deserved to be presented with the possibilities of next steps.

It took my daughter a minute to follow my slightly ethereal and non-tangible question but after a while it dawned on her what I was asking her to do.

What's really the heart of the question I was asking my daughter? Simply put, how do you best honor the life of the girl in you -- the life that only you can live?

Because sometimes life unfolds and things get more complicated than what they should.

The longer we live we learn to do what makes sense, what seems safe, and what seems reasonable. We learn to stick with what is acceptable. We learn to color inside the lines even if coloring outside of the lines is what thrills us down to the core of who we are.

So we take the job that pays more even if it drains our soul. We choose the school to which others react positively, even if we sense deep down in our gut that another school "feels better" for reasons we can't explain. We choose the safe place to live even when there is another area of town, state, or country that we truly enjoy despite the fact that we don't know anyone there.

And we stay in the relationship because it feels safe or because we are afraid to be alone.



“This world is a noisy place. It takes intentional effort to hear the cries of our hearts.”

If we are not careful, we will reason ourselves right out of wonderful opportunities to express the unique gifts, abilities, interests, passions, and personal nature of the girl inside. We learn to silence her. We build her life around the values of other people, familiar places, or super-sensible plans.

And we forget to take a chance on her - the girl who would really love to live out her unique God-given presence in a unique God-given way.

I asked my daughter to pray and ask God to speak to her heart and to let her know if there was a way that was His way for her. And then I told her that if the decision was only a matter of choice -- of picking a direction and moving forward -- that she should take some time and listen to the girl in her.

She needed to take time to hear what that girl wanted, needed or desired. This world is a noisy place. It takes intentional effort to hear the cries of our hearts. Then it takes courage and bravery to honor the girl who utters them.

While I don't remember what that particular decision was or what her choice ended up being, I do remember that she took the time to listen. And when she called to tell me her decision, she was sure.

She got it. She learned that she could honor her soul by paying attention to her own voice. My daughter had taken the time to listen to the girl inside. She got to the heart of it by looking closely at what God had already deposited within her and realizing that she had known the answer all along. 🙏

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURIE UNGER

Chrystal Evans Hurst is a speaker, worship leader and author of the book *She's Still Here*.



Pinners Conference

WWW.PINNERSCONFERENCE.COM / @PINNERSCONF



“Our goal is to facilitate an inspiring experience. We hope our attendees leave feeling enlightened, encouraged, creative and happy.”

Pinners Conference is the only Pinterest-based event in the nation that connects consumers, brands, and influencers all in one fun location. Women attend Pinners from across the country to learn, create, and shop all the ideas they have discovered, pinned and “liked” online. Popular experts are selected to teach over 100 classes on topics such as: DIY, home decor, beauty, fashion, cooking, photography, party planning, memory keeping, design, lifestyle, sewing, and more. These workshops are in addition to a full trade-show floor, which features over 250 local and national brands. Pinners Conference began several years ago in Salt Lake City and has quickly expanded nationally. There are now Pinners in Dallas, Texas, Scottsdale, Arizona, Salt Lake City, Utah, Atlanta, Georgia and San Diego, California. [📍](#)

CO-FOUNDER, ROXANNE BENNETT



Pinners is a customizable weekend of fun that connects the blogger, the retailer, and the consumer in a face-to-face environment.



The Brand Passion Guide Workshop

The Brand Passion Guide Workshop is a styled educational experience that focuses on cultivating community and teaching attendees everything that I have learned while designing successful brands within the creative industry. The heart of the Brand Passion Guide Workshop experience was created with a special kind of business owner in mind--the kind of business owner who wants to grow, connect, and build from a safe place of truth. My mission is to empower you to feel confident and important while building a brand that you are passionate about.

