

**Wisdom of Shared by the  
Women of the  
Becoming Your  
Best Version Podcast**

Published by  
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**Becoming Your Best Version**  
**Words of Wisdom from 93**  
**Podcast Guests**

*Book I*

**By Podcast Creator and Host,**  
**Maria Leonard Olsen**

*This book, and all of my life's work is dedicated to my children,  
Caroline and Christopher,  
who light up my world in so many ways.  
I will live my amends to them for the rest of my life.*

## Introduction

I started the podcast, *Becoming Your Best Version*, to amplify the voices of wonderful women who have inspired me on my journey. These women come from all over the world and share their stories and insights to help others navigate life. What follows is the answer each of these women provided on the podcast to the following question: *What do you do to become your best version?*



*Becoming Your Best Version* is available on seven platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts and Amazon Music.

Subscriptions and reviews are welcome!

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# Season One

## **Yvette Boden**

### **Founder of Awakened-Woman**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Learning self-worth. For most of my life, I didn't realize I had something to bring to the table. I was worthy of good love. I was worthy of good things happening to me.... We are all worthy of love and I think a lot of times, we deny that to ourselves. The love you give to yourself sort of spreads out into different parts of your life. It really is the core to having a good life.*

As the founder and author behind Awakened-Woman, a digital platform designed to inspire and invigorate females, author Yvette Boden writes with endless empathy. In just two years, AW has amassed tens of thousands of followers, thanks to a combined 500+ articles centered around celebrity profiles, relationships, love, abuse, motherhood and Latino culture, infused with a signature blend of her pragmatism and compassion. In 2021, she was named one of the “Bella Bosses We Admire” by Bella Magazine. Yvette’s words have also appeared on The Best Holistic Life Magazine, Thrive Global, media maven Arianna Huffington’s portal dedicated to ending the global stress and burnout epidemic, and BELatina News, where she profiles celebrities like Latin Grammy Award-winner Luis Fonsi, television actor, Joe Minoso and ABC's "The Baker and the Beauty, actress, Nathalie Kelly. Since 2020, as part of the AW Empowerment Series, she has interviewed Alexandra Garcia, Google, Jeimy Osorio, Actress & Singer, Heather Fink, CEO & Founder, The Sexiest Beauty, Novi Parker, Actress, Tyler Perry’s Sistas, Amelia Moran Ceja, President, Ceja Vineyards, Kara Goldin, Founder & CEO, Hint Water, Author of WSJ Bestseller, “Undaunted,” Maria Trusa, CEO, Forme Medical Center & Urgent Care, Shayla Rivera, NASA Rocket Scientist / Comedian, Benita Alexander, Journalist, Julissa Prado, CEO & Founder, Rizos Curls, Nathalie Kelly, Actress, Alexa Ray, Canadian Recording Artist, Vanessa Coppes, CEO, Bella Magazine, Lois Robbins, Actress from TV Land’s hit show Younger, Lisa Vidal for AW, Actress from The Baker and the Beauty and BET’s Being Mary Jane, Nikki Boyer, Actress, 3-Time Emmy winning Media Personality and Host, Dying for Sex Podcast, as well as Christina Vidal Mitchell, Actress, ABC’s United We Fall. Her debut book, A Journey to Becoming the Best Self (Black Rose Writing)—part memoir and part prescriptive nonfiction, inspired by Yvette’s own post-divorce path from devastation to joy—was published in 2019, and received praise from The U.S. Review of Books. As a single mother based in New York City—a metropolis she credits for her open mind-- Yvette regularly channels her own growth experiences, she has contributed to outlets like SmartCoparent and DivorceHub.com that focus on personal crises. Ultimately, Yvette’s writing, which seeks to empower and encourage women searching for personalized definitions of success, is an effort to build strong communities through vulnerable and powerful storytelling.

Website: <https://awakened-woman.com/>

Instagram: @womanawakened

Facebook: AWinspires

Twitter: @womanawakened

## Dr. Nicole Cutts Success Coach

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Pay attention. Get quiet and go inside and listen to your core self.*

Interview with my dear friend, Dr. Nicole Cutts. Nicole is a Clinical Psychologist, Success Coach, TEDx Speaker, author and media commentator. She is also an entrepreneur at the helm of Cutts Consulting, LLC an Organizational Consultancy and Vision Quest Retreats through which she helps women clarify and achieve their Visions of Success. Through her work and book series for women and girls entitled *The Adventures of Isabelle*, Nicole inspires and empowers people to achieve a more balanced and successful lifestyle. Whether in a corporate board room, classroom or facilitating a retreat in an exotic location, Nicole enjoys taking audiences to the “Aha” moment, helping them identify blocks, spark a change in attitude and behavior and ramp up personal success and happiness! Nicole can be seen and heard frequently on TV and radio. She is also a former executive producer and radio show host on WPFW 89.3 FM in Washington, DC.

Nicole received her Ph.D. from the California School of Professional Psychology-LA, where her emphasis of study was Multicultural Community Clinical Psychology. She received her Executive Coach certification from The Center for Executive Coaching. She also holds a B.S. in Psychology from Howard University.

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

## **Susan Burrell**

### **Intuitive Healer and Spiritual Guide**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Get the garbage out of your head. Mind-mapping helps. To get it out creates space to investigate what is keeping you stuck. I invite you to face that. If it's scary to do that yourself, find people to help you.*

Susan Burrell is the author of “Live Your Empowered Life: A 30-Day Journey Book” and she has a thought provoking podcast called Empowering Chats with Susan Burrell that can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iHeart Radio and other popular platforms. Her guided meditations are accessible through the Insight Timer App. Susan is a feisty Scorpio (was even born with the red hair to back it up!) who has navigated life by learning how to listen within to that Divine urge that keeps pointing her in the direction of her life’s purpose even when she can’t see the road. She is a guide in the crossroads of life with a master’s degree in Consciousness. Susan has been counseling and supporting people in transforming from the inside out for over 25 years. Her methods are proven because she has lived this journey to empowerment.

To learn more about Susan and her work: <https://www.susanburrell.com>

**Jack Perez**  
**Founder of Kuel Life, Redefining Modern Midlife**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I have a very long list of to-do's and they are all scheduled in there because they help me be healthy and be my best, but I don't punish myself on days when I don't get them all done. I don't know of any day where I check off all of the things in my head about what I need to do to be my healthiest, kindest, or smartest. I figure if I get about 80% done in a given week, that's a solid B, and I can live with that.*

Jacqueline "Jack" Perez founded Kuel Life in 2017. Through her platform, Perez champions change, redefining modern midlife for women through curated content and women-driven brands. The Kuel Life Community grows daily. With over 35 Kuel Category Experts and 35 women-driven brands, Kuel Life offers women an opportunity to "Share, Learn, Shop, and Play with Our Second Act Sisters!" Previously, she spent 20 years at Summit Strategy Partners, a San Francisco-based marketing and public relations firm, where she was a founding partner. Jack brings extensive, deep, start-up experience, having worked with numerous small to midsize companies. She is excited to finally birth her own start-up. Having earned an MBA from the University of Chicago, Perez carries a hard-nosed business understanding to the entrepreneur world. She is fluent in Spanish, and having worked with multiple international firms, has a clear grasp on cross-cultural influences. Jack's passions include spending time with her son and traveling to exotic, off-the-beaten-path places such as Cuba, Jordan, Zambia, Bolivia, and Zanzibar. An endorphin junkie, Jack is an avid jump roper, Peloton-fanatic and a third-degree black belt in Taekwondo.

Learn more at <https://kuellife.com/>



## **Alesia Cohen Weiss and Kara Rubenstein Deyerin Women Helping People Who Have Discovered Misattributed Parentage**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Alesia: My best version has come from knowing who I am and becoming involved in fulfilling work.*

*Kara: I have had to deal with a lot of adversity in my life and I have had to get up and brush myself off and keep going. I now carve out space for myself and take time to heal myself first because we have to take care of ourselves first before we can help others. In addition, we all have to take a breath before we respond, as well, and try to have some grace because we don't know what is happening in others' lives.*

**Right to Know (RTK)** educates the public on the complex intersection of genetic information, identity and family dynamics. They advocate for Misattributed Parental Experiences (MPE, NPE), anyone who discovers the person who raised them is not their genetic parent. Their advocacy includes increasing awareness of misattributed parentage experiences (MPEs), promoting access to trained mental health professionals, and changes in the law to reflect the right to know one's own genetic identity. <http://www.RightToKnow.us/>. RTK has a hotline for people who need help: (323) TALK-MPE.

Alesia Cohen Weiss is RTK's CXO, Chief Experience Officer. Alesia is a retired RN, Army Veteran, and blog writer. She is a leader in networking for positive emotional support, genealogical research, and education for those impacted by a surprise in their DNA. Due to her own experience from an over-the-counter DNA kit in 2014, she was shocked to her core to find the man who had raised her was not her genetic father. It took Alesia four years of sleuthing to discover the identity of her biological father. Unfortunately, he'd passed years before. After connecting with her genetic family, she discovered four members had brain tumors just like she'd experienced. Had she known she had a genetic predisposition, her doctors could've diagnosed her tumor much sooner.

Kara Rubenstein Deyerin is RTK's Chief Executive Officer. She is a non-practicing attorney with an LLM in Taxation and a master's in Trade & Investment Policy. Two years ago, Kara wanted to see where in Africa her father's family came from. Her over-the-counter DNA test revealed she was 50% something but it wasn't African. This meant the man on her birth certificate couldn't possibly be her genetic father. She lost her bi-racial identity with the click of a mouse. Kara discovered she was 50% Ashkenazi Jew. The DNA Pandora's box she opened led to an identity crisis. She's a passionate advocate for genetic identity rights. Read her blog about being Unexpectedly Jewish in Seattle.

## **Amber Keyes**

### **Keys to the Kingdom Founder and Healer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I am really passionate about embodiment work (practices to tune into and appreciate your feminine body), and using some of the Mama Gena tools for emotional mastery (a book and courses demonstrating a feminine approach to reclaiming your life and helpful tools for moving your feelings and for bearing witness to other sister goddesses, which helps to integrate the whole self), to work through negative emotions. Also, every year I make a manifestation list that always includes a circle of supportive women that feed my spirit, that are like minded, and that I can surround myself with because there is so much to be gained in this way.*

Amber Keyes is a multi-faceted, complex, and dynamic force for good in this world, with offerings that include parenting by design and helping women find their spark. She is the Chief Empowerment Officer of Keys to the Kingdom and has dedicated her life's work to the revolution of human consciousness. She integrates her background in psychology, social justice advocacy, and Human Design to help people live their truth and love their lives. She believes that once you can see and accept yourself exactly as you are, the floodgates of opportunity and prosperity open to help you create a life beyond your wildest dreams. When she isn't transforming Human Consciousness through her work with clients, Amber can be found playing ball with her dog, or venturing outdoors with her family. Learn more at <https://www.amberkeyes.com/>.

**Chloe Cullen**  
**Author on Perfectionism**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Self-forgiveness. I recognize that I am still very perfectionist. It helps to center myself and realize that I am very fortunate. I try to be aware of what happened in a given day that was good and what is good in my life.*

Chloe Cullen is the author of PERF: The Unspoken Flaws in Our Perfect Culture (New Degree Press, August 2021), a book of essays exploring perfectionism in mainstream culture and her own life. From Hamilton to Billie Eilish, from Twitter to Martha Stewart, PERF breaks down perfectionism as a cultural pattern that reinforces hard work and constant improvement in a never-satisfying cycle. Her work has also been published in TINGE Magazine, Please See Me and other publications. Chloe has worked at entertainment agencies, management firms and production companies in talent representation and development. In May 2019, she graduated from Penn State with her Masters in Creative Writing, her Bachelors in English and her Bachelors in Broadcast Journalism. Check out the pre-sale video on her forthcoming book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVwAtjZT8rw> Instagram: @ischloeawriter PERF newsletter: <https://ischloeawriter.substack.com/>.

**Lisa Tahir**  
**Psychotherapist and Psychoastrology Founder**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Really being intentional with who I spend my time with, how I spend my time and being really mindful about what I am doing. I forgive myself and support myself. I give myself supportive, positive messaging and deliberately make a positive narrative for myself. I strive for a state of well-being so that I can be available and present to everyone in my life.*

Psychotherapist, author and healer, Lisa Tahir is passionately committed to working with people to help them heal through all of the senses of the body by utilizing intuition, therapy, energy healing, meditation, Reiki healing, crystal healing, nutrition, sound frequencies, yoga, exercise, podcasting, writing and teaching. She hosts the popular weekly podcast All Things Therapy, dedicated to promoting personal growth and advancing the conversation on emotional, psychological and spiritual development in a way that's accessible to people all over the world. At nolatherapy.com you can connect with Lisa and learn more about her work including her nonprofit, "The Yes Foundation, INC," which uses tax-deductible donations to teach children and adults with disabilities to blow and cast glass art utilizing her ADA-compliant and the patented workbench, "The CHAIR-iot." Lisa authored the book, *The Chiron Effect - Healing Our Core Wounds through Astrology, Empathy, and Self-Forgiveness*. Learn more at [www.NolaTherapy.com](http://www.NolaTherapy.com). Follow her on social media at @nolatherapy.

**Michelle Fishburne**  
**Founder of Who We Are Now**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I think my best version is somebody who is hearing and seeing people, and converting their stories to share.. I believe I have found the best version of myself and I need to confirm that to myself continually and stay the course.*

Sometimes life turns you upside down, dumps you on the floor, and asks “so what are you going to do about it?” Today’s guest, Michelle Fishburne, believes those are the moments in life that have led her to become her best version. The most recent dump-on-the-floor moment happened in 2020. At the beginning of January 2020, Michelle had a job she loved, she lived in a house she adored, and her youngest was in her senior year of high school. By August 1, Michelle did not have a job or a house and her youngest went off to college. Instead of being afraid, Michelle leaned into the moment and created a version of herself that had been lying dormant for years.

Michelle moved into her motorhome in September 2020 and traveled 12,000 miles all over America, interviewing people about their lives during the pandemic. Her project, called Who We Are Now, will be published by UNC Press in 2022. After she submits the manuscript this summer, she’ll be headed off again, all over America, for her next book. Michelle found the best version of herself.

Prior to launching this project, Michelle has been a public relations and partnership director for national nonprofits, a homeschool teacher, a newspaper columnist, and an international corporate attorney. Learn more about Michelle and her work at [www.whowearenow.us](http://www.whowearenow.us).

**Karen Cleary Alderman**  
**Glass Ceiling Breaker**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Life goes on. What presents at each time in your life will be different, so you have to keep your eyes open to the things that come along and make you happy. I am a voracious reader and I am constantly trying to take advantage of great books and keep learning. There are lots of opportunities in life, lots of friendships, so hold onto what you can while you have it, and do what you can with what you have.*

Karen Cleary Alderman retired in 2020 after a 49-year professional career. That career was diverse, improbable, and broke glass ceilings. It started in academia (6 years) researching and co-authoring three public policy books on veterans, women in the workforce and the transition to the all-volunteer force. She transitioned to federal service (27 years of which 23 years were in the Senior Executive Service (SES)), and finished at Deloitte, the world's largest private sector consulting firm (15 years). Throughout, it was not just work. She married Kim Alderman in 1973 and raised four children. She joined, supported, and held leadership roles in professional associations including the American Society of Military Comptrollers and the Association of Government Accountants. She is committed to health and fitness, including competitive springboard diving. Karen currently is a USA Masters 1-meter springboard champion.

**Michela di Carlo**  
**Late Bloomers' Advocate and Founder of CrunchyTales Magazine**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I embrace myself, with all of my imperfections. I started becoming the best version of myself when I stopped caring about other people's opinions. I always focus on my own path and my own journey. It is a waste of time and energy to compare oneself with other people. I want to keep growing. My sense of guilt was holding me back. But I realized that there is nothing wrong with trying to improve one's life.*

Michela di Carlo is a Manchester England-based, former feature writer for the most influential Italian national newspaper *La Repubblica*. She holds an MA in Communication Studies from the University of Rome and is a senior member of the Italian Professional Journalists Society. Michela is a speaker and creator of "Salotto Italiano" (Individual Restaurants Production), a series of charity events in support of the Prince's Trust. She has also hosted several "road-shows" around the UK promoting the Italian way of life. As a late bloomers' advocate and founder of the illustrated online indie magazine *CrunchyTales.com*, dedicated to discerning and sassy women over 40, she is now on a mission to reset the meaning of midlife, focusing her work on inspirational content to empower women feeling stuck in the second act of their lives.

*CrunchyTales.com* is the first illustrated online magazine on a mission to reset the meaning of middle age. It aims to empower those who don't let age define them, women over 40 and beyond who need to be seen, heard, and celebrated. The news and features on lifestyle, food & wine, travel and wellbeing are specially tailored for the late bloomers--those women who are evolving rather than disappearing, open to change, and confident to start a positive revolution at any stage of their life. Check it out at <https://www.crunchytales.com/>.

## **Diana Place**

### **Founder of Third Act Quest**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Strip it all away and find connection with other people and with yourself. To me, it's honoring this inner GPS that is built on a lot of the work I've done with coaching. I am really in touch with my values and my vision of what I want to experience in my life. So, if I am considering decisions, I go back to my inner GPS. I call myself my best self. I try to keep in line with my true self. I honor my true self and do not compare or judge myself.*

Diana Dunbar Place is the founder of Third Act Quest, which helps people design their “third act” life plans or to work through specific challenges and important transitions in life or work. Her 35-year professional career includes: a decade in Boston with a leading international marketing & ad agency; ten years with America Online (AOL-Time Warner) in the exciting early days of the internet that culminated in a role as senior vice president. She has also started three entirely different entrepreneurial ventures. She co-founded *Dunbar-Hunter & Associates*, a cause-marketing firm (bridging corporations and nonprofits around a range of issues from aids, to homelessness, domestic violence and breast cancer), launched *WonderBlink Photography*, a dream she'd had since she was fourteen, and *The Global Design Post*, an online platform for designers. Though each of these experiences was fascinating, remarkable and expanded her life and my mind, it is what happened *around her* business career — the little breadcrumbs that I followed — that have driven her, and were “calling” her all these years. Throughout her life, she has taken on mentor/advisor roles to a range of women, as well as started several organizations including an angel network to serve and connect women. For a variety of reasons, she never put this personal passion front and center. Until now.

In her fifties, she found herself at powerful transition point. Despite the coinciding emotional challenges surrounding a cancer diagnosis, closing her latest entrepreneurial venture, and becoming an empty nester, she was filled with deep gratitude, joy and reignited passion for this next phase of her life. *Third Act Quest* is her way of living my passion to support, inspire and connect people as they create their “third act” of life, and helping to empower optimism versus fear and dread, and respect and collaboration versus disregard and disfavor in our culture. Through retreats, courses, group and private coaching, and a special event series, she can help reframe the experience and perceptions of aging among people of all ages. Third Act Quest is working to shift the experience and perception of aging for individuals, in the workplace and in our culture in general; inspiring people to reimagine what it means to grow older. Importantly as well, she wants to help bridge understanding, connection and mutual support between generations.

Email [diana@thirdactquest.com](mailto:diana@thirdactquest.com) and connect by checking out <https://www.thirdactquest.com/>.



**Judy Arazoza**  
**Founder of Fitness Over 40**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I keep a gratitude journal. To keep up the consistency of it, with pencil to paper, reminds me of being a student. Realizing that, no matter how seemingly impossible life is, there is always something for which to be grateful.*

Judy Arazoza is a mother, grandmother and wife of her prom date from 38 years ago. When she became an empty nester, she decided to take on fitness as a project to pay it forward. She started out as a personal trainer and then became certified in nutrition. In her early years as a young adult, she was a respiratory therapy adjunct instructor and always had a huge interest in health. Judy found that physical fitness could not really happen without mental fitness. So, she took it a step further and focused on mental fitness before physical fitness with my clients. She also considers a third aspect to overall wellness--spiritual fitness--which is often overlooked in the big picture of living well. Judy's goal is to help others improve their lives. Gratitude as a conscious practice is a cornerstone of her approach with midlife women. Judy's website is [www.gratefulfitnessny.com](http://www.gratefulfitnessny.com) and she hosts the "Air Hug Community" podcast.

**Nancy Davis Kho**  
**Midlife Maven and Author of The Thank-You Project**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I remind myself to choose hope over fear. It is very easy to notice all the giant problems in the world and think they are too big for us to fix. Only in choosing to believe that things can improve, can I be part of the solution. This is part of the gratitude process. I encourage and strengthen the positive recall bias. I notice the positive. By deliberately choosing not to be afraid and looking at what I can do helps me to be my best version.*

Nancy Davis Kho is a speaker and podcaster whose work has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and NPR affiliate *KQED*. She is also author of *THE THANK-YOU PROJECT: Cultivating Happiness One Letter of Gratitude at a Time* (Running Press, 2019). Nancy covers “the years between being hip and breaking one” at [MidlifeMixtape.com](http://MidlifeMixtape.com) and on the Midlife Mixtape Podcast, available on all major podcast platforms. The Midlife Mixtape Podcast won a 2020 Iris Award as Podcast of the Year and was included in *Wall Street Journal’s* list of 8 Podcasts for Anyone Nervously Facing Retirement. Nancy has been both champion and judge in the acclaimed international comedy-lit improv show, *Literary Death Match*. Learn more about Nancy’s work at [www.DavisKho.com](http://www.DavisKho.com).

## **Fatima Gul** **Civil Rights Advocate**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Self-care. Every day is a challenge, but maintaining a healthy, sane life is important. I want to make sure I sleep at least hours of peaceful sleep so I can have a productive day. I pay attention to what my body needs, what people I surround myself with, and consuming things that can heal me, because work can be very draining. And being authentic is important. We must dig in and figure out who we really are and what we really need in order to be our best versions.*

Fatima Gul Sindhi-American Human Rights Activist and Executive Director of the Sindhi American Political Action Committee (SAPAC). Her life's mission to raise awareness about the human rights issues in the Sindh, Pakistan province. As the SAPAC Executive Director, Gul has been instrumental in carrying forth the organization's mission to improve the socio-economic and political rights of Sindhis via political advocacy and education. Born and raised in Sindh, Gul spent the first ten years of her career as a teacher and counselor helping orphans at schools throughout Sindh. During her time in the education sector, Gul saw firsthand how the country's school system was struggling to adequately prepare Sindhi youth for future opportunities. Gul worked in various fields where she gained substantial experience working with Sindhi media and witnessed the severe and prevalent censorship of human rights abuses faced by Sindhis. Her roles furthered Gul's conviction and awareness about issues impacting the Sindhi people and cemented her resolve to pursue a career as a Sindhi-American human rights activist. The overarching aim of her work is to educate and foster awareness throughout the U.S. about the critical human rights violations occurring in Sindh, including violence against women and children, religious persecution and enforced disappearances. At SAPAC, Gul has conducted hundreds of meetings with U.S. politicians about the situation in Sindh, overseen the successful implementation of numerous community outreach events and aided in the research of developments in Sindh that are often not covered by international media and documenting it in SAPAC's public newsletter, Sindh Guardian. In October 2019 Gul was invited to speak before Congress during a Human Rights hearing. She highlighted a number of egregious human rights abuses occurring in Pakistan and how it acutely impacts minority communities, including Sindhis. In March 2020, Gul addressed members of the United Nations' Human Rights Council, Geneva, during a special session celebrating International Women's Day. Gul brought attention to the abduction and forced conversion of Sindhi girls. In April 2021, Gul collaborated with the Sindhi Foundation, to organize and participate in a 350-mile walk from New York to DC to highlight the intersectionality of climate change and human rights abuses occurring in Sindh and the world. A short film covering the Long Walk is currently in post-production.

Gul looks forward to continuing her work and hopes that her efforts will showcase the strength of the Sindhi people and their rich history as people living together in peace and tolerance. See <https://www.sindhifoundation.org/> to learn more.

**Julie Reisler**  
**Founder of Empowered Living**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *At the core of all of us, we are created from this essence, this intelligence, that is love-based. So, anything that gets in the way of that, I allow to melt. I start off with giving myself healing, loving energy. Meditation follows. I picture myself embodied with light and ask every day to be of greatest service to me and to all those I am called to serve. I ask the universe to guide me. For me, it is getting out of my own way. Being loving and compassionate to myself has been a huge healing gift. The more I can be loving to myself, the more I can be loving to others.*

Julie Reisler, founder and CEO of Empowered Living, is a Master Transformational Coach, Bestselling Author, TEDx Speaker, and Podcast Host of The You-est You®. Julie has been featured in Forbes, MindBodyGreen, The Chopra Center, and Thrive Global and is the author of the *Get a PhD in YOU* book series. She is a multi-time TEDx speaker and teacher on the popular app, Insight Timer, with over 135,000 downloads. Julie is also the founder of the Life Designer® Coaching Certification Academy and Sacredology® Community. Julie has a master's degree in health and wellness coaching and is on the faculty at Georgetown University in their coaching program. She loves guiding big-hearted spiritual entrepreneurs to be their 'You-est You' in their careers and life. To learn more about Julie, go to [juliereisler.com](http://juliereisler.com).

**Molly Watts**  
**Host of the Breaking the Bottle Legacy Podcast**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I had to address the habit that was causing me so much pain. I had to learn that I was capable of having a different relationship with that habit and change how I framed the past. I had to address what was the biggest issue in my life. Figuring out that relationship changed everything.*

Molly Watts is the author, mentor and podcast host of Breaking the Bottle Legacy. Breaking the Bottle Legacy is dedicated to helping daily drinkers and adult children of alcoholics change their relationship with alcohol. After living under the influence of her mother's alcohol abuse for most of her life, and loathing what alcohol had meant to their relationship it felt like bitter irony when Molly had to acknowledge her own dysfunctional drinking. She changed her 30+ year daily drinking habit, and was able to create a peaceful relationship with alcohol--past, present and future. She now helps others who worry about their drinking do the same. You can pick up a free copy of her e-book "Alcohol Truths: How Much is Safe?" to help you determine your own risk/reward analysis for alcohol. Visit [www.mollywatts.com](http://www.mollywatts.com) to get yours today.

**Jennifer Degan**  
**Somatic Coach and Resiliency Expert**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Yoga is my medicine. It helps me to regulate my mood, to start my day off with some circulation and intentionality. And it helps me start my day much more inwardly. And I can see the difference if I don't start my day in this way.*

"Yoga is my medicine," says Jennifer Degan. Jennifer has 30 years of practice as an educator, counselor, yoga teacher and somatic-based coach. Life brings her great joy and great challenge. Jennifer is a life-long learner, with the equivalent of two master's degrees. She is a member of Wellspring Institute of Mental Health Advanced Graduate Study of Trauma. Attachment and the Embodied Mind is her most recent pursuit. She began the transformative process of her life when she was very young. Her spiritual life opened with the death of a sister when she was six years old. She had a supportive family and people around her that helped her understand grief, sorrow, hope and connectedness to something greater, a spiritual connection to the God of her understanding. From the age of three on, she has known this deep connection resides in us, and that we have the capacity to use the intimate and profound happenings in our lives for greater good.

Since this experience, she has transformed and grown from other life experiences. She was dropped at age 11 on her back during an Outward Bound program and carried off on a stretcher. That "trust fall gone south" only made her dig deeper into her capacity to push through pain, debilitation and challenge, and find new ways to discover hope.

The experience of being dropped was only the beginning; she has since suffered brain trauma and surgery, multiple losses, and falls that keep her getting back up again, curious and aware that caring for ourselves is an important and necessary job to undertake, as we never know what will throw you back, literally!

She takes her practice of life seriously. Hope, persistence, deep love and connections are a starting place for her yoga and meditation practice. She encourages all her clients to find their authentic voice. It is from this core source that we gain the most inspiration.

Learn more at <https://mindbodyawareness.net/> and <http://restoringresiliencyclub.com>.

**Jennifer Arthurton**  
**Creator of Old Chicks Knows Sh\*t**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *The best thing that I do is to reconnect with myself every day through meditation or paddle boarding to the middle of the lake, so I can tune into myself—to determine what is going on and where am I being directed. If I know who I am and am grounded, I can better support the people around me, I can better do my job and I can better share my gifts.*

Jennifer Arthurton, who is based in Canada, is the creator and founder of Old Chicks Know Sh\*t, a platform and podcast designed to inspire and support midlife women in chasing their dreams and creating their kick ass next chapter. Jennifer is an empowerment coach, podcast host, writer and speaker, and having made her own midlife course corrections, she is a passionate advocate of the inherent power and wisdom that women possess at a time when they often feel overlooked in society and doubt themselves most. Jennifer regularly appears as a guest on blogs and podcasts and as a speaker at marketing conferences, women’s conferences and events. Find out more about at [www.oldchicksknowshit.com](http://www.oldchicksknowshit.com) or Old Chicks Know Shit on Instagram and Facebook.

**Debra Soltis**  
**Attorney and GirlsUp Executive Director**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *This question implies that there are comparative versions of myself that I should not embrace. It's all a continuous journey. It's easy for me to be proud of the moments when I am confident, compassionate, caring or creative. The challenge is that is not only who I am. I am also intolerant, impatient, insecure, cranky and all of the things that I am. The challenge is to embrace all of it on our road to truly know ourselves, which is not the end game, but is a critical component to living a meaningful life. I think that trying my best to living an examined life is what keeps me true to this journey. That is composed of recognizing all aspects of myself, and telling the truth even when that's uncomfortable, and realizing that my choices reflect who I am, whether I want them to or not. It includes trying to stay on top of what I say I believe in versus the choices that I make and seeing that they line up. It also is realizing that it's all a gift and taking a deep breath and, in my father's words, walking in like you own the place.*

Debra Soltis is a founding partner of the law firm of Kiyonaga & Soltis, PC in Washington, D.C., where she specializes in employment discrimination, criminal defense and civil rights litigation. Much of her practice focuses on empowering women in the workplace to combat sexual harassment and other forms of gender discrimination. Debra has been repeatedly recognized by *Washingtonian Magazine* as one of the best attorneys in Washington, D.C. in employment law and has been repeatedly honored as a SuperLawyer by her peers for her criminal practice. Since 2009, Debra has served as the Executive Director of GirlsUP, Inc, a DC not-for-profit which inspires adolescent girls to figure out who they are before the world tells them who they should be. She is a sought out commentator on issues related to civil rights, criminal justice and the societal challenges faced by adolescent girls and has appeared on CBS Evening News, NPR, ESPN and numerous other media outlets. For over twenty years, Debra was on the adjunct faculty of Georgetown Law School, co-teaching a course of original design on critical film theory with her husband, Paul Kiyonaga. Debra also serves as an Advisor to the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Debra was formerly an associate at Williams & Connolly, LLP, where she worked on a variety of civil and criminal matters for clients including Effi Barry, The Washington Post and Paramount Pictures. She is a *magna cum laude* graduate of Georgetown Law School and is admitted to practice in the District of Columbia and Maryland. She and her husband have four children, two girls and two boys, ranging from ages 14 to 24. See <http://www.kiyosol.com> and <https://www.girlsup.org/>.



**Barbara Guterman**  
**Entrepreneur and Teach Give Inspire Fridays Founder**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *The most important thing is to take that one hour a day for myself. Normally, what that means for me is to exercise, clear the cobwebs and start my focus. I take a few minutes every morning to reflect on what I am grateful for, like today I am grateful for my independent children, I am grateful for my opportunities, I am grateful to be here. Take time to do the things that you love. Set your intention each day for who you want to show up as that day. And be in the service of others. It's those moments when you get outside of yourself that really bring you so much energy and joy.*

Barbara Guterman is a seasoned entrepreneur, a passionate business executive, and a veteran community organizer with a desire for creating powerful change. She is a devoted wife and mother to three grown sons who share her passion for business and for giving back. As a consummate entrepreneur for over 35 years, Barbara has launched companies and managed businesses in a multitude of industry segments including telecommunications, retail, franchising, manufacturing, fine jewelry and in internet-based start-ups. Her experience ranges from small business to large scale public corporations and covers many areas of expertise including, management, operations, sales, investor relations, public relations, community relations and external affairs. Her ability to see the big picture and to do whatever needs to be done to achieve that goal is what sets Barbara apart from others. At the young age of 23, Barbara saw an untapped market opportunity in the telecommunications industry and co-created one of the nation's first competitive local phone companies. At the age of 30, Barbara's company was the first in her industry to go public and was regarded by Wall Street as a "leading edge" company. Under her team's leadership, the company raised over \$80 million dollars and grew to over 5,000 employees, providing competitive local and long-distance voice and data services to customers nationwide. She was widely recognized for these achievements and was featured in the September 1995 edition of Forbes magazine as a "Woman with a Mission". Barbara has the distinction of being the first person to don the cover of Readers Digest, where she was highlighted as a distinguished woman entrepreneur. In addition, she was recognized as Ernst and Young's 1997 Florida Entrepreneur of the Year, for her efforts in building Intermedia Communications. Barbara received her bachelor's degree in Telecommunication from the University of Florida in 1985 and an MBA from the University of South Florida in 1993, where she was also named USF's Entrepreneur of the Year in 1993. . Barbara is currently a Mentor and Partner in several startup businesses and runs a Women's speakers series called Teach Give Inspire Fridays, a platform that allows women the opportunity to empower themselves, their businesses, their families and their communities. <https://www.teachgiveinspirefridays.com/>.

**Robin Joy Meyers**  
**Joy Architect**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Every day, even if it's only five minutes a day, I sit with my coffee and I write in my journal. I take time to practice gratitude. I take time to realize that I have time to do affirmations, and to get outside and take a walk. Start with five minutes. I like to record a personal message each day. In the voice memo function, I like to say, "I am powerful because \_\_\_\_\_." We all walk around with cell phones. Hearing your own voice say such things is so impactful.*

Robin Joy Meyers has used her expertise as a molecular geneticist to become a Joy Architect, ICF Certified Self-Mastery Mindset Coach, TEDx & international speaker and author to empower thousands of women worldwide to amplify their voices, embrace change and thrive through life's transitions. She is the creator of the F.E.A.R. Method and author of *Alone, but Not Lonely: Reclaim Your Identity and Be Unapologetically You*, which was listed among "The 13 Life Coaching/Self Development Books That Everyone Should Read" by Fupping. Her upcoming book, *The Common Denominator*, will be released in early 2022. Robin Joy's TEDx Talk, "The Science of Loneliness and Isolation" has been viewed by tens of thousands and is featured on TED.com. Her expertise also has been featured on Hallmark's Home and Family TV show, CUTV News Radio, Thrive Global, Medium and Authority Magazine.

See <https://linktr.ee/robinjoymeyers> for more information about her amazing work. Listen in and learn about the science of fear and loneliness, the importance of alone time, how we each have to validate ourselves (no one else can do it) and how the number one lasting relationship we have is with ourselves.

**Heather Leah**  
**Founder of WithLoveDC**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *The answer changes from day to day and from season to season in life. It means showing up each day and trying to listen to what I need as far as support, and what parts of myself are asking for healing. We often spiral through the same lessons in different ways. Being my best self is checking in every day and doing my honest best each day. Maybe it means adding new activities or creative projects or stepping back. Always taking stock of what I need and how I can meet those needs is what is important.*

Heather Leah is a poet, teacher, meditation and yoga instructor, children's book author and community organizer living in Ashland, Oregon. She is passionate about bringing people together and creating a sense of community and support. She is the founder of the movement WithLoveDC and the annual Women of the Wild gatherings. WithLoveDC is a movement to spread love, joy, and acceptance throughout the District. Join us in our mission to make this world a better place; one smile, hug, or random act of kindness at a time. They hold free pop up yoga around DC, including at the U.S. Botanic Garden. Women of the Wild is a magical gathering where women of all ages, races, religions, and backgrounds will share a sacred space among trees, rivers, and bird songs. Heather's favorite activity is to spend time with friends and explore hiking trails in the DC area with her dog, Snoop. See <http://www.withlovedc.com/> for more info.