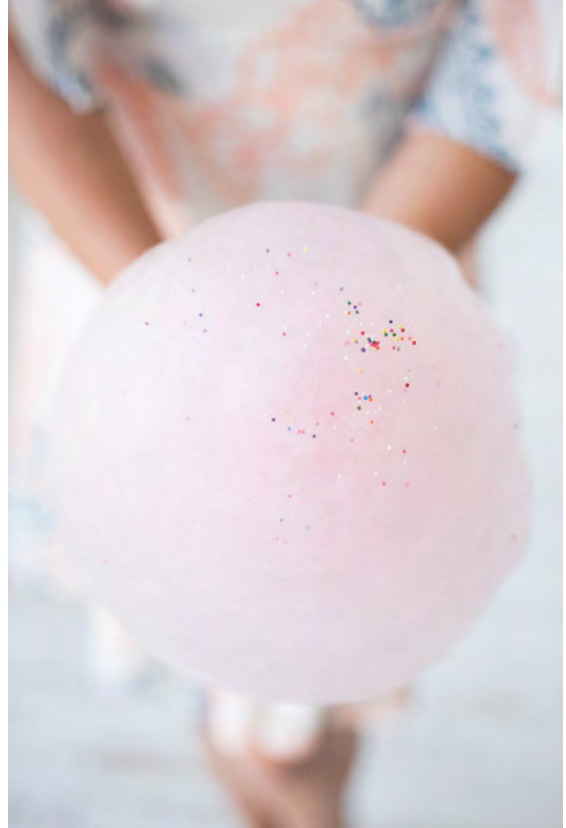
The Brand Passion Guide was originally created as a digital resource to give entrepreneurs insight into my creative branding process. This was my plan: a small resource, no more than about eight pages, packed with the steps I use to create brands everyday. Nothing more, nothing less. I quickly realized that there was a need for a deeper, more hands-on experience--one that would equip attendees with the tools needed to connect their brand to their passion and to focus on what matters most in their lives.

For this event, attendees were transported into the world of The EmmaRose Agency with one step over the threshold of our beautiful all-white brick venue in Annapolis, Maryland. The free-flowing design set the tone for the day and fostered unimaginable passion. An intimate group of photographers, weddings planners, florists, and creative coaches spent the day learning how to define their brand's unique style, cater to their target audience's specific needs, and identify the elements of a cohesive brand, along with the tools to increase profitability in their business easily. The BPG Workshop was also filled with small group sessions led by industry influencers, interactive styling sessions, and, last but certainly not least--a signature rosé toast to celebrate the triumphs to come from the day's work.

If you light up at the idea of building a brand based in authenticity, we invite you to join the family and reignite your brand so you can return to what matters most in your life. Find the next The Brand Passion Guide Workshop @theemmaroseagency. [📍](#)

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@HAVENANDHASBROOK

Tiffany Tolliver is the founder of The EmmaRose Agency which offers, branding, web design and styling for creative women in business.



“The BPG Workshop was everything I expected and more. In the past, I’ve second-guessed my decision to start a business, but attending this event and surrounding myself with other like-minded individuals confirmed that I am doing the right thing and following my heart. I walked away feeling empowered and even more confident than before. You are incredibly awesome for putting this together, and I will cherish the experience forever.”



CRAFTCATION

WWW.DEARHANDMADELIFE.COM / @DEARHANDMADELIFE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW WILLIAM



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LP HASTINGS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN FEINZIN



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW WILLIAM

“I was nervous to attend Craftcation for the first time on my own, but I’m so glad I did. Not only was it worth every penny but it WAY exceeded my expectations. Everyone was so welcoming. I created meaningful friendships, crafted my heart out, and learned actionable business skills. I have finally found my community and I’m never letting go.”

CRAFTCATION ALUM

Craftcation is an annual four day business and makers conference. Industry professionals give lectures and host panel discussions on creative business, as well as lead attendees in hands-on craft workshops—and it all happens right by the beach in Ventura, California. Craftcation ignites the entrepreneurial spirit, strengthens craft and business skills, and builds relationships in the creative community.