**Nuthan Manohar**  
**Founder of Me Met Me**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *After I went through a series of problems, I wondered about the purpose of life. I believe we are put on this earth is to learn certain lessons. How we learn these lessons is going through heartbreak and other difficulties and pain. Believe that the universe has your back and wants you to realize your potential. All the experiences that you need in order to transcend are put in your path. There always is a lesson. If you keep that belief, you will become your best version.*

Nuthan Manohar, who is located in India, is the founder of Me Met Me, a "Sleep Whisperer," "Happiness Mentor" and "Ayurvedic Perfumer." Nuthan is a TEDx speaker on therapeutic perfumery, an adjunct faculty at IIM K (one of the top five management institutions in India, and top 100 globally) for Self-Management, an international corporate trainer with clients like LinkedIn, Discovery Channel, Indian Navy, Hyatt, and Yoga Alliance. She has a Masters in Yoga and an MBA. A volunteer movement she had started from her Yoga Studio went on to become a best practice case study acknowledged by UNDP.

During the peak of her brand consultancy career, when she was in charge of eleven countries, she faced a host of acute physical and mental challenges. This prompted her to set out on a mission to discover, design and share techniques to restore health and happiness. In 2020, she was able to assist over ten thousand people across the globe to become resilient to stress, stay happy and sleep deep. She is working towards the launch of her personalized therapeutic perfumery brand. Check out <https://memetme.org/>

Tune in to learn about how to sleep better and how to increase your happiness!

**Laura Di Franco**  
**Brave Healer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I make the pursuit of joy a priority every day. This was a practice and it did not happen overnight. When I figured out what my deepest desires are—not what others wanted—things shifted in ways I did not anticipate. It was a challenge and a mindset practice and a mastery. Doing that allowed me to be my badass self every day.*

Laura Di Franco is the CEO of Brave Healer Productions, where they publish world-changing wellness books. With thirty years of practice in holistic physical therapy, a third-degree black belt, and 20 books and counting, she offers powerful expertise and energy that'll help you leave a legacy with your brave words. In this podcast, Laura shares a few self-healing techniques and her success in making the pursuit of joy a priority every day.

See [BraveHealer.com](http://BraveHealer.com) for more information about Laura's work in helping others share their voices.

**Luisa Heymann**  
**Author of *Get a Move On!***

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I think most of us know what we need to do, but I need to organize my time to allow myself to do these things. I need to take care of myself and be present for my friends and family. I need to not put things off. My best self is when I show up for me and for the people that I care about in my life.*

After a lifetime of being physically active, in 2014 Luisa Coll-Pardo Heymann was side-lined with a broken neck after being hit by a drunk driver. For months she could barely move, so when finally able to resume something approaching normal life, she had to start getting back in shape in teeny-tiny bite-sized pieces; thus, the concept of mini-workouts was born. She soon realized that these were a fantastic addition to her weekly schedule--even once she could exercise normally again--and has kept it up ever since. If you're in a similar situation working to come back from an illness or injury, are sedentary and/or tire easily and would like to have more energy, have a scary health problem that you need to get under control, or are just plain tired of being out of shape and don't know where or how to begin to get your body on the road to better health, Mini-Workouts are a great place to start.

See <https://www.mini-workouts.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/Luisa.Heymann.Author> for more information.

**Liz Solar**  
**Voiceover Actor and Storyteller**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *It is trial and error. I am always redefining. Being curious and caring about what other people think about the world. Actively listening. Listening below the surface. We are imperfect people. We are bound to, as imperfect people in an imperfect world, make bone-headed moves. Sometimes it comes down to a sincere apology. That can heal a lot of wounds. I am always working on that. I am never really satisfied. Because I have a pulse, I know I am not there yet.*

Liz Solar is a Boston-based voice actor who can be heard on commercials, interactive apps, audio books and corporate narrations for regional and global brands. She has produced and participated in storytelling events, and produces and hosts the *Embark* podcast. Her mission is to share stories--both personal and universal--to promote understanding, empathy and a little more conversation. Liz coaches reluctant speakers to communicate with more confidence, power and grace. Her signature talks include "No is Not a Four-Letter Word." A founder and contributor to the writer's blog, *Acts of Revision*, Liz is completing her first novel. She lives in the greater Boston area with her husband and Goldendoodle studio manager, Jessie.

See [LizSolar.com](http://LizSolar.com) for more information.

**Emily Barrosse**  
**Founder of Bold Story Press**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I have learned to write down and say out loud the things that I want in my life. The change I want in my life that will bring me the serenity I want. Writing them down and saying them out loud gives them life. It makes me accountable, in some way, to myself. It is a way for me to manage and overcome the fear. I manifest my destiny by saying out loud and writing it down.*

Emily Barrosse is founder and CEO of Bold Story Press, a publishing press by, for and about women. Previously, she founded Bold in Business, a program that teaches professional women to own their power for success in business. Emily developed her track record of publishing success while working in leadership roles in the publishing industry. She has more than 30 years of hands-on experience signing, developing, and publishing best-selling books. As Vice President, Editor in Chief at McGraw-Hill, she was responsible for a \$500 million digital and print publishing list. In addition to her publishing and leadership expertise, Emily is a keen listener and communicator, and an excellent coach in the area of developing entrepreneurial leaders. She is passionate about working with and advancing women and minorities at every level. Emily has an undergraduate degree in Communication from the University of Delaware. She lives outside of Washington, D.C.

See <https://www.boldstorypress.com/> for more information.



## **Sky Bergman Documentarian**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Not letting fear stand in the way of doing something. Instead of saying, "Why?" say "Why not?" I stayed true to my passions and did not allow money to stand in the way. I have tried to keep my dreams alive. Sometimes you have to think outside the box. I had to think creatively to have the funding to get my film made.*

Sky Bergman is an accomplished, award-winning photographer. **Lives Well Lived** is a documentary that celebrates the incredible wit, wisdom and life experiences of older adults living full and meaningful lives in their later years. Encompassing 3,000 years of collective life experience, diverse people share life lessons about perseverance, the human spirit and staying positive in the midst of life's greatest challenges. It was screened in more than 200 cities, garnered awards, and is being aired on PBS. It is Sky's directorial debut. Her fine artwork is included in permanent collections at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, Seattle Art Museum, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Her commercial work has appeared on book covers for Random House and Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., and magazine spreads in Smithsonian, Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel, Reader's Digest and Archaeology Odyssey. Sky currently is a Professor of Photography and Video at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo, CA. See [www.lives-well-lived.com](http://www.lives-well-lived.com) for more information. "'No' is just a starting point," says Sky. As a person who encountered much rejection before her film garnered acclaim and a coveted spot on PBS, this is true, well-earned wisdom!

See <https://www.skybergmanproductions.com/> for more information.

**Kelly Howard**  
**Fitness Empowerer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *To really see what is going to light me up, what is going to make my life more exciting. When I do that, it extends out to everything else in my life, my work, my family and my relationships. If I am not doing the things that make me feel great, then I am not going to be able to take care of the things that matter in my life.*

For more than 20 years, Kelly Howard has been connecting women to freedom and personal empowerment through fitness consistency, mindset and adventure. She's changed thousands of lives with her "Fit is Freedom" podcast, courses and events, and is a contributing author to the bestseller, *#1 Habits for Entrepreneurs*. A serial entrepreneur herself (created and sold four companies), she's the former owner of Bayou City Outdoors, the largest outdoor activity and social club of its kind. She's helped thousands of women enjoy and flourish on hiking, biking and kayaking adventures worldwide. She currently calls Houston, Texas her home, but can frequently be found on rivers and trails across the globe.

See [www.FitisFreedom.com](http://www.FitisFreedom.com) for more information.

**Ana McKessy**  
**Holistic Energy Practitioner**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *It is all about meditating. If I am able to meditate, I am able to be more grounded, to be more centered. I can respond with a calm voice of reason or support, without getting pulled into whatever is happening. It is transformative to even take five minutes of breathing and connecting inward. It can be taking a walk in nature and connecting inward and being present.*

Ana McKessy is a holistic energy practitioner, taking women on a transformational energy journey using meditation, energy healing and coaching. Through her Facebook group, the Spiritual Gravy Train, Ana leads a community of women and shows them how to improve their energy and their lives through movement, wholesome nutrition, focused relaxation and connection to their inner self. She provides masterclasses on meditation, breathwork and energy. She also provides one-on-one coaching for women looking to move forward in discovering their true identity and life's passion so that they can be the best version of themselves! Having devoted much time towards healing and recovering from her own core traumas and ancestral wounding, she has followed a calling to help other women do the same. Her energy work is transformative. Single sessions equate to years of therapy. Through Akashic record readings, channeled lessons from higher consciousness and spiritual counseling, she supports women looking to reclaim their voice and recognize their innate power. If you are looking to get unstuck and start over again in your career, love relationships, money relationships or any other aspect of your life, she is here to help.

See <https://www.whenspiritleads.com> for more information.

## **Lynda Rozell Tin Can Pilgrim**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *It was a matter of setting aside time every day, where it is just me and God, to pray and to develop an even closer relationship with Him. He made me to be the version of myself, so I peel away the layers to get closer to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.*

Lynda Rozell has lived most of her life in Virginia where she earned Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in Foreign Affairs and a J.D. at the University of Virginia. After law school, she joined the firm, Hunton & Williams, as an associate on the Antitrust and Trade Regulation team in Washington, D.C. She subsequently worked as an Attorney Advisor on the personal staff of two presidential appointees to the Federal Trade Commission. Lynda also has worked as a massage therapist and run a small business providing in-home therapeutic massage for pregnant women. She served in a number of capacities at Tepeyac Family Center, a non-profit ob/gyn practice in Fairfax, Virginia, and the primary program of Divine Mercy Care, a charity devoted to transforming hearts through healthcare. She was married for 21 years and has two grown children and an elderly Chihuahua. Raised Catholic, Lynda fell away from the church for many years. To her surprise, she rediscovered faith as an adult. She actively volunteered at her local parish and parish school as well as serving as a Girl Scout leader when her children were young. In 2018, Lynda retired, moved to Florida, and embarked on her marvelous adventure as a full-time nomad, living in an Airstream travel trailer. She started a travel blog in 2019, [www.tincanpilgrim.com](http://www.tincanpilgrim.com), and wrote a book chronicling her transformation to a life as a Tin Can Pilgrim, including her ongoing growth in her faith and in the practical skills needed to live in and tow her Airstream trailer. Lynda seeks to live out her Catholic Christian faith in her ordinary, everyday life as she travels around the country visiting and writing about shrines, religious sites and the beauty of Creation. She invites others into the community of nomads and wanderers that she has found on the road and shares the signposts that continue to lead her to radical trust in God. She enjoys volunteering and spending time the many friends she has made in her travels across the country.

See <https://tincanpilgrim.com/> for more information.

**Kavita Ahuja**  
**Founder of Power Purpose Play**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Reinvention. Getting better every day. If we give ourselves the time and opportunity each day, we become better. Understand what is within and bring those best parts into the world. I practice meditation, and ask hard questions about what I really want. What do you want to contribute to the world? How do I want to be better? It is about giving back and helping others to realize their full potential. It is something I do every day, one little piece at a time. What is best is an individual definition.*

Kavita Ahuja is an entrepreneur and founder of Power Purpose Play , a global platform dedicated to advancing the personal growth and inner power of women in midlife. She is the host and visionary behind the successful podcast, “The Midlife Reinvention”, a course content creator, an accomplished writer and a Personal Transformation and Transition Coach. At age 52, Kavita, who also holds a major in Biology and an MBA, left an extremely successful corporate pharmaceutical career of almost 25 years, took control of her health, her spirituality and her personal relationships, and found her next true calling, which is to help women find the power within them to rediscover their purpose and reinvent themselves, regardless of their age or circumstance. She rediscovered herself after the age of 50, and she knows you can too. Her mission is to help you do just that. “My vision is to give you a glimpse of yourself beyond anything you can imagine," says Kavita. "I want you to experience more happiness, more hope for your future, more excitement for your next journey, more confidence in yourself, and a greater understanding of your true purpose and power in this next chapter of your life.”

See <https://powerpurposeplay.ca/> for more information.

**Diane Papalia Zappa**  
**Author of *The Married Widow***

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I try to be kind to myself and realize that some days are going to be better than others. I try to reach out to other people. If I can write to other widows, help them in some way, or help with efforts regarding my was husband's health challenge, that is a worthwhile thing to do.*

Diane Papalia Zappa earned her PhD in Lifespan Developmental Psychology in 1971. She went on to teach human development courses to thousands of students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, attaining the rank of tenured Full Professor of Child and Family Studies at the age of 30. While in Madison she and co-author Sally Wendkos Olds wrote *A Child's World* (now in its 13th edition) and *Human Development* (in its 14th edition). In 1986, while still a Professor in Madison, she met Frank Zappa's younger brother, Bob, who was marketing manager for one of her books. They married in 2015. Her latest book, *The Married Widow*, is available everywhere, and is her reflection on their relationship through the years. It is a beautiful and poignant love story, with inspiration for people who have lost loved ones.

See [www.TheMarriedWidow.com](http://www.TheMarriedWidow.com) and <https://www.facebook.com/themarriedwidow> for more information.

**Catherine Grace O’Connell**  
**Founder of Forever Fierce: Midlife Matters**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Look at yourself and be real with yourself., not in a negative way. Be a better me than I was yesterday. We all fall down, and all we can do is look at ourselves and ask how we can be better today. Be the better self that you are today. We all play the comparison game with social media, but the best thing we can do is compare ourselves not to others, but to who we were yesterday and to be better.*

Catherine Grace O’Connell is an Ageism Positivist, an Empowerment Catalyst, the founder of Forever Fierce: Midlife Matters, a global Facebook Community dedicated to supporting and celebrating the Modern Midlife Woman, and the CEO of MODlife Media, a female-focused message based digital media agency. She is a Motivational Speaker and the host of the Mastering Modern Midlife Talk Show. Catherine is passionate about inspiring and empowering women at Midlife & Beyond to see aging in a positive light.

Women at Midlife & Beyond are the Perfect Storm. We are the first demographic in history to have health and vitality, wisdom and life experience, and a pocketbook to match. We are a fierce creative force balanced by compassion and empathy. Together, we control over 80% of the nation’s disposable income and it’s time we make our presence known!

Six years ago, her life looked vastly different. She was a woman who almost lost her life to late stage Lyme Disease, disempowered from decades of trauma and abuse. She had no self-esteem, no passion, no purpose and no future. Her beliefs changed and her life began to dramatically transform. She let go of who she was told to be in order to become the woman she had always desired to be.

She has been on a deeply spiritual path for over 30 years. She has her Masters in Spiritual Psychology and a PhD from the University of Rise Like A Phoenix. She is an energy worker trained in many different modalities. She has studied with some of the top spiritual teachers, mystics and mentors who empowered her to understand true transformation happens from within. She didn’t have a tribe so she created one!

Our attitudes, beliefs, energy, patterns, and behaviors in the present determine our future. What we think and believe directly affects how we age. Through her life experience, she has become an expert at Mastering Modern Midlife and it’s her passion to share what she has learned with others. See <https://catherinegraceo.com/> to learn more.

## **Alma Chopra** **Life Example and Inspiration**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I get better every day. The core of it is accepting myself. After I was diagnosed, I was chasing a cure. But now I practice meditation and affirmations, short positive statements in present tense. The more you tell yourself positive messages, the more likely they are to become true. I am a believer in quantum physics, the gratitude, and love for yourself. The better version comes slowly, but every day you can work on yourself to become better.*

Alma Chopra is an entrepreneur, inspirational speaker, disabilities awareness advocate and life counselor, who has conquered Cerebellar Ataxia, a disorder that causes progressive loss of coordination and difficulties with balance and gait. Her story is an embodiment of hope, faith and courage in times of darkness and overwhelming uncertainty. Alma, whose name means "soul" in Spanish, wants her journey to serve as an example. "I am willing to show my vulnerabilities to the world. If it can inspire one person globally, my job is done."

Learn more about Alma at her website, [www.almachopra.in](http://www.almachopra.in), and follow her on social media:

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/almachopra>

YouTube: [https://youtube.com/channel/UCspjHEVLhkfrxu-XJA7Y\\_gg](https://youtube.com/channel/UCspjHEVLhkfrxu-XJA7Y_gg)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/chopraalma>



**Geeta Bakshi**  
**Afghan Refugee Assistance Nonprofit Founder**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I practice resilience. I remind myself every day to have faith that what is meant to be will be. I take the blessings and the difficulties in life and I try to practice embracing that all of these experiences have helped me grow into the best version of myself. The unbelievable women in my life have helped me to learn resilience. I appreciate that this lineage of extremely resilient people have helped me learn to face challenges, embrace them and overcome them.*

Geeta Bakshi spent 14 years with the CIA doing counterterrorism work and focusing on the war in Afghanistan, bestowing upon her an enormous responsibility to help protect innocent lives from terrorist adversaries. Geeta is a second-generation American of South Asian descent and the founder of FAMIL, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Afghan allies and their families resettle in the United States after the evacuation of American troops from Kabul in summer of 2021. Geeta founded FAMIL, which means “family” in Afghanistan, to help Afghan allies of the United States, just as they had helped Americans in Afghanistan for so many years. FAMIL is dedicated to assisting Afghan allies and their families in the United States. They provide comprehensive support to Afghan families, with a focus on employment, education and integration. Their vision is for displaced Afghan families to rebuild their lives, pursue their dreams and become contributing members of their new communities in the United States.