At Craftcation you’ll be surrounded by hundreds of other creatives who are there for the same reasons as you are:

- Build your community
- Start the business of your dreams
- Get the tools and knowledge to push your existing business to the next level
- Feel the pure joy of learning new skills and making
- Spend four days at the beach having fun

Aside from over 100 business and craft classes, Craftcation has evening celebrations, themed parties, yoga, tours, and intimate gatherings so that attendees can balance learning with fun and forge lifelong friendships.

Craftcation is a once a year, life-changing opportunity to be surrounded by people who will inspire you, support your dreams, and help you achieve your creative and business goals.

CRAFTCATION: BUSINESS + MAKERS CONFERENCE
 April 4-8, 2018
 Ventura, California
 Registration opens: October 5, 2017
 For details: www.dearhandmadelife.com



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURIE WILSON

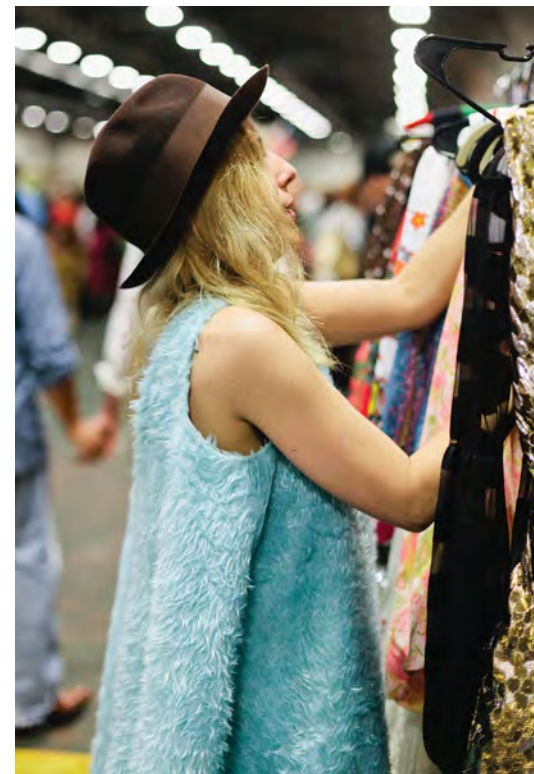


PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW WILLIAM



Flea Style Summit

WWW.FLEASTYLE.COM / @FLEASTYLE



Flea Style – previously dubbed The Dallas Flea – was founded in 2009 by Brittany Cobb. The former lifestyle editor fostered a deep love for vintage and unique goods as a writer and as a child combing local markets and antique malls with her mom in Southern California. Recently, Flea Style grew into e-commerce to sell vendors’ wares as well as unique finds Cobb sources around the globe and the company launched Flea Style Summit, a conference for creatives to help inspire and educate the small business and artisan communities.

Whether you’re a small business owner, considering starting your own company or just looking to network and learn something new, it’s important to take time to invest in yourself and your brand. Flea Style Summit is one of those assets for creative thinkers and tastemakers. The summit aims to inspire and empower attendees to take their brands and life goals to the next level through informative panels and mentorship sessions while also enjoying meals, cocktails and some serious fun such as an artisan candy bar, live hand-lettering, book signing, shopping and more. [🔗](#)





Wild Hearts Conference

WWW.HELLOWILDHEARTS.COM / @HELLOWILDHEARTS



Wild Hearts Conference is a rally for the dreamers, action takers, and magic makers. It's for the women who refuse to live an average life and are ready to dive into the grandness life has to offer. It's for the women and entrepreneurs who want to throw their hair up, roll up their sleeves, get their hustle on, and make magic happen in the world. It's for the women who aren't afraid of the process but will do what it takes to live the life they were created to live—a life full of purpose, wild and untamed.

The 2017 conference held in Brooklyn, New York, was the perfect combination of inspiration to keep your soul blazing, knowledge to help you grow your business/dream/vision, and connection with other like-minded women.