See [www.familusa.org](http://www.familusa.org) to learn more about her important work.

**Lauri Fitz-Pegado**  
**Author, Diplomat, Executive and Trailblazer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I try to be introspective, to be caring, to consider other people's views, to remain open, to keep my priorities in balance—family, friends, professional pursuits and passions. And that is hard. But that is what I try to do, to keep those things in perspective. And now it is time to determine how I want to give back.*

Cultural and commercial diplomacy are the hallmarks of Lauri Fitz-Pegado's career. She has been a civil servant at the Voice of America and the U.S. Information Agency, and a Foreign Service Officer in the Dominican Republic and Mexico. Appointed by President Clinton, she was confirmed by the Senate to serve as Assistant Secretary and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service at the Department of Commerce led by Secretary Ronald H. Brown. In the private sector she advised countries, corporations, individuals and non-profits as a senior executive at Hill and Knowlton and Gray and Company, and as a partner at The Livingston Group. Lauri also was an executive at Iridium, the global mobile satellite communications company. With a history of ballet training and performing with the Capitol Ballet, Vassar Dance Theatre and Ballet Santo Domingo, she now has returned to her passions by teaching ballet and mentoring. She applies her communications and public relations skills to promoting artists, and her business and leadership experience to advising dance institutions sharing her commitment to social change, empowerment, and inclusion.

Lauri received her B.A. from Vassar College, M.A from the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and speaks Spanish and Portuguese. She is grateful for the rich contributions her community of family and friends has made to her life story.

For more information, visit <https://inthedash.live/>.

## **Pleasance Silicki** **Integrative & Holistic Coaching/Healing & Sacred Arts Guide**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I go to bed early so I can get up early to feel source, spirit and wisdom. So every morning I have this divine, intimate date with myself. Sometimes we dance, sometimes we read under a warm blanket. I listen to classes. In Ayurveda, you start the day with warm water. And I love coffee. To be the best version, I prioritize and honor the most important parts of the day for creativity and source and spirit.*

Pleasance Silicki is an Ayurvedic Lifestyle Counselor, Holistic Health Coach, Rising Kohenet, Author, Death Doula, Inner Voice Facilitator and Adjunct Faculty at The American University and the Maryland University of Integrative Health. She teaches from the foundations of evidence-based Positive Psychology and weaves the practices of many wisdom traditions including Vedic Wisdom, Mystical Judaism, Earth-Based Rituals and ceremonies, and Somatic Healing. She is the founder of THRIVE, an online self-care class and LOLA, a dynamic community-based in sacred circles and teachings that cultivate liberation and awakening in daily life.

Pleasance is the author of *Delight: 8 Principles for Living with Joy And Ease* and the host of the LOLA Community Podcast. As the founder of lil omm Yoga Studio, the co-founder of The National Kids Yoga Conference, and Septima Clark Public Charter School, Pleasance is passionate about bringing well-being into a variety of communities and connecting spiritual teachings to racial justice. In higher education, she taught Mindful Explorations, Strategies in Stress Management, and in the AU Community Experience program. She facilitates Mind-Body Medicine Skills Groups, Stress Management and Self-Care workshops and retreats.

See <https://linktr.ee/lilommyoga> for more information about Pleasance's work.

**Patricia Lohan**  
**Feng Shui Expert**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *My house is feng shui-ed always. And wherever we go, I feng shui the space. I started a good news revolution. I know that, where attention goes, energy flows. Refocus. Ask people, "What's your good news?" It has been an amazing journey. I invite you to ask people what their good news is. They may say nothing. Then ask them, "So, nothing good has happened today? They usually can come up with something. Create a positive ripple.*

Patricia Lohan joins us from across the pond in Ireland. She is a Feng Shui expert, manifesting magnet, alchemist, healer and real-life Irish Celtic Shaman. Patricia is the creator of PowerHouse Feng Shui and Author of *The Happy Home: A Guide To Creating A Happy, Healthy, Wealthy Life*. She helps entrepreneurs make their homes & businesses magnetic to money, luck and blessings. She shows you what they don't teach in business school, what lies between the lines, your top-secret tool for success. She has helped thousands of people across the globe embrace Feng Shui and create lasting changes in their businesses, homes and lives. She likens Feng Shui as acupuncture for the home. Patricia has seen firsthand the power of the mind, surroundings and inner healing, clearing and aligning everything so it works holistically. She loves entrepreneurship, and has grown three successful startups of her own. Patricia has been featured in media around the world, including The New York Times, CNN, Forbes, The New York Post, She Knows, Essence, Mind Body Green, USA Today and Elephant Journal.

See <https://www.powerhousefengshui.com> for more information. And a great tip she shared: Ask people, "What's your good news?" Everyone has something good in their lives. And that which we focus on becomes magnified. Let's join her good news movement!

# Season Two

**Barbara Ellison**  
**Happiness Coach**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Find out who you are. Find out what is under all the labels and masks that you have on. It is a process of awareness. It can be something little. What is one little thing? And forgive yourself. Look in the mirror and celebrate who you are. Then say, "I forgive you for \_\_\_\_."* *Something will come to you. We all have baggage. We all have stuff. When the tears stop coming, we are healing. Don't go back to it. Let it go because it is no longer serving you anymore. If you need to fess up, do that, then let it go. That is where the process starts.*

Barbara Ellison is a speaker, author, host, personality trainer, dream coach and wellness partner. She works with mid-life women who are ready to take charge of their lives so that they can be the best ever version of themselves--the full of energy, well-toned, confident and highly paid version. Barbara is on a mission to make happiness the norm by inspiring people to lead happy, healthy, financially free, abundant lives.

Learn more at <https://trendsinmarketingenterprises.com>.

**Ronit Plank**  
**Author and Storyteller**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *A balance of pushing myself and resting when I need to rest. My husband helps me slow down and practice self-care. I give myself time to understand that I don't have all the answers, that the answers will come eventually, and that it is a process. I need to accept that I am doing the best that I can.*

Ronit Plank is a writer, speaker, teacher and mother whose work has been featured in *The Rumpus*, *The Atlantic*, *The Iowa Review*, *Writer's Digest*, *The Washington Post*, *The Seattle Times*, *The New York Times* and elsewhere. Her stories and essays have been nominated for both the Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net and she is author of *When She Comes Back*, a memoir about the loss of her mother to the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and their eventual reconciliation. Her short story collection *Home Is A Made-Up Place* won Hidden River Arts' 2020 Eludia Award and will be published in 2022 by Sowilo Press. She's also creator and host of the award-winning podcast, "And Then Everything Changed," featuring interviews with authors, survivors and people in recovery about pivotal moment in their lives and the decisions that have defined them. She lives in Seattle with her family.

See <https://ronitplank.com/> for more information and for links to her book, articles and podcast.

**Dr. Andrea Wilkinson**  
**Brain Health Expert**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I really tune in and am honest with myself about what I need to do to protect my energy. I have become acutely aware of the activities that I do, the people I surround myself with, and what I do that drains my energy. I have become a conscious observer. When I don't have my internal energy, I cannot use my resources to help others. I have become a keen protector of my mental resources, my internal energy. I identify what makes me feel energized. And I am not apologizing for it. I am doing things in my daily life, like going for a walk in the afternoon, because of how they make me feel. I sometimes put blocks in my calendar because I need that time to replenish myself and fill that cup back up.*

Brain health expert, Dr. Andrea Wilkinson, is helping people find focus, mental clarity and calm through a better understanding of how the body works. She has a Ph.D. in Psychology and has been researching brain health, wellness and mental resilience for the last 20 years. In 2014, she founded BrainShape.ca, a platform for adults who want to optimize their mental vibrancy and physical energy. Dr. Andrea is also the host of the BrainShape Podcast, a weekly show that covers the latest brain health research and shares tips on how to feel your best. Check out <https://www.brainshape.ca/> for more information.



**Philippa Hughes**  
**Social Sculptor**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I was thinking about this commencement speech that Steve Jobs made at Stanford. It is hard to see how the dots connect in your life, until you look back. The dots are going to connect, but you may not see the connections until later. So my correlation to Steve Jobs' message is that you must throw out a lot of dots. So people are my dots. Every gig, every good thing that has happened to me in my life, is because of some dot I threw out earlier in my life.*

Philippa P.B. Hughes is a Social Sculptor and Creative Strategist who designs relational spaces for honest conversations across political, social, and cultural differences. She has produced hundreds of creative activations since 2007 for people who might not normally meet to engage with one another in unconventional and meaningful ways. These relational experiences build social capital, social cohesion, and social discourse. Her practice encompasses a multi-disciplinary approach informed by sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, history, community organizing, design thinking, creative placemaking, art, and humanities.

Philippa, who has been published many times and has spoken on multiple platforms, speaks about how to have better conversations and about using creative placemaking and innovative interventions and happenings to strengthen communities and to increase dialogue between people who might not normally interact. She also speaks about the personal transformation that comes from curiosity and discomfort.

See <https://www.philippahughes.com/> and <https://www.curiosityconnects.us/> for more information.

**Iris Krasnow**  
**Author, Editor and Professor**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Everything that I am is about being sure-footed about myself. All we really have are selves that are grounded in spirituality and self-worth. Then we are spiritually indestructible. I hang around with smart, empathetic, curious women. I never have lost a good friend. There is nothing like the power of women to fill me up, to startle me, to make me more hopeful, to make me happier. You have to keep your girlfriends close. Press the delete button on anyone who does not make you feel your best self.*

Iris Krasnow, a Stanford University grad, became the fashion writer for the Dallas Times-Herald, before moving to United Press International in Washington, D.C. to become the national feature writer. In her several years at UPI, Iris specialized in celebrity profiles, including Yoko Ono, Billy Graham, Ted Kennedy, Norman Mailer and Queen Noor of Jordan. Iris is the author of *Surrendering to Motherhood*, the New York Times bestseller, *Surrendering to Marriage*, *Surrendering to Yourself*, and *I Am My Mother's Daughter*. *The Secret Lives of Wives* continues her journey as a journalist who chronicles the adult female growth cycle, followed by the publication of *Sex After... Women Share How Intimacy Changes As Life Changes*. Her newest book was released in 2020, *Camp Girls: Fireside Lessons on Friendship, Courage & Loyalty*.

Her writing has been featured in many national publications, such as *Parade*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and *AARP publications*. Iris has been a guest on numerous national television and radio programs, including *Oprah*, *Good Morning America*, *Today*, *All Things Considered*, and has been featured on CNN. Interviews with Iris, and reviews of her work, have appeared in *Time*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Glamour*, *The New Yorker*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *Redbook*. She is the Senior Editor of AARP's *The Ethel*, a lifestyle and health online publication for women over 50. Iris is a professor emerita teaching writing at American University in Washington, D.C., where she became one of my mentors, while teaching in the Lifelong Education And Professional Development (LEAD) Program there. She is married to an architect, and they are parents of four grown sons.

Iris helps women get unstuck. She instills hope in all who are blessed to know her.

See <https://iriskrasnow.com/> for more information.

**Dara Goldberg**  
**Founder of the Lovin' Midlife Movement**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I give myself permission in midlife to lead with my heart. My brain doesn't mean my it takes the total back seat, but I lead with my heart like I never did before now. I talk to myself, and what that used to be was my inner critic. But now I have a say to myself. It is so much more compassionate. It is about saying, "Dara, you are scared." It helps me show up for people, my work and my family. It becomes a choice, and I am the one making the choice. I remind myself that I am always going to be a work in progress and growth is infinite.*

Dara Goldberg is a changemaker, entrepreneur, speaker and the founder of the Lovin' Midlife Movement. She's known for her undying passion to make the world recognize women in midlife are invincible—not invisible. After 15 happy years advising and raising millions of dollars for nonprofit organizations and charitable foundations as a founding partner in a consulting firm, she woke up one morning and realized something was off. This was the pivotal moment—as society told her she was crazy for wanting to leave a perfect job—where she realized there needed to be a change. Now she advocates for and brings together women in midlife to change the way society looks at, listens to and understands them. Appearing weekly on Clubhouse, she has sparked a community of like-minded women who are fiercely proud to call themselves women in midlife. As she sparks conversations about aging with confidence and excitement, she lives in Philadelphia with her husband, two step-daughters, two cats and a super silly dog named Chumley.

See [www.lovinmidlife.com](http://www.lovinmidlife.com) for more info. You can find her on Clubhouse and Instagram at @daradoesmidlife. It's a growth spurt, not a midlife crisis!

**Marjorie Margolies**  
**Congresswoman, Mom, Nonprofit Founder**  
**and Author**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *It's about using what I have learned to share with others. If I can spread the kindness, if I can make a change in just one person's life, as my father told me, then I have made my mark. I think it is about sharing. And I don't do it enough. Put aside the necessity of being the most important, the show off, and see if you can share the victories.*

The Hon. Marjorie Margolies is the former Congresswoman from the 13th district of Pennsylvania. She's a 25 year veteran of NBC news and the Founder and President of Women's Campaign International (WCI). She's a professor of political science at UPenn and the author of five books, the mother of 11 and the grandmother of 21. Her son is married to Chelsea Clinton. Her new book, *And How Are The Children?* (MacKenzie-Wyatt, January 2022), is a wonderful inside look at the world of an Emmy-award winning broadcaster who adopts hard-to-place refugees from Vietnam and Korea, blends them into a joyful, chaotic household consisting of four stepdaughters and two biological sons and then adds three more Vietnamese boys plus various and assorted family members who stay for 25 years. Marjorie was the first single woman to adopt from abroad! Hillary Clinton wrote the foreword to this rich, inspiring book. Marjorie, who was married to Congressman Ed Mezvinsky while continuing her own challenging work as an NBC correspondent, somehow made juggling eleven kids and a super-sized career seem effortless. One of Marjorie's adopted Vietnamese children, Vu, now an anesthesiologist, says, "What would have happened to me if my folder had been on a different desk that day."

Marjorie runs WCI, which trains and empowers women around the globe to transform their communities and to take a seat at the table in political leadership, economic development, civil society and conflict transformation. She has traveled to more than 50 countries. WCI has had phenomenal success, including doubling the number of women in parliaments around the world.

She is currently on the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, having just completed teaching a course with David Eisenhower on the "First Hundred Days of the Biden Administration." In addition, she has lectured at universities throughout the country on topics like "Dealing with the Media" and "Women Leaders in Emerging Democracies," analyzing the ways in which politics and the media interact.

When she was elected to represent the state of Pennsylvania in the House of Representatives, she was the first woman ever elected to Congress from Pennsylvania in her own right. She was defeated because she became the main target of Republicans after she cast the deciding vote to approve President Clinton's budget.

**Gina Vild**  
**Happiness and Resilience Thought Leader**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *As a child, before I would fall asleep, I would replay a happy memory. A research study came through at Harvard that said that people who relive happy memories are happier and joyful. I read poetry. I share poetry. I have been curating poetry for 24 years to a mailing list and I spend the month of January knee-deep in good poetry. And I always have had a gratitude practice. I have a friend with which I share three things for which I am grateful each day. It holds me accountable.*

Gina Vild is an author, educator, thought leader and speaker on the themes of happiness, living with purpose and resilience. Her career includes more than four decades in which she held senior leadership positions in healthcare, academia and government. Most recently, she served for 12 years at Harvard Medical School as Associate Dean and Chief Communications Officer. She is known for being a curator of poetry, meditation enthusiast, lifelong learner and mother. Her vibrant approach to life blends academic learning with real-world experiences. She is co-author with Sanjiv Chopra, MD, (Deepak Chopra's brother) of the successful book *The Two Most Important Days, How to Find Your Purpose and Live a Happier, Healthier Life* published by St. Martin's Press. She is at work on her next book on the topic of resilience. She blogs for Psychology Today and shared with us how to mend a broken heart and other interesting tips for living one's best life. See <https://www.2mostimportantdays.com/> for more information.

**Dr. Ellen Albertson**  
**The Midlife Whisperer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Two things. I practice self-compassion. I learned to stop beating myself up, and understood the elements of self-compassion, which are being kind to yourself rather than critical and understanding common humanity. Stuff happens. We all make mistakes and are all imperfect human beings. And the mindfulness piece, which includes noticing difficult emotions and stopping. I notice when I am feeling difficult things and learned to love myself, to treat myself as a good friend. And slowing down to listen to my intuition. Intuition is the voice of your soul, that deep, wise eternal observer part of me that has been with me my whole life, regardless of age. I get quiet enough to listen.*

Ellen Albertson, PhD, RDN, NBC-HWC, is a psychologist, registered dietitian, national board certified health and wellness coach, reiki master, and mindful self-compassion teacher. Known as The Midlife Whisperer™, she helps women raise their vibration so they have the energy, confidence and clarity to make their next chapter their best chapter. A bestselling author, inspirational speaker and expert on women's wellbeing, Dr. Ellen has appeared on *Extra*, the Food Network and *NBC World News* and has been quoted in *Psychology Today*, *Eating Well* and *USA Today*. She has written five books and articles for *SELF*, *Better Homes & Gardens* and *Good Housekeeping*. Her latest book, *Rock Your Midlife: 7 Steps to Transform Yourself and Make Your Next Chapter Your Best Chapter!*, provides concrete steps we can all use to improve our lives. She brings more than 25 years of counseling, coaching and healing experience to her holistic practice and transformational work. She lives on the Champlain Islands of Vermont with her high-tech, raw-food loving partner, Ken, and her tree climbing Border Collie, Rosie. Dr. Ellen helps us let go of who we think we are supposed to be and embrace who we are. Go to <https://themidlifewhisperer.com/> for more information.

**Sara Shulding Kranz**  
**Trauma and Life/Leadership Authority**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I take time for myself every day and I sit in fierce self-compassion. I use the tools from my book.*

Sara Schulting Kranz is an acclaimed author, keynote speaker, trauma and life/leadership authority, wilderness guide, and executive producer of "Walk Through This," a documentary feature in production of her healing journey in nature. She is also a single mom of three amazing sons. As a multiple trauma survivor who used nature in her healing and transformational journey, Sara coaches clients, leadership executives and organizations on the necessity and benefits of using nature for mental and emotional health. You will find Sara speaking to businesses, corporations and running executive leadership workshops, in addition to leading healing, transformational and leadership retreats in nature. Sara's signature land-healing retreat is in the Grand Canyon, where she guides clients to go deep within themselves while being guided into the healing benefits of nature. Her signature water-healing retreat involves kayaking out of Whittier, Alaska, alongside glaciers and surrounded by majestic mountains. All retreats, whether signature or tailored, involve transformational coaching, healing, hiking, adventure, connection to nature, energy work, manifestation, mindfulness and meditation. Sara's book, *WALK THROUGH THIS: Harness the Healing Power of Nature and Travel the Road to Forgiveness*, was released in 2020. The documentary, "WALK THROUGH THIS: A Story of Starting Over," has filmed in Black Earth, WI, Los Angeles, CA, and in the Grand Canyon, and will be released in the near future. Some gems from this extraordinary woman: Hurt people hurt people, and healing people heal people. When we speak our truth, we are giving others the opportunity to do the same. Another nugget: Forgive yourself. This is your journey, just as your children have their own journeys.

Find out more at <https://www.saraschultingkranz.com/> and <https://www.walkthroughthis.com/>, and follow her on Instagram (@saraschultingkranz) and Facebook (Sara Schulting-Kranz). Check out her beautiful TEDx Talk on forgiveness: <https://www.saraschultingkranz.com/keynote-speaker/#single/0>.

**Laura Davis**  
**Ground-breaking Author of *Courage to Heal***  
**Writing Teacher and Writing Retreat Leader**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I go out in nature. I am blessed to live a 15-minute walk to the ocean and near a redwood forest. I live in a temperate climate. I walk. I go to the ocean, I have a pandemic dog who I take out. I need to breathe, to look at beauty. Nature is my church.*

In her 30+ year career as an author, Laura Davis has written seven non-fiction books that have changed peoples' lives. *The Courage to Heal* paved the way for hundreds of thousands to heal from the trauma of sexual abuse. *Becoming the Parent You Want to Be* helps parents develop a vision for the families they want to create. And *I Thought We'd Never Speak Again: The Road from Estrangement to Reconciliation* teaches the skills of reconciliation and peace building to the world, one relationship at a time. Laura's ground-breaking books have been translated into 11 languages and sold more than two million copies. Her new memoir, *The Burning Light of Two Stars*, tells the story of Laura's dramatic and tumultuous relationship with her mother, from the time of Laura's birth until her mother's death. This story about "two souls who just wouldn't quit each other" provides a no-holds-barred peek at the real Laura--the woman behind the teacher, the facilitator, and author. Laura's love of words extends into her teaching life. She loves building communities of writers and teaches weekly writing workshops online and in Santa Cruz, California. When there isn't a pandemic, she leads transformative writing retreats in northern California, Bali, Peru, Italy, Vietnam and other international destinations. Laura lives in Santa Cruz, California with her spouse Karyn and their new yellow lab puppy, Luna. She enjoys swimming, hiking, mahjong, making kombucha, motion theatre, her grandchildren and, of course, writing.

Go to <https://lauradavis.net/> to learn more.



**Nancy Gaudet**  
**Juvenile Diabetes Advocate, Survivor and Thriver**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I wake up grateful every day. I pray every day. I am a faithful person, but I was not always a faithful person. But faith helps me to be the best version of myself. Faith, gratitude and prayer. Finally I feel like I am in a good place. It is a gift.*

Nancy Gaudet is a strong, fiercely independent woman who cares deeply and loves unconditionally. Her story involves doing a bike ride for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation to raise funds for children with Type One diabetes, as her son had been diagnosed with it at age nine. It was her fourth ride and she was 58 years old. She completed the 100 miles and two hours later had a massive seizure, landing her in the ICU unit at a hospital in Florida. She spent five days there close to kidney failure and was read her last rites. Fortunately, she has no permanent damage, went through months of rehab, and changed her life.

Nancy manages 12,000 apartments and supervises 400 staff for a family-owned real estate company in Boston. Her greatest joy is her 22-year-old son. She also is an advocate and fundraiser. She started and has been running for ten years a monthly support group for other moms, whose children also have juvenile diabetes, helping more than 200 mothers with that effort.

Nancy met her soulmate during the pandemic, while working on another fundraiser. She and her partner were both working on a fundraising project for dear friends. A friendship formed, and a goal of raising a substantial amount of money to help mutual friends was achieved. According to Nancy, that first kiss, after months of talking on the phone for hundreds of hours, was just like living in a Hallmark movie. There was that one singular, slow motion moment when time stood still and two very bruised and battered hearts let the tiny droplets of love seep in slowly. She believes that there are no coincidences; there are only “God instances.”

To learn more about Nancy's support group for women whose children have juvenile diabetes, email her at [NancyGaudet60@gmail.com](mailto:NancyGaudet60@gmail.com).

**Yvonne Marchese**  
**Creator of the Late Blooming Living Podcast**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I meditate and do yoga most days. I am not a yogi. It is something that helps me tap in and keep my body moving. And connecting with people is my new jam, like on Clubhouse and podcasts. It is looking at the stories we tell ourselves. We tell ourselves stories all the time. I get aware of our stories, get a little power over them, and change the stories.*

Yvonne Marchese is the host of the Late Bloomer Living Podcast, a professional photographer, mother and wife. At the age of 48, she realized that she'd bought into a story about getting old that was adversely affecting her health and relationships. Changing her story about aging inspired her to start the Late Bloomer Living Podcast where she is on a mission to redefine society's ideas on aging and exploring how to live a life by design. Yvonne believes that midlife is filled with possibility, that it's never too late to pursue a dream and that the stories we tell ourselves have tremendous power. Yvonne presented an online event called Midlife Uprising, May 11-13, 2022, dedicated to helping women in midlife get unstuck, get inspired and take the steps to bust through resignation and old habits so they can take on new challenges, dreams and passion projects. The speaker lineup included experts like Dara Goldberg, Jack Perez, Lou Blaser and me, Maria Olsen. The summit was built on three thematic pillars--Clarity, Compassion and Courage-- one for each day of the event.

Day 1 - Clarity around our automatic thoughts and unearthing our desires for the future.

Day 2 - Compassion - Reframing our thoughts with a big dose of self-compassion.

Day 3 - Courage and taking action towards our desires and goals.

See <https://latebloomerliving.com/> for more information and to listen to this terrific podcast!

## **Debra Sabatini Hennelly** **Resilience Expert**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I start every day with at least each day of quiet mindfulness just listening and watching. A connection to nature has been very helpful to me. To be my best self, I have to stop thinking that I have to be what someone else wants me to be. The best way to do that is to be quiet and to focus back on what is important to me. I start each day anew. I have to let go of what I did not get done, for example. A beginner's mindset is how I become my best self.*

Debra Sabatini Hennelly was the student government president and my UVA Law School class president for the class of '88. She teaches organizations ethical leadership, including how to create psychological safety in the workplace, so that employees will feel empowered to speak up, as an early warning about problems that can be prevented and addressed early. Employee wellbeing is crucial to organizational health. The pandemic's "Great Attrition," or "Great Resignation," underscored the importance of creating an ethical culture in an organization, so that employees feel like they belong, that their voices are heard, and that they are doing work that matters. Debbie also penned a book, *Presence in Chaos – 365 Mindful Moments*, that contains inspiring daily quotes set against her beautiful original photography, and describes how the book grew out of her experiencing burnout and reaching a personal low point in her life.

Debbie helps executives and boards create cultures of integrity and inclusion, which are essential to the resilience of organizations and their people. She uses stakeholder-focused frameworks for managing compliance, ethical and ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) risks and opportunities and helps integrate them into operations and culture. She also coaches legal and compliance professionals, helping them lead effectively and develop strategies for personal resilience. For more than 25 years, Debbie has been creating innovative approaches to managing compliance and fostering ethical leadership—from boardrooms to break rooms—with organizations ranging from small entities to some of the largest multinationals. Her expertise is rooted in her multi-disciplinary background in engineering and law, cultivated through her decades of corporate leadership roles and consulting experience. Her passions for learning, teaching and "connecting the dots" fuel her ability to inspire authenticity, engagement and accountability. Debbie founded Resiliti in 2004 to provide ethical leadership, culture and compliance consulting and training. Resiliti offers a comprehensive suite of services, including holistic risk management, ESG strategies, culture mapping and experiential learning. They help bring to life organizational values and build cultures of integrity that support the perspectives and dignity of each individual in a team and across an organization.

Debbie is an adjunct professor in Fordham University School of Law's Program on Corporate Ethics and Compliance. Debbie spent almost 15 years in legal and compliance leadership roles. Debbie earned her B.S.E. in Civil/Environmental Engineering from Duke University and her J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law.

Learn more about her work at [Resiliti.com](http://Resiliti.com) and [PresenceInChaos.com](http://PresenceInChaos.com), and follow her on LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.

**Ulrika Sullivan**  
**Intuitive Spiritual Life Coach**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *What I do to become my best version is to have a spiritual practice that I am doing every day. It is a way for me to stay in my flow, and I know now how important that is. For me, I meditate, I do some form of body movement every day, yoga, energy exercises or breathwork. I work with divination tools, like tarot oracle cards, which also is how I communicate with my spirit guides. Every person can work out a system how they communicate with their spiritual team or the universe at large. I journal a lot. I follow astrology. Many go to the gym to maintain their external physique. This is my internal gym that is essential to my wellbeing.*

Ulrika Sullivan, who is originally from Sweden, is a former scientist turned author, intuitive spiritual life coach, yoga teacher and energy healer. She is passionate about helping busy women to connect with their intuition, energy and true selves to find inner calm, self-love and life balance so that they can live from the heart with more ease and flow. Ulrika is the author of *Wisdom Beyond What You Know: How to Shift from Being Driven by the Mind to Living from the Heart and Intuition*, the creator of the podcast *New Light Living - See Your Life in a New Light* and founder of the *Beyond the Mind* membership community. See <https://ulrikasullivan.com/> for more information.

**Ellen Warner**  
**Photojournalist and Author of *The Second Half***

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I meditate, to center me. I have taken lessons in breathwork. I try to do a bit of that every day. And I try to keep myself fit. What you put into this machine that is your body is going to affect how it works for you. My diet is quite important to me. It becomes increasingly important to exercise, as well. If I can nourish my spiritual mind and remain centered and calm, and keep my body healthy, I will become my best version.*

Ellen Warner's career as a photojournalist spans more than 50 years. Her photographs have been published in numerous newspapers and magazines and exhibited extensively. Over the years, she has developed a specialty of author portraits and has worked for most publishing houses in New York and London. She has also written travel articles, which have been published in *The New York Times* and *Travel and Leisure* in the U.S.A., and in *The Traveller* in the U.K. Ellen's recently published book, *The Second Half: Forty Women Reveal Life After Fifty* (Brandeis University Press, March 8, 2022), explores, in photographic portraits and interviews, how the second half of life is experienced by women from many different cultures. From a French actress to a British novelist, from an Algerian nomad to a Saudi Arabian doctor, and an American politician, Ellen Warner traveled all over the world to interview women about their lives. She asked them what they learned in the first half that was helpful in the second, and what advice they would give to younger women. Their revealing and inspiring stories are enlightening for all readers, and are illustrated by Warner's stunning portraits, which tell their own stories. I wrote a review of Ellen's excellent book for *The Washington Post*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/books/2022/03/04/second-half-advice-ellen-warner/>. As I wrote in my review, "Paring away the less essential, being generous, practicing gratitude, staying in the present moment and finding purpose are ways of living urged repeatedly [by the women interviewed for] the book." Learn more about Ellen's work at <https://www.ellenwarner.com>.

**Alicia Dara**  
**Nationally Recognized Speech and Presentation Coach**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I get quiet, introspective and meditative. I don't know how to be in the world without mediation. I have formalized the process much more. I try to be very steady, no matter what happens. I try to get alone and silent and deep breathing, to bring mind and body to the same place. It helps me to be present as much as possible. And the more we can become the protagonist of our own stories, the more personal agency we have going forward. There is a state of being where we have full ownership and agency over our lives.*

Alicia Dara is an amazing woman who shared multiple pearls of wisdom with our listeners about how to find your voice, how to become the protagonist in your own story, and even how to truly connect with one's emotions to fully enjoy classical music! She is a nationally recognized speech and presentation coach based in Seattle. She has helped thousands of people including CEO's, Global VPs, Executive Directors and Presidential candidates break through blocks, find their Power Voice, and put it to work. "What we allow is what we encourage," she shares, in describing how she helps women learn how to set appropriate boundaries in the workplace. Her most popular group training is "Power Voice for Career Women," which helps women strengthen their voices, clarify their messaging and push back against workplace sexism. Corporate clients include Microsoft (where she is a vendor), Amazon, Kimpton Hotels, Planned Parenthood, The Riveter and Carhartt. Private clients include the National Women's Political Caucus, the Female Founders Alliance, and members of Facebook, Merrill Lynch, Seattle Trade Commission, Windermere and Twitter. Alicia is currently working on her first book about strengthening women's voices in the workplace.

Learn more about Alicia's work and access her fantastically helpful resources, which include YouTube instructional videos about how to be a better public speaker, at [www.aliciadara.com](http://www.aliciadara.com).

**Andrea Koppel**  
**Founder of the College2Career Academy,**  
**Career Coach and Professional Pivoter**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Living a life free of regrets, if we follow our hearts instead of living in our heads. We need not be shackled by society's expectations. Part of my journey has been educating myself on mental, spiritual and physical wellness. I have a functional doctor, also known as integrative medicine, to get to the root cause of illness and disease. Food is medicine, so I try to eat in a way in which I am nourishing my body the kinds of food that give me energy and help me live my best life. I am a Peloton fanatic. I love to move my body. Movement is healing. I nourish my body with exercise. And I meditate twice a day. Meditation is more than releasing or managing anxiety and stress. It is a pathway to drop into our heart, our gut, so we can tap into our intuition, our voice inside us telling us this isn't right or this is right. I set my intention so I can manifest in my life what I want. I read voraciously. I am an incredibly curious person. I read all kinds of books, and I love to explore, to visit new places and to be with people who fill me with energy.*

Andrea Koppel coaches young people in how to find their professional passions. She shares, through personal experiences in allowing herself to fail and explore new opportunities, that the best way to finding a fulfilling career is to experiment with different iterations. It is by working through one's fears that we may uncover our true passions and evolve into the most authentic versions of ourselves. Andrea is a former award-winning CNN correspondent, who followed a path for years along the trail blazed by her esteemed father, veteran news broadcaster and "CBS Sunday Morning" correspondent, Ted Koppel. Andrea currently is an Ed Tech start-up entrepreneur, career coach, and Founder and CEO of the College2Career Academy, which helps confused college students and grad students find careers they will love. She urges students to explore the tangible hard and soft skills they have that are applicable to many different career paths. Andrea models for her students, as well as for all of us, how to live a life without regrets. While, at age 43, her identity was caught up in being a CNN correspondent, she is living a life true to who she is now, a person who had a son at age 40, who has different priorities and who no longer relishes the 24/7 stress of the high-powered job she once held. She is still "mission driven," but her current work resonates more with her values. She reframed her setbacks as opportunities, remarking that getting fired as a CNN correspondent was "an incredible gift," because it allowed her to launch into the great unknown and to pursue ultimately more fulfilling positions during various stages in her life. She was able to explore how to use her transferable skills in different industries.

In 2021, Andrea was named a Top Job Search Expert to follow on LinkedIn. She is also the host of the Apple TOP 100 podcast, Time4Coffee and founder of Time4Coffee LLC, a company with a mission to empower 1 million students to turn their degrees into careers they will love.

Follow Andrea's work at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andrea-koppel-caffeinated-career-coaching/> and <https://Time4Coffee.org>.

**Tessa Krone**  
**Educator and Co-Founder of The Open Nesters**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *The idea of mindfulness, play and lightness practice. When I share with others, I am at my best self. Acceptance, self-love and compassion also are important, especially when going through tough times. We must embody both of the paradoxes.*

Tessa Krone, MA, Speaker, Educator, Podcaster and Coach, is the co-founder of The Open Nesters Podcast. Tessa and her partner Amir have a successful podcast in which they discuss the stage of life as kids become adults, as ACT III, or the OPEN, rather than empty, NEST. They have created new lives for themselves in many ways and, as their adult kids say, they are "living [their] best lives!" The Open Nesters Podcast has a mission to empower and inspire others whose children are now adults. They seek to imbibe this stage of life, ACT III, with curiosity about the new possibilities and surprises yet to be experienced. Their personal goals are also a part of their mission as they believe that being open minded and open hearted, and connecting more deeply, as well as uniquely, to new experiences and people will keep them healthy and vital. They welcome others to integrate these goals into their lives, as individuals, and a couple. Another aspect of their mission is to inspire more fun, exploration and the building of a new community of open nesters around the world. By hearing about the possibilities others are exploring as Open Nesters, they hope you will be inspired to live at the edge of your curiosity. Tessa teaches a wide range of offerings around the world, many of which incorporate the aspect of play. Tessa helps women, men & their partners embrace their sexual desires, and awaken the playful dimension of love, touch, and creativity in and out of the bedroom.

She suggests that we think back to what we used to do to spark joy when we were children, and incorporate those activities into our lives. Dance, creating art, laughing in the mirror, laughing yoga and playing games are examples. She observes that, when we laugh, we surrender from our bodies and release natural feel-good hormones. Because hugging can have similar effects, Tessa created "hum-hugs" as a modality for increasing good feelings. She had participants, in a recent seminar at a Burning Man event, hug on the left, so that they could feel the heartbeats of the person whom they were hugging, and simultaneously hum while hugging. Humming, she maintains, neurologically clears space within. Worth a try!