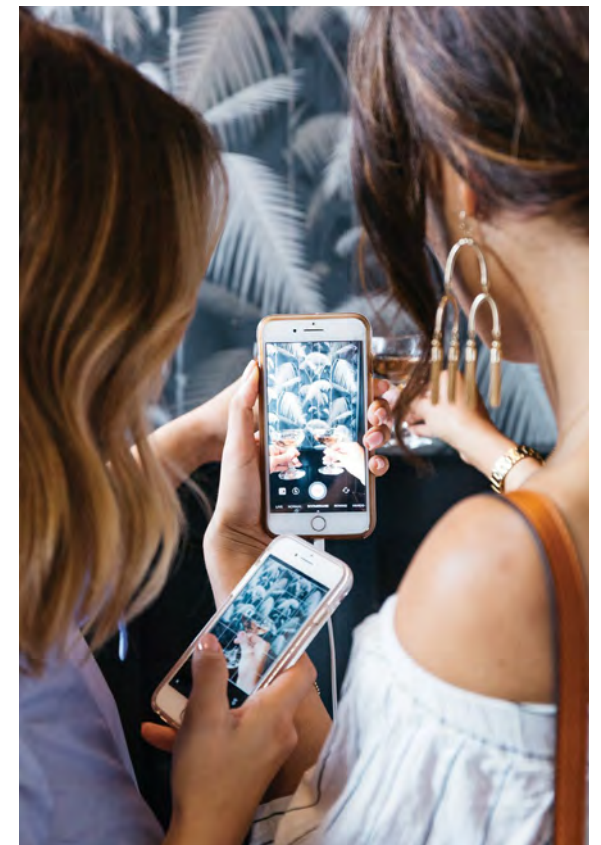
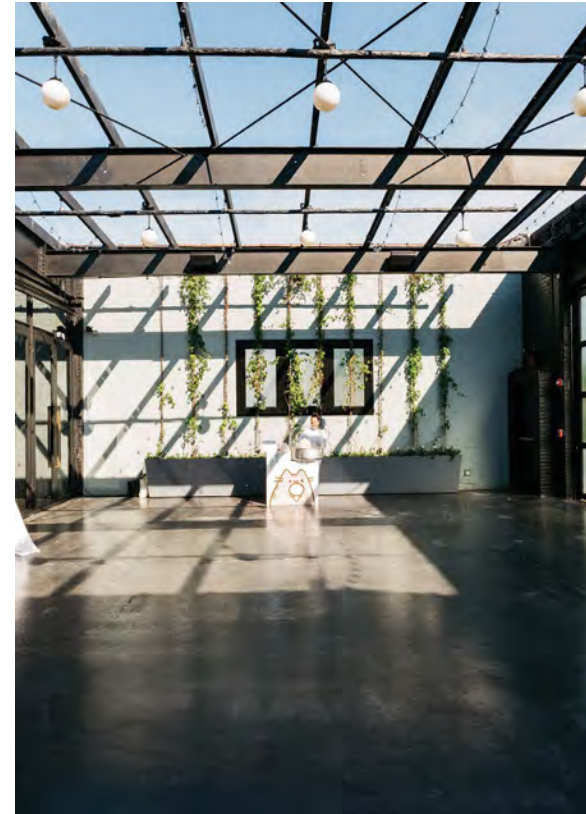
The keynote speakers and panelists were women who embody what it means to be a dream chaser, magic maker, and action taker. They were authors, leaders of social enterprises, humanitarians, artist, ted-talk speakers, advocates for justice, innovators, and culture influencers. Among them were Ruthie Lindsey (Stylist and Speaker), Eryn Eddy (founder of So Worth Loving), Liz Bohanon (founder of Sseko designs) and Ashley Beaudin (#theimperfectboss).

Each session at Wild Hearts Conference took you through the process of dreaming. Because, like anything—dreaming and creating is a process, a cycle, a constant journey. No matter where we are in our current journey, we're always dreaming and striving for something new, breaking past old limitations and expanding our capacity, reinventing ourselves and digging deeper into our purpose.