Tessa encourages us to become our best selves by sharing our light with others, and accepting ourselves with compassion. She suggests we become "missionaries."

See <https://theopennesters.com/> to learn more. Connect with Tessa on @theopennesters on Facebook and Instagram and search for Stacey Tessa Krone Battat, M.A. on LinkedIn. To check out some of the resources Tessa mentioned, see <https://theopennesters.com/open-nest-resources/>. To learn more about her next event that she spoke about during the show, the Radiant Women's Day Long Retreat: Gathering Mothers & Daughters for Embodied Holiness, go to <https://www.facebook.com/events/534171515041927>.



**Michela Fantinel**  
**Midlife Mindset Coach and Solo Travel Enthusiast**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *It is a work in progress. I love to observe myself and see the progress I have made. If I have not progressed, I try to find out why. I use meditation practices in everyday life. Mindfulness has become a habit of choice. I have several courses that I am using to train myself in energetics. I like to see what my soul is telling me to do. When I reach one stage, I have to go further. Everything moves. We have to embrace it and pace it our own way. Sometimes it is slower and sometimes it is faster. I am open to more in my life.*

Michela Fantinel joined the podcast from beautiful northeast Italy. Michela is a life and mindset coach and entrepreneur, based in Italy, who has pivoted a few times in her career and life. At age 44, she swapped a manager's life for a less ordinary life and became a travel blogger and publisher. At 56, she started her coaching practice with the mission to help women over 50 step out of an unfulfilling life, get unstuck, set clear goals and achieve success beyond their realistic expectations. Michela is passionate about healthy living and the art of growing young and sharing her knowledge with like-minded women who are ready to open up to limitless possibilities. She shares in the podcast about choosing a path that aligns with your values, learning to tune into one's intuition, and discerning out your passions and values so that you can pursue a lift in alignment with them. She maintains that, once you can determine your what and why, that you can more easily pursue your how. Michela observes that we are all works in progress, that she strives to work on areas in which she has become stuck, and that she continually asks herself how she is serving others. She uses mindfulness and varying forms of meditation and healing modalities to address obstacles in her life. Michela encourage us to ask ourselves, "What is my soul telling me to do?" Everything is in motion and evolution. We must embrace change and pace our progress in our individual ways. Michela helps women in midlife do just that, both in persona and online.

Learn more about Michela (and book a free coaching consultation) at <https://magicfifty.com/>. Learn more about solo travel for women, particularly in Italy and Australia, at <https://www.rockytravel.net>.

Follow Michela at:

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/MagicFifty/>

IG: <https://www.instagram.com/magic.fifty/>

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikifantinel/>

**Erin Mathis**  
**Empowering Style Coach for Women in Midlife**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Align your mind with the way you want to feel and the life you want to have. As someone who struggled with depression, anxiety and negative thought cycles, I have had to learn how to retrain my mind. I've used meditation, mantras and really speaking and envisioning how I want to feel, the life I want to lead, and the person I want to be. When I have a negative thought cycle, I use affirmations, like "I am at peace," "I am exactly where I need to be right now," or "The timing in my life always works out to the best." These help me tap into that hopeful energy. It's a daily practice.*

Erin Mathis, cofounder of The Style Core, is a Style Coach for women in midlife who feel stuck in a rut and want to empower themselves to take charge of their future. She helps women up-level their personal style so they show the world who they really are and align their image with the impact they want to make. She applies the same process she used to transform her own image to help her clients reinvent themselves so they can confidently show up as the captivating women they are and tell the world who they are through their look. She has more than 15 years of experience in helping professionals reinvent themselves with the purpose of aligning their image with the impact they want to make.

Her expertise includes the following...

- How image has the power to transform your entire life
- Getting your brand aligned with your mission
- How to overcome a midlife crisis and thrive
- Use your style to become a magnet for new opportunities and success in midlife and beyond

Some people might dismiss style transformation as "just a makeover," but as a style coach, Erin understands how image has the power to transform your entire life. She shares more about this in her TEDx Talk "The Power of Image to Transform Your Life."

From her home town in Northern California, Erin coaches women around the world online through her transformational style coaching program, *Your Million Dollar Look*. Erin graciously has offered her free guide *My Top 5 Secrets to Up-level your Style* to the Becoming Your Best Version audience: <https://erinmathis.com/top5>.

Website: <https://erinmathis.com>

TEDx Talk: <https://erinmathis.com/#ted-talk> "The Power of Image to Transform Your Life"

**Lizzie Moulton**  
**Confidence Coach, Writer, Therapist and Mentor**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Most of all, journaling. Make it count. When we write something, we can see our thoughts and our emotions, and that is where the lessons are. Also, it's movement, I put myself out into the world, nature, impromptu dance parties, travel. When we are not moving, we are stuck in our heads. So movement, to me, is freedom.*

Lizzie Moulton is a Confidence Coach, Cognitive Behavioral Therapist and writer, who illuminates the energetic dance between our minds and bodies and what it takes to trust ourselves fully. She aims to wake up people's feelings to get them in touch with the boundaries they need to draw.

Lizzie is an Australian country gal who broke the rules and dedicated her life to the journey of self-exploration. She is an expressive, down to earth soul, who leads with heart and seeks to expand minds. After healing her own stories, beliefs and patterns that kept her feeling small, stuck and prioritizing everyone else, Lizzie is now a radiant and humbling example of how you can turn your story around and do life your own way!

Her mission is to empower people to connect to their truth and trust their gut to be able to confidently express themselves fully and freely, encouraging them to go for the life they desire, without self-doubt, hesitation or seeking approval. Lizzie is passionate about sharing her wild adventures to inspire others to speak their truth and think bigger!

Lizzie currently lives and works from her home in Scotland, UK.

Links:

<https://lizziemoulton.com/>

[https://www.instagram.com/lizzie\\_moulton/](https://www.instagram.com/lizzie_moulton/)

<https://www.facebook.com/lizziegmoulton>

**Meta Wagner**  
**Creativity and Innovation Speaker, Author and Educator**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I have found throughout my life that I need to use all aspects of my personality, creativity and brain, or it does not satisfy me. I need to use my brain, but use my social side, too. I need use the analytical and creative sides of my brain, or I do not feel good. I need to express myself through every possible avenue available to me. I need to know I am helping other people, which makes me feel good about myself, too.*

Meta Wagner is the author of *What's Your Creative Type?: Harnessing the Power of Your Artistic Personality* and of the fabulous Substack newsletter, *Page Fright*, which is a great resource for writers. She is a writing and creativity professor at Emerson College in Boston, and has also taught at Boston University, Wheelock College and Grub Street creative writing center. Meta is the creator of an original model for creativity, the Five Creative Types, and has given talks about it at TEDx, creativity conferences, and corporate events and webinars. Meta has been a contributor to *The Boston Globe* opinion pages and a columnist for *PopMatters*, and has had articles published in *The Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe Magazine*, *Wall Street Journal* custom content and others. She is a writing coach and writing workshop leader.

Meta inspires creators of many types. She frequently speaks on claiming one's power and drawing motivation from what worked for the masters, like Ernest Hemingway. Meta helps people understand their creative type, accept it and use it to one's greatest advantage. She admonishes people not to "should" themselves, but to explore their authenticity. She believes in the catharsis of telling one's truth via creative endeavors.

Learn more about Meta's work and follow her at the links below.

Website: <http://www.metawagner.com/>

Buy her book: <https://www.indiebound.org/book/9781580056373>

Page Fright Newsletter: <https://metawagner.substack.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/meta.wagner>; Facebook author page: [https://www.facebook.com/metawagnerwriter/?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/metawagnerwriter/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/meta\\_wagner1](https://twitter.com/meta_wagner1); LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/meta-wagner-5b541861/>; Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/creativelymeta/>; TEDx talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGttCeMK9NU&t=9s>

**Hara Allison**  
**Storyteller, Photographer and**  
**Host of the See Beneath Your Beautiful Podcast**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I question everything I think. Everything I think I know could have another possible answer. How can I ever really know someone else's thoughts and feelings? I am open to not knowing everything. Questioning everything is how I find my peace.*

Hara Allison is a storyteller through photography, design and her podcast, "See Beneath Your Beautiful." On her podcast, guests share stories of adversity and perseverance which inspire, encourage and challenge us. Hara embraces these tough conversations, intimately exploring our loves, fears and hopes with a delicious combination of depth and lightness. One of her most impactful podcast episodes aired on September 25, 2021: "Motherless Daughters." Hara interviewed a dozen women who lost their mothers about the impact the loss had on them. Hara has found that talking about one's pain can free us of it. Despite a traumatic childhood, including sexual abuse at a young age and her mother passing away at the age of 46, Hara finally found her worth and wishes that others see their own beauty and the light they were meant to shine. Hara said it took her 52 years to be able to confront her feelings of low self-worth. She also shared that, the more she parented, the more she was able to forgive her parents.

Hara's clients believe in her ability to tell their story. From that vulnerability and trust comes honest images that make them feel understood and confident. She calls it an "honor, every single time" to photograph her clients. Her "See Me" photography series is a compilation of arresting photographs of women with the words they self-selected to describe themselves hand-painted on their skin. The 25 women photographed, many of whom she had never met, shared why they claimed the words they chose, and what they were willing to say out loud. Hara believes that is what is beautiful about a person is the light that shines through them, not their physical characteristics. It shows in her work, and particularly in the See Me series. She also has volunteered to photograph people who are dying. It was beyond her comfort zone, initially, but she wanted to witness them. "All I ever wanted was to be seen," she reflects.

Most importantly, Hara is now open to not knowing. Hara questions everything she thinks she knows. "There could be another answer," Hara says.

For more information, check out the links below.

Photography: <https://hara.photography/>

Podcast: <https://seebeneathyourbeautiful.com/>

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/SeeBeneathYourBeautifulPodcast>

IG: [https://www.instagram.com/hara\\_allison\\_photography/](https://www.instagram.com/hara_allison_photography/)

**Julia Roberts**  
**Creativity Coach and Author**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I was a poor clarifier and a good ideator. I recognize other people's skills and abilities and how they can help me, and I don't have to be threatened by that. I have stopped being an us and them person and am now more of a let's and us person. What helps there is having a solid sense of who I am and my value, really knowing that from my heart out.*

Julia Roberts, MSc, helps thousands of writers every year see their creative process more clearly and master their strengths and struggles. She is on a mission to help writers glide past those awkward, painful moments that can stop your writing in its tracks. She can help you stare down doubt, dread and delay, and write with more ease and satisfaction.

Julia's new book, *Write Without the Fight: Master Your Creative Process to Write with Ease and Satisfaction*, was launched in May 2022. With this book, Julia helps writers gain confidence and creativity in their writing. She taps into the surprising science of creativity to give the reader grounded, proven, easy-to-use methods to find clarity, ideas, structure and to finish their work. She shares her personal experiences, and those of her clients, with creativity, writing and publishing.

Julia is performing a TEDx talk: "It's Not Just Mojo, The Surprising Science of Creativity" in Summer 2022. She is also the author of *Sex, Lies & Creativity – Gender Differences in Creative Thinking*, (Difference Press, 2014), has her Masters of Science in Creativity, and is a trained and certified Life and Creativity coach.

Learn more about Julia's work at <https://www.decodingcreativity.com/>, follow her on Instagram at @juliadecodes and join her private Facebook group, Write Without the Fight.

**Lisa Lucca**  
**Midlife Life Coach, Empowerer, Author and**  
**Radio Show Host**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *To live true to who I am. The truth of who we are is really knowing ourselves, knowing our motivations, knowing our needs and desires, knowing our expectations and creating something of ourselves from that place. For me, I write. I also like to make jewelry. We all have the need within us to create something. It can be within the arts, or things like a garden, community, a meal from scratch or just creating anything that wasn't there before that can be shared, that we pour our passion and love into and something that evokes emotion.*

Lisa Lucca is the author of *Ashes to Ink: A Memoir*, a story of heartache and the power of forgiveness, about her narcissistic father who came out as gay, and mother who did not want people to know, in their midwestern town, that she was the straight partner of a gay man. Lisa co-authored an epistolary memoir, *You Are Loved*, with her partner, Mark Mathias. Her memoir with her husband is a beautiful love story, told over the course of ten years via emails between the two that delved into life's biggest issues and the choices that shape our lives. She also was a #Blogger17 Voice of the Year Honoree (for her blog piece, "Two Roofs, One House"), and is published in several publications and anthologies, most recently in the collection, *Crone Rising*.

Lisa's weekly public radio show, Live True, has streamed globally since 2019. Her fifteen-year career in the entertainment industry included positions at LucasFilm and in production management on a world tour with Janet Jackson. She reinvented her life during the time in which she was a single mother, and became a life coach when laid off after 9/11. "To make a living, I became a life coach," Lisa says. "To make a life, I opened my dream palette to do my radio show and writing." While acknowledging that change can be scary, Lisa believes that it is more painful to live a life you hate than to search for a life you love. She left her first husband with only \$100 in her pocket and with a three-year-old son, and never looked back. She is flourishing in the southern New Mexico desert mountains by living a creative life. Her coaching and speaking focuses on empowering women to live true to who they are, especially in mid-life and beyond. "Do you want to be an 'older woman' or an 'elder woman,'" Lisa asks.

Lisa believes that, in our 40s, we learn more about who we are, in our 50s we practice being who we are, and in our 60s we come into our third chapter, in which we can be the creators who no longer settle for less than we deserve. If we do not create--whether it is a garden or a community or something else of ourselves--we fester. "All of us have the need within us to create something."

Lisa Lucca (she/her); [lisalucca.com](http://lisalucca.com); Facebook: [/lisaluccawriter](https://www.facebook.com/lisaluccawriter); Instagram: [@lisa.lucca](https://www.instagram.com/lisa.lucca); Twitter: [@lisaluccawriter](https://twitter.com/lisaluccawriter)

**Amikaeyla Gaston**  
**Cultural Arts Ambassador, International Cultural Arts and Healing Sciences**  
**Institute Founder, Musician and Healer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Life is about being all in. You are not guaranteed even the next minute. I am going to live every moment in every way. The power of now is so important. Embrace the fullness of life. Embrace your own inner calling. Why are you here? Those existential questions are not existential. They are essential. I dig into every second of every day, living it to the fullest, with joy, with an emphasis on wellbeing for all. Reframe how people are being othered. How do we be more inclusive? How do we heal the planet instead of harming the planet? How do we move so that we are in synchronicity with all living beings? How do we live abundantly with joy, happiness and open hearts? The game of life is: how did you live?*

Amikaeyla Gaston is the Executive Director and Founder of International Cultural Arts & Healing Sciences Institute. She is a force for change. Proclaimed as one of the “purest contemporary voices” by National Public Radio, Amikaeyla is a public keynote speaker, performer, educator and author. She travels the world serving as a Cultural Arts Ambassador for the State Department and is the Founder of the International Cultural Arts and Healing Sciences Institute and co-Executive Director for World Trust Educational Services Organization. Amikaeyla has been bringing together artists and healers of all forms and specialties to promote healing and wellness through the arts & activism. She leads corporations, universities and organizations through cultural competency, restorative justice and racial equity training designed to facilitate, engage and support people in exploring challenging conversations. She does expansive work with political refugees, war survivors and at-risk populations worldwide and is often called into difficult scenarios to offer inter-cultural literacy and deep restorative justice work in support of transformative and peaceful solutions. Her international program of public dialogue is designed to allow different traditions and nationalities to gather together and address issues concerning our communities at large. Appearing internationally on television, radio and film, with appearances on PBS, HBO and in the Sundance Film Festival, Amikaeyla is the winner of twelve WAMMY Awards for Best Jazz, World and Urban Contemporary Vocalist, and is the proud recipient of the United Nations Global Woman Award, the Voss Foundation Emerging Women Leaders Award, the Pioneer Award for Exemplary Leadership and Outstanding Service in Social Justice and Advocacy and the International Hero for Peace and Forgiveness award. Her extensive studies with traditional healers and cultural artists around the healing effects of music led to the commemorative Golden Buddha performance at personal invitation by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in India. Amikaeyla uses music as medicine to connect people and to practice cultural diplomacy. "When words defy us, music can touch our hearts in certain ways you cannot otherwise do," she says. Ami recognizes the power of art as advocacy and has used her art to build bridges by appealing to people's emotions. Amikaeyla grew up in Potomac, Maryland, and now is bi-coastal, with a home in the DC area and in California. You can learn more about Ami's work at [www.Amikaeyla.com](http://www.Amikaeyla.com) and follow Amikaeyla on social media at @amikaeyla and @Amikaeyla Gaston.



## **Rachel Strabley Consulting Hypnotist**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Follow your intuition and ask the universe for what you want and what you need. Listen when it steps in the way. And I love to do hypnosis on myself. I record for myself on my phone, lie down and listen to it. I call it my new power nap.*

Rachel Strabley is a Certified Consulting Hypnotist through the National Guild of Hypnotists in Nashua, New Hampshire. Rachel studied at the Yale University's The Science of Well Being program. She began her study of hypnosis to help with her own depression and sleep problems, and now uses hypnosis and other modalities to help her clients, who are in the U.S. and abroad. Her youngest child uses Rachel's hypnosis recordings to help her fall asleep!

Through hypnosis, clients are able to overcome a lack of confidence, decrease or eliminate fears and phobias, address weight issues, low libido and menopause symptoms, improve relationships with themselves and others, release beliefs that block success, and reduce or eliminate old pain and recurring illnesses. Rachel's primary focus is to guide female entrepreneurs to level up their businesses. She has enabled numerous businesswomen to increase their profitability and confidence, and to improve their lives overall. She also has helped athletes improve their performances in their sports of choice. Conducting emotional detoxes with her clients--enabling them to release emotions subconsciously held since childhood--also is part of her practice.

Rachel conducts group hypnosis sessions, like a recent offering to a group of realtors to help them improve negotiating skills and attract clients. She notes that, because one receives only what one is willing to receive via hypnosis, participants take what serves them individually during group sessions.

Rachel encourages us to follow our intuition, to ask the universe for what we want and need, and to listen when something gets in the way. When the student is ready, the teacher will come.

Some of Rachel's fantastic offerings on her website, like her "Mini Hypno Boosts," are free. Learn more about Rachel's work at <https://hypnosiswithrachel.com/> and follow her at the links below:

IG: [https://www.instagram.com/hypnosis\\_with\\_rachel/](https://www.instagram.com/hypnosis_with_rachel/)

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/HypnosiswithRachel/>

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachel-strabley-42799a/>

**Danielle Glosser**  
**Amplifier of Artists' Visibility/Client Volume and Helps Collectors**  
**Appreciate and Obtain Art**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I try to take advantage of all opportunities. My superpower is being a master brainstormer. I discard some ideas, but as an entrepreneur, I find it essential to dream the dreams. My willingness to take action has led to some tremendous opportunities for myself.*

Danielle Glosser is the Principal of Client Raiser, a business dedicated to helping artists to increase their client volume and the visibility of their art. Since 2014, she has worked with nearly 200 artists in 20 states across the country in support of their professional goals. Danielle also assists art collectors in exposing them to new work and finding pieces that bring them joy. She has hosted unique online art exhibitions that have benefitted nonprofit organizations and struggling artists during the pandemic, and brings a passion for social justice to her work. Danielle supports women in the arts and increases exposure of work by artists of color.

Danielle's expertise in strategic planning, project management, research, writing and networking comes from years of working and building relationships in the private, nonprofit and government sectors on social justice issues from inner-city schools in Oakland, California to The White House. She has had several careers, including doing marketing work for the NBA, which have informed her work today on behalf of artists. These professional opportunities — coupled with her personal belief that the arts are central to igniting conversation and enhancing human understanding — moved her to help artists with the business elements of their practice and to share their work with the world.

Danielle is a 25+ year resident of Washington, D.C. She has led workshops with over a dozen arts organizations, including the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, ArtTable, Maryland Institute College of Art, Hamiltonian, Transformer, Washington Project for the Arts, Halcyon, Superfine Art Fair, D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Gateway Arts District, VisArts, Washington Sculptors Group, Women's Caucus for Art, Artomatic, District of Columbia Arts Center, Montgomery Arts Association and Capitol Hill Arts League. She is also a member of ArtTable, which is the leading organization for professional women in the visual arts. She is passionate about art and amplifying artists' voices, and has helped many art collectors and artists fulfill their professional and personal dreams.

Danielle offers complimentary sessions to artists and art collectors. Here's a link to sign up: <https://www.clientraiser.com/contact> and to learn more about her work.

**Margit Novak**  
**Author of *Squint: Revisioning the Second Half of Life***

Q.     *What do you do to become your best version?*

A.     *The word I use is intentionality. Thriving now, at this point in my life requires more than saying, "I'll see what happens." Strength training is the only way you stay independent as you age. I have to be intentional about making a commitment to fitness. I have to cultivate friendships. Loneliness has an incredible negative impact on wellness and having meaningful social interactions is so important to well-being. I need sacred space for meaningful opportunities to talk could occur. Whether it's friendships, physical fitness or finding purpose—all are important for thriving and being my best self now. I have to take some responsibility.*

Margit Novack is an entrepreneur, thought leader in aging and pioneer in Senior Move Management. Margit founded Moving Solutions in 1996, when she was in her 40s. Over the next 25 years, her passion and commitment to serving older adults and their families inspired her team to provide world-class service that earned her awards and national media attention in this then-new cottage industry. She had no direct experience in the field at the time she started her company, but saw a need and sought to serve a vulnerable population.

Margit is widely recognized as founder of the Senior Move Management industry. She is the Founding President of the National Association of Senior and Specialty Move Managers (NASMM), chaired the NASMM Ethics Commission and developed industry training. NASMM recognized Margit's commitment and service by creating the Margit Novack Award for Excellence in Senior Move Management.

In 2020, Margit left the formal work world and began a new role as author, speaker and champion of a re-visioned picture of aging. *Squint: Re-visioning the Second Half of Life* is her first book, which she wrote during the Covid pandemic. Her book is an uplifting guide for the second half of life. Margit's memoir opens our eyes to the abundant possibilities of later life. She pairs profound and memorable personal stories with larger themes -- downsizing, caregiving, forgiveness, estrangement and more -- and shows that with the right perspective and "re-visioning," the future is rich with possibility. Realistic, compassionate, substantive and uplifting, Margit's *Squint* is a guidebook that leaves us better equipped for the years ahead. She believes that "life will never get better than it is right now," and believes the statistic that a positive outlook can increase one's lifespan by seven years. She notes that, sometimes, we don't know what we are passionate about, and encourages listeners to be on a journey of uncovering your passions, which may change over time. At age 72, she recognizes her desire to be part of a team, so she started a "mitzvah team" of friends to make a difference in her community. She and her team have collected socks for shelters at long term health care facilities, for example. She believes in living with intention, as opposed to a "I'll see what happens" approach, and preaches about the value of intentionality in her book and during public speaking engagements.

To learn more about Margit and her memoir, *Squint*, please visit [www.margitnovack.com](http://www.margitnovack.com), and follow her at: [facebook.com/margit.novack](https://facebook.com/margit.novack); [instagram.com/margit.novack/](https://instagram.com/margit.novack/); [twitter.com/MargitNovack](https://twitter.com/MargitNovack); [linkedin.com/in/margitnovack](https://linkedin.com/in/margitnovack)

## **Emily Clement Life Coach**

*Q. What do you do to become your best version?*

*A. To me, it's about setting and maintaining boundaries. If you are not feeling a "heck yeah," you are welcome to respond with a confident "No thank you." This is the ultimate personal freedom.*

Emily Clement helps people reclaim their personal power and manifest the lives they truly desire. She is a soul-searching joy-creator with a passion for helping others shine. Emily is an inspirational speaker, certified transformational life coach, educator, workshop facilitator and emotional wellness/healthy boundaries expert. Emily was a student of life and business strategist, Tony Robbins, and now works behind the scenes at his events. She will travel with him to New Zealand and Fiji this year to work on another of his events. Emily pivoted from being a full-time teacher (she taught at an all-boys middle school as well as at a men's prison, to give a voice to the voiceless) to becoming a full-time life coach. Because of these experiences, she can "hold your hand and kick your ass," she quipped. Emily's work led her to observe that therapy typically is about learning the backstory to determine how a client became who he or she is, whereas coaching focuses on who one is now. She prefers working as a coach to being a therapist because she believes that every time you tell your old story, you recreate it, and she helps clients understand that their history does not dictate one's future. We all can let go of our old stories. She helps clients define what they desire and to identify fears and blockages to achieving what they want. Emily views her client's job as determining what exactly they want. Then they can work on how to get it. She notes that we often are familiar with what is comfortable, but encourages listeners to flirt with the edges of their comfort zone, as a way to build confidence.

She earned a teaching certificate and B.A. in psychology from Wheaton College and a M. Ed in counseling from Plymouth State. Emily has taught and traveled all over the world. As a certified life coach, she has integrated her favorite elements from the best of her life experiences--- teaching, counseling, speaking, meeting new people, building community and effecting positive change.

Learn more about her work at [emilyclementlifecoach.com](http://emilyclementlifecoach.com), where she offers free workshops on boundaries and personal freedom, mindset and manifestation. Emily also offers free connection calls to explore where you are and where you want to be.

Follow her on Instagram and Facebook at [@emilyclementlifecoach](https://www.instagram.com/emilyclementlifecoach).

**Jodi Silverman**  
**Midlife Mentor, Coach and Founder of Moms Who Dare**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I continuously invest back into my personal growth, both in time and with financial investment. We are never done learning. Every year, I make a decision regarding how I will invest in my personal growth. It's a continual process. I want to continue discovering things about myself. It's a journey.*

Jodi Silverman helps women embarking on the empty nest and midlife transition to rediscover who they are, outside of a mom, mother-figure, daughter or partner. As a mentor and coach, she provides community, tools and strategies to increase resilience, find happiness, and discover purpose, meaning, fulfillment and fun.

Jodi helps women shift the focus that may have been on everyone else back onto themselves. She shares her best tips and strategies, learned from her own daring and continuing journey, to help women release fear and limiting beliefs, preventing them from stepping into their purpose and living their most daring life now. She has inspired thousands of women around the country through her coaching programs, Moms Who Dare® Membership Community, "In the Nest with Jodi" show and as a sought-after speaker. Jodi has been featured in CEO Mom Magazine, This Is It Network and on a variety of podcasts.

Her mantra is "Dare On!" It has become a rallying cry for those in her community to embrace what is next in their lives. She encourages listeners to cultivate happiness for themselves, to practice the pause and release judgmentalism, and continually decide what would best support your own self-growth. Jodi believes we should never be finished with our own personal growth, as do I.

Learn more about her work and offerings at the links below.

Website: <https://jodisilverman.com>

Moms Who Dare Private Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/momswhodare.fortheemptynester>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jodisilverman/>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/jodi\\_silverman/](https://www.instagram.com/jodi_silverman/)

"In The Nest with Jodi" on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/inthenestwithjodisilverman>

## **Batul Sadiq** **Image Consulting Coach**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Forget about perfection and make sure you are fulfilling your why. I give myself permission to be my best version. I affirm every morning that I am worthy and deserving of being the best version of myself. Each morning I identify: what will this woman be doing, what will she be wearing, what will she be eating, what spaces will she be putting herself in and who is she connecting with who is supporting herself in this journey. Taking actionable steps every is what gets me closer to being the best version of myself.*

Batul Sadiq is the founder, owner and wardrobe stylist at BHS Image Consulting, in the Washington, D.C. area. She realized, as a young professional and mother, how image and style could be used as tools to communicate personal and professional goals. She was able to attract positions and experiences in which she was valued by, in part, honing in on her own authentic style, and ultimately made the decision to be in control of her own narrative. Batul uses her experience to work with women to identify their personal style and guides them in curating a fun and functional wardrobe to enhance their lives, empower their spirits and achieve their goals. BHS Image Consulting is the realization of a dream that started in the heart of the fashion district in New York City where she received extensive training from industry veterans and had the opportunity to collaborate with fellow creatives. Her initial desire to support women at different stages of life and encourage them to strip themselves of the labels placed on them has grown with time. "There is no budget, body type or image standard, but rather the unique needs of people looking to share their spark with the world," Batul says. Since 2005, she has assisted women across the country from all backgrounds to reveal their most authentic selves through their wardrobe styling and image. She helps women overcome roadblocks in their lives and recounts stories of clients who finally started feeling heard in their workplaces when they owned their authenticity and felt better about themselves, starting with identifying and owning their personal style. Her time spent at the Fashion Institute of Technology and San Francisco State University, combined with her Asian American Muslim upbringing, has shaped her perspective on the way we dress and its impact on business, environments and people. Batul also is an image consulting coach for Emerge Consulting Solutions, a member of Fashion Group International and a blog contributor at Mind Body Soul Sisterz, which brings together women who offer concrete steps to help us own our own authenticity and achieve our goals.

You can follow Batul's work at:

Website [www.bhsimageconsulting.com](http://www.bhsimageconsulting.com); Instagram: [@bhs\\_image\\_consulting](https://www.instagram.com/bhs_image_consulting/)  
[www.instagram.com/bhs\\_image\\_consulting/](https://www.instagram.com/bhs_image_consulting/); Facebook: [@BHSImageConsulting](https://www.facebook.com/BHSImageConsulting/)  
<https://www.facebook.com/BHSImageConsulting/>; Like To Know It: BHS Image Consulting  
<https://www.shopltk.com/explore/BHS%20Image%20Consulting>; Pinterest:  
[www.pinterest.com/bhsimageconsulting](https://www.pinterest.com/bhsimageconsulting); LinkedIn: BHS Image Consulting  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/bhs-image-consulting/>

## Susanne Kerns and Missy Stevens Creators of the Moms &... Podcast

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Susanne: Understanding my core values and doing the work of figuring out what they are, which is not always easy, and using them to set boundaries and figure out what I want to do.*

*Missy: I sleep. I make sure that I sleep. I can't take care of myself if I don't have rest, and if I don't rest I cannot do the work that really matters to me. I need to take time for myself. I had to unpack a whole lot of guilt over rest. If I slept late or was going to bed when I still had more to do, I felt guilty.*

Susanne Kerns is a podcaster and humor writer living in Austin, Texas with her husband and two children. Her work has been featured in *Scary Mommy*, *Redbook*, *Today Parents* and several parenting anthologies, including the NYT bestselling *I Just Want to Pee Alone* series. She co-produced, and performed in, the "Listen to Your Mother" show in Austin, Texas. She's currently writing her first non-fiction book to help other women to deal with the identity crisis that can come with giving up your career to become a stay-at-home mom. She co-hosts the Mom & ... Podcast with Missy Stevens, which also focuses on helping moms define themselves outside of "mom." In 2017, she started the group, "Informed Parents of Austin," to advocate for LGBTQIA+ students, families and staff in her school district. Susanne uses her "privilege of safety" to be the megaphone for children in the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as for their parents. When people do not feel safe enough to speak, Susanne volunteers to speak for them. Her efforts have paid off. For example, her local school district will be teaching an inclusive, science-backed sex education program this term. Susanne works hard to use her core values to inform her life decisions.

Missy Stevens is a writer, foster child advocate and podcaster. Her past life includes stints as a corporate community relations manager and non-profit communications writer. These days, Missy is an aspiring novelist, slowly working on endless revisions of her first manuscript. Her work has been featured in local and national online publications, as well as in the stage production, "Listen to Your Mother." Missy admonishes listeners to not wait to do what you want to do. At-home moms can start before their children leave home to hone their skills or build new ones. She uses her considerable skills as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) to help children who cannot speak for themselves. It is emotional work, and Missy understands that she cannot take care of herself or others without proper sleep and rest. "I can't do what really matters to me if I don't take rest time. I unpacked a lot of guilt over that." Missy--and we--are better off when we practice self-care.

These two women are inspiring and insightful each week on their fantastic Mom & ... Podcast. Learn more at <https://momandpodcast.com/>.

**Margo Weinstein**  
**Author and Intrepid Adventurer**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I travel. I travel because it takes me out of myself and my world. Through new experiences, cultures and people, my life is enriched. It makes me a better person, especially because it helps me realize that other people in other countries live, act and do differently than I do. I become broader and more open-minded. So travel. Take a trip.*

Margo Weinstein is a traveler, intrepid adventurer, class-action lawyer, and single mom. Educated at Yale College and Northwestern University School of Law, she became a partner in a multinational law firm, but that did not stop her from traveling to over eighty countries, moving with her young son to Shanghai and Bali, and discovering how to combine wanderlust and motherhood. For now, she lives with her son in a high-rise in downtown Chicago, anticipating her next move. *Jalan-Jalan: A Journey of Wanderlust and Motherhood* is her first book.

*JALAN-JALAN: A JOURNEY OF WANDERLUST AND MOTHERHOOD:* "In Bali, *jalan-jalan* means to go forward, a route used for traveling, and the path chosen in life or career. *Jalan-Jalan: A Journey of Wanderlust and Motherhood* is the story of my path to Bali. As a Chicago-based class-action lawyer, intrepid travel provided an escape from the demands of my career. I summited mountains, kayaked tropical fjords, almost drowned in icy Class V rapids, and battled baboons in my Zimbabwe hotel room. I took risks that led my son Jake to exclaim, "Mom! How was I ever even born?"

But he was born, and my risk calculus changed as I adjusted to the joys, demands, and qualms of motherhood. Instead of camping on deserted beaches in Papua New Guinea and Palau, we stayed at all-inclusive beach resorts in Jamaica and the Riviera Maya. I left the river rafts and kayaks behind for Disney Cruises with Jake. Searching for a better way to combine my wanderlust with motherhood, I gripped Jake's hand and leaped. We landed first in Shanghai and then in Bali, living as expats and learning about new countries, cultures, and ourselves.

Regardless of where you are on your path, if you share my wanderlust, maybe this book will inspire you to travel, too. Or, after reading about my near-death experiences traveling in Pakistan and Burma and how I dragged my young son to live on the other side of the world (twice), you may be glad you stayed home with this book."

"I travel because it takes me out of myself and my world. It enriches my life, by being in other cultures and learning about how others see the world, which makes me a better person."