Two full days of activity including sessions, panels and the epic "after party" and "goodbye party" filled 501 Union, an historic car restoration shop turned event space which was the perfect backdrop for the event. And, it wouldn't be a Wild Hearts event without brunch—the morning after the conference, attendees had the opportunity to brunch with new friends, french toast and mimosas.

Wild Hearts isn't just a conference, it's a community. Co-founders Lindsey Eryn Clark and Lauren Palomares (aka Lin and Lou) began by hosting "wild hearts wknds" in various cities across the country such as Portland, New York, and Austin. You can find upcoming dates for all of their events at www.hellowildhearts.com or on instagram [@hellowildhearts](https://www.instagram.com/hellowildhearts).

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK LIVINGSTON AND MAX KUTZ





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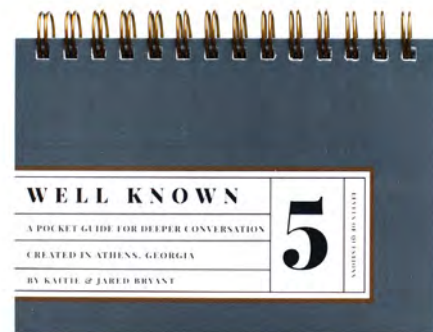
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LITTLES + PETS

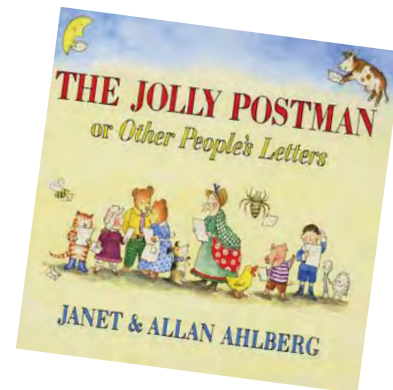


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2018 National Parks Calendar / \$28
www.slightlystationery.com



Orderly Days System / \$45
www.motherhoodpress.org



2018 Weekly Refresh Weekly Planner
 \$39.95
www.jlynn.designery.com



Whole Body Fitness:
 A Self-Guided Fitness Planner
 \$45
www.homebodysoul.com



Belong Market Guide

REFRESH



Rose + Sea Salt Hair Spray
(100% natural and vegan beachy texturizing spray)
\$22
www.florapothecarie.com



Good Tidings 16 oz. Mason Jar Candle
\$22
www.antiquecandleworks.com

Cake by the #
2 oz. \$10 / 8 oz. \$21
www.2sweet2touch.com



Bon Voyage Kit / \$55
www.oy-l.com



Frosted Cranberry Sugar Scrubs / \$12
www.spathyme.etsy.com

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WEARABLE



The Elizabeth Dress / \$225
www.sixchelbydinachavez.com



Wire Wrapped Quartz Ring
\$19.50
www.etsy.com/shop/theFaintofHeart



Chic + Active Leggings / \$58
www.howwesoul.com



Spill the Tea Statement Tee / \$26
www.thecaffeinatedcork.com



Choose Joy Women's Tee / \$22
www.rawsugarwrites.com

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WORKING GIRL



Wife. Mom. Boss. Tshirt / \$28
www.nimbishop.etsy.com

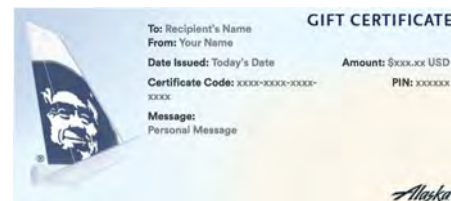
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www.awaytravel.com



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www.alaskaair.com

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\$18
www.rachelallene.com



Van Reversible Travel Tote
\$349
www.swandoe.com



about the artist



Rachel Heckmann

Rachel Heckmann is an educator, product shop owner, encourager, and the creative stylist and director at Rachel Allene, an online shop that offers products and services for the creative, joyful, and inspired dreamer. She creates business resources in order to encourage and empower women to run heartfelt and profitable businesses on all social platforms. Rachel is a grateful wife, founder of #lesshustlemoregrace, and believer of real talk.

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