To learn more: Website: <https://margoweinstein.com/>;  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Margo.Weinstein.Author>;  
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/margoweinstein/>



**Dr. Kerry Byrne**  
**Founder of The Long Distance Grandparent**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *If you can find a way to be comfortable with uncertainty, that can help. I use the affirmation, "I am ok with not knowing." Secondly, I treat running as a mental health activity. That can be a walk, as well. I can solve most problems at the end of a half hour run or walk with a good podcast or music to inspire me.*

Kerry Byrne, PhD, is a researcher, collaborator and entrepreneur in aging, care and connection. She is the Founder of The Long Distance Grandparent, a mission-driven business helping grandparents strengthen relationships with their grandchildren – no matter the distance between them. Dr. Byrne launched an online monthly membership program called The Long Distance Grandparent Society to support grandparents in their journey to create fun and meaningful moments with their grandchildren through intentional and purposeful grandparenting. It's the only program like it in the world and Kerry built it based on her 20-plus years' experience as a research scientist in the area of aging and care. Kerry pivoted in her career, though she always had an interest in family caregiving and human connection as a professional focus. A serendipitous event moved her into the burgeoning field of gerontology. Kerry did consulting work for various companies, and was on a tenure track as a professor before she launched her own business. Her impetus for starting The Long Distance Grandparent was driven, in part, by her living very far from her parents and wish to help them with their desire to know their grandchildren. In the U.S., she reports that more than half of grandparents live more than 200 miles from their grandchildren. Drawing on her personal and professional experience, Kerry helps improve intergenerational relationships within families, because these relationships impact everything from mental health to ending ageism. She shares practical, research-backed strategies through her blog, email newsletter, speaking engagements, membership program, and a few on this episode! For example, Kerry advises grandparents, grand-aunties and grand-uncles to "sweat the small stuff," i.e., remember the small details about your loved ones so they feel heard, known and special. These things can include sports, foods and any other interests. Kerry's membership group also receives ideas for virtual grand-dates, like art projects the grandchildren and grandparents can do together at the same time, virtually. Kerry is a mum to two little boys and all the grandparents in their lives are at a distance. She recently moved back home to Canada after living abroad (including in Dubai) for the last five years. Learn more at: <https://thelongdistancegrandparent.com/>

**Sally Tierney**  
**Clear Path Forward Private Investigation Firm Owner**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I do practice self-care. I get enough rest. I try to eat healthy. Every day, I will not open my eyes until: (1) I say thank you to God for my life; (2) I ask God to help me lead with kindness, compassion and love for myself and for everyone I meet; (3) I ask God to remind me that I have everything I need and that God always provides; and (4) I ask God to help me look for miracles. There are miracles all around us, if you look for them.*

Sally Tierney is the owner and CEO of Clear Path Forward, a private investigation firm based in the Washington, DC area. Empowering her clients with the facts, to bring clarity and transparency to a daunting situation, is her mission in life.

Sally used her considerable skills to start a business helping others when their lives seemingly are falling apart. Sally is the strength people need when navigating terrible situations in their lives. She is a truth seeker and empowerment advocate for anyone who is having trouble navigating an unfair system. Her experience has taught her that there are times when a private investigator is necessary to bring accuracy to light. Her husband was wrongfully accused of something he did not do. Sally worked to demonstrate the truth, and her husband was exonerated. It was a harrowing experience, and Sally turned it into a business using the law to expose facts and force transparency when needed to support and strengthen her clients' cases. Her firm's services also include medical and mental health advocacy; advocating for sexual assault victims; elder care advocacy; assistance with domestic violence and child custody cases; and mitigation investigations to reveal insightful details about individual lives that can lessen penalties ordered during criminal sentencing.

In addition to being a private investigator, Sally has successfully owned and operated Just Dance, a studio in Alexandria, Virginia for the past 18 years. She also is the producer and host of The Dance Studio Podcast. This is her fun way of giving back to studio owners and dance teachers all that she has learned over her long career. Sally was a dancer in professional theatre for several years, and taught dancing for 20 years before opening her own studio. She was a teacher for Project Plie, American Ballet Theatre's diversity & inclusion initiative, and served on several non-profit arts organizations, like Artspire, which awards scholarships to those in underserved communities.

Sally knows the necessity of self-care, so that she can give so much to others in need. She has a daily gratitude practice and keeps her consciousness open for miracles. And she finds them.

You can follow Sally on FB, LinkedIn, and Instagram under the name Sally Tierney. Her website address is [www.clearpathforwardpi.com](http://www.clearpathforwardpi.com).

**Laura Stassi**  
**Host of the Dating While Gray Podcast**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *It's a work in progress. I exercise regularly. I play pickleball. I take walks. I don't eat carbs after breakfast. I keep an open mind. I work on responding and not just reacting.*

Laura Stassi is creator and host of the public radio podcast *Dating While Gray: The Grown-Up's Guide to Love, Sex, and Relationships*, which began in 2020 when she won a diversity in voices contest on NPR. On her podcast, she explores issues and relays true stories about love after age 50. Online dating, sexual intimacy, financial considerations, deal breakers--everything's on the table--from interesting, diverse voices.

Her book, *Romance Redux: Finding Love in Your Later Years* (Rowman & Littlefield, September 2022) is a deep dive into dating while gray. "*Romance Redux* explores how older people are seeking, finding, and keeping intimate relationships. Laura includes her own experiences as well as those of other gray love seekers and finders. She also talks with dating and relationship experts and researchers to explore the obstacles and rewards of re-partnering at this stage of life. Whether it's through "gray divorce," which remains high, or the untimely death of a partner, more and more older people are facing vibrant years ahead of them, alone. They're interested in finding love for the later years of life but after decades off the market, dating again can feel daunting. Using personal stories and expert research, Laura takes readers on a tour through the many ways older adults are finding companionship, romance, and a fulfilling sex life."

Laura equates "gray divorce" with divorces involving those over age 50. Her podcast includes people who are interested in finding love post-50, such as divorcees, widows, widowers, those who never married, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Laura writes about and discusses the obstacles and rewards of re-partnering later in life. She notes that the pandemic forced many of us to be more thoughtful about with whom we want to spend our time.

Laura was married for almost 30 years before getting divorced. Newly single, she turned to friends and relationship experts for advice. On *Dating While Gray* and in *Romance Redux*, Laura shares the lessons she's learned and introduces other gray daters as they all weather the wild world of love, with advice from experts.

Laura is also an award-winning writer of health, wellness and medical features for military families, and she's the author of several nonfiction books for young readers. She has two grown children and enjoys jogging along the wooded paths of Reston, Virginia, and the sandy shores of Emerald Isle, North Carolina.

Find out more about Laura and her work at [laurastassi.com](http://laurastassi.com).

**Caralena Peterson**  
**Author of *The Effortless Perfection Myth***

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I think about where my sources of validation come from and who I am giving power to in determining how I feel about myself. I like to remind myself that how I see myself in my decisions affects how others see me. I think that the thoughts and beliefs that are most important to me cannot be invalidated by others. The more I love my own decisions, the less I need others to like them. I look inward. I try less to earn love from others and I trust myself more.*

Caralena Peterson is the author of *The Effortless Perfection Myth* (September 2022) about the gender issues today's women run into in college. She graduated from Duke University in 2015 with majors in Women's Studies and Public Policy. She has published articles with *Inside Higher Ed*, *The Week*, *She Knows Media*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Rewire News*, *Bustle*, *Garnet News*, *Women's E-News* and *Elite Daily*. She is also a mixed-medium artist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times* and *Washington Life Magazine*.

"While experiencing the harmful and overwhelming effects of Effortless Perfection firsthand during college, Caralena added Women's Studies as a second major to get to the bottom of it all and started writing honestly about her experiences in a column for the student newspaper. After graduating from Duke University in 2015, she set out to educate as many college women and their parents as possible about what she uncovered and the importance of sharing our authentic selves with the world. Today she writes regularly on the topic and travels to high schools and colleges throughout the nation to speak about Effortless Perfection, mental health, hook-up culture, and disordered eating. Caralena is also a mixed-medium artist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times* and *Washington Life Magazine*. When she is not busy with all her side hustles, Caralena works full-time as an English teacher in New Orleans, Louisiana (though she will be stepping back the 2022-2023 school year to promote her book)."

"Most women don't go off to college expecting a major drop in confidence; they're getting ready to have the best four years of their life. But the reality is that women leave college with less self-esteem than they came in with and are two times more likely to experience depression than their male counterparts. So, where is the disconnect happening? Drawing from a plethora of data and her own personal experience, Effortless Perfection expert Caralena Peterson shows us just how immense the Myth's impact can be and why women need to start talking about the ways it disadvantages them instead of hiding behind secrecy and comparison. Full of authentic reflection and heart, this talk invites undergraduate women to take an honest look at their state of mental health and learn ways to move into healing and empowerment."

You can check out her past work and sign up for her newsletter at [www.caralenapeterson.com](http://www.caralenapeterson.com) and follow her on Instagram at @effortlessperfectionmyth. Listen to and like her fantastic TEDx Duke talk: <https://youtu.be/d8ZSQQSmZ8c>.

**Katie O'Malley**  
**Founder of (en)Courage Coaching + Consulting**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I remind myself consistency beats intensity every day of the week. It is through remembering that Rome wasn't built in a day. I give myself the grace to know that being consistent is more important than being intense. I am looking to be one percent better every day. Growth happens over time.*

Katie O'Malley is the founder of (en)Courage Coaching + Consulting with more than a decade of professional experience serving the nonprofit, corporate and education sectors. Across these workplaces, she noticed that her strengths and values consistently steered toward the support and development of others. In 2012, she earned a Master's Degree in Counseling and Board Certification in Coaching. She leverages a mix of evidence-based practices from the fields of counseling, management consulting and leadership education to equip her clients with customized strategies to meet their individual needs.

Coaching recent grads, experienced professionals, and small business owners aspiring to lead their teams and organizations is her most fulfilling, life-giving work. She believes that earning the right to hear a client's story, and creating a partnership that encourages the design of their most authentic and courageous life, is an incredible privilege. The average age at which a person is put in a leadership position is age 30, Katie says. Yet people are typically not trained in leadership skills until age 42. Katie helps to fill this 12 year gap by equipping people with the necessary skills, and helping organizations learn how to prevent attrition by training their employees with appropriate skills and providing needed support.

"Self-awareness is one of the key attributes of a good leader," Katie maintains. She counsels listeners to pay attention to their strengths and privileges, and to have a commitment to learning about themselves. (en) Courage Coaching + Consulting offers several programs, including the Coaching Career Accelerator Program and the Small Business Coaching program, which you can read more about on her website. She also helps client with more personal, difficult issues. Trauma, she says is not the difficult thing that happens, but our reactions to the event/happening. Katie helps equip her clients to deal with workplace-induced trauma, like that which can stem from discrimination, harassment, bullying, microaggressions, gaslighting and more. Such trauma can affect our mental and physical health. "In the healing, we regain our personal strength and sense of power," Katie shares.

Katie recently left her full-time position as the Senior Associate Director of Leadership Development at The University of Chicago Booth School of Business. She is now working full time on what began as her passion project, (en)Courage Coaching + Consulting, and is now a nationwide endeavor.

Learn more about (en)Courage + Coaching at [encouragecoaching.org](http://encouragecoaching.org)

Follow Katie at: Instagram @encouragecoachingchicago; Facebook @encouragecoachingchicago; LinkedIn: Katie O'Malley

**Siobhan Davenport**  
**Champion for Women and Girls and Founder of Non-Profit Entrepreneurs**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I, on a daily basis, strengthen my mindset. I practice affirmations, I make time for meditation and prayer and, even though I have faced that people-pleaser gene and imposter syndrome, they still pop up, I have to fortify myself on a daily basis in order live intentionally and with purpose.*

Siobhan Davenport is a multi-bestselling author and champion for Women and Girls with more than 15 years of non-profit experience. She is the founder of Non-Profit Entrepreneurs, a coaching and consulting firm that empowers non-profit leaders to build to give and increase their impact. Siobhan is a professional certified impact coach and transformational speaker.

Siobhan shares eloquently from her heart and experience. A recovering people-pleaser who suffered from imposter syndrome over the course of her life, she learned the healing value of forgiveness--of self and of others. She pays it forward in this chapter of her life by helping primarily women harness their passions for giving back to their communities by successfully setting up their nonprofit organizations. She offers her clients a blueprint for successfully making an impact, which includes how to use the required nonprofit language to obtain necessary funding, to build awareness of one's chosen cause, and how to build an effective board of directors.

As the daughter of teen parents, Siobhan knows about overcoming odds. Personal willpower is important, but it's imperative to have a community that fosters success. Siobhan dedicated her career to racial and gender equity by giving young girls everything she had--tools to overcome challenges and the community and support systems that enable girls to thrive.

Siobhan is a contributing author to a new book, *A Reason to Be Volume 4: Seeking Life Purpose* (Tilda Whitaker-Bakeris, 2022), which is an Amazon #1 best seller. It is a collaborative book with nine co-authors and is a must-read for all who are seeking to walk and live in their purpose. Siobhan's contribution is titled, "Purposeful Living with God." Readers are guided and inspired to step into the purpose and passion for their lives and missions. You can order a copy at [www.buildtogive.org](http://www.buildtogive.org) or on Amazon.

Siobhan also contributed to *Soul Talk: Twenty Soul-Stirring Stories of Women Who Let Go and Let God* (Cheryl Polote-Williamson, 2017) and *Shift Happens: Inspirational Stories on Finding Happiness, Achieving Success and Overcoming Obstacles* (Nikki Woods, 2016). Both are inspiring reads.

To learn more, go to her website: <https://www.buildtogive.org/>. Siobhan offers free consultation calls--sign up on her website. FB Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/buildtogive/>; Twitter: @SiobhanDAuthor

## **Kathy Fritz** **Master Hormone Coach**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I carve out self-care time every single day. It entails, for me, time in prayer, aromatherapy, and exercise. I am an avid tennis player. I don't play every day because I don't think it is helpful to move our bodies in the same way each day. Practicing self-care makes me a better mother, person and coach.*

Kathy Fritz is a board-certified master hormone coach who helps women in perimenopause and menopause experience relief from hormonal symptoms like fatigue, hot flashes, moodiness, and insomnia. Her clients lose weight, rediscover their energy, feel sexy, and stop thinking they're losing their minds. Kathy's background in education gives her the expertise to individualize material so her clients can go from where they are to where they want to be.

According to Kathy: "I help perimenopausal and menopausal women get relief from their hormonal symptoms like insomnia, weight gain, and hot flashes. I know there's a lot of (mis)information out there about midlife, what's normal, and what you can do about it. You don't have the time to research your symptoms or go through months of trial and error trying to fix them. I've sifted through the evidence-based material so I can create individualized hormone-balancing plans, because every woman's hormonal landscape is unique and shifting. I will help you make meaningful, sustainable changes that get you relief and help you maintain a new level of health."

She notes that the pill stops communication in one's body. She did her own research to help herself and uses what she learned to help others. She discovered her second calling. "I enjoy journeying with people and being able to support others to meet their own goals feels to me like meaningful work."

She helps women move their bodies from glucose burners to fat burners. She helps women improve energy levels and sleep quality. Food, movement, essential oils/supplements and toxic burden relief are the four pillars upon which her work is built. Stress and external things that negatively affect our bodies also are examined.

She was surprised to discover that menopause and its attendant symptoms and effects can begin in one's mid-30s. Making changes early can positively impact one's life. Eliminating dairy can help some people, for instance. Her partnership with women have improved the lives of so many, nationwide.

<https://www.instagram.com/kathyfritzcoaching/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kathy-fritz-hormone-coach/>

## **Trish Glowacki** **Founder of the Glowmedia Project**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I do therapy, which, I think, saved my life when my son died and when I got divorced. I practice yoga, I try to eat well and exercise regularly. I am careful with myself. I put a lot more thought into relationships that I have. I make time for my friends and family.*

Trish Glowacki is a filmmaker, writer and songwriter. Her first musical, *WARNING: Take Only As Directed*, was adapted to the screen. The award-winning film has proven to be an innovative and effective tool for teaching teens, their educators, parents and guardians about the dangers of prescription medicine misuse. In November 2011, Trish lost her 21-year old son, Charlie, after a five-year battle with anxiety, depression and substance abuse. Charlie died of an accidental Oxycontin overdose. In the wake of Charlie's passing, the family searched for ways to both handle the incredible grief and honor their beloved son's memory. Trish, an accomplished musician and thespian, set out to write songs and a play about Charlie. In the process of writing and researching, she realized a larger vision for his legacy. The growing opioid crisis had just started to reach a national consciousness. Overdoses have quadrupled since 1991 and the crisis has penetrated both rural and urban communities, crossing ethnic and socio-economic boundaries. Armed with a powerful story and an urgency to educate youth nationwide, Trish decided to adapt her play into a short film musical that could be used as a unique teaching resource. The goal was to produce a high-quality short film and disseminate it to as many middle and high school classrooms as possible. Leveraging her extensive contacts in the music and film industries, Trish enlisted studio musicians, hired a film director and production company, and co-wrote the screenplay. The film, *Warning: Take Only as Directed*, premiered in 2014 and soon after was added to Discovery Education, the nation's largest provider of digital educational content. To date, the film has been viewed by over a million students nationwide. The film comes with free resource guides and lesson plans. These materials facilitate classroom conversation and enhance understanding of the film content. The overwhelming success of this film inspired the Glowacki family to focus on other sensitive issues facing today's youth. In 2016, they created a 501c3 organization, the glowmedia project, and started fundraising for the development of a series of new films that, like *Warning*, seek to build awareness and reduce stigma around various challenges affecting teenagers.

The fifth film, addressing bipolar disorder, *King of the World*, was released in 2020. The pandemic brought new projects to a halt, but they were able to produce a documentary about the effects of the pandemic on the mental health of teens, *Unimaginable*, which will be released this fall. With pandemic restrictions lifted, they were able to film their seventh short, addressing suicide prevention, *There Can Be Light*, in May.

Learn more: [glowmedia.org](http://glowmedia.org); FB: [@glowmediaorg](https://www.facebook.com/glowmediaorg), IG/twitter: [@glowmediafilms](https://www.instagram.com/glowmediafilms), [Vimeo.com/glowmedia](https://www.vimeo.com/glowmedia)



**Catherine Hand**  
**Author of *Becoming a Warrior***

Q.     *What do you do to become your best version?*

A.     *I practice physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self-care. You have to take care of the body to be your best self. And I try to practice this idea that, whatever my adversity, I believe that it can be overcome. Emotionally and spiritually, I understand that it is not just about me. It is about us. I examine how am I in relationship with others. If it is out of sorts, I do what I can to make that better.*

In 2018, Catherine Hand was one of two producers for Walt Disney’s adaptation of Madeleine L’Engle’s beloved children’s classic *A Wrinkle in Time*. Catherine’s career in the entertainment business was launched working for the legendary writer/producer Norman Lear. She was the Associate Producer on Lear’s Emmy Nominated ABC TV special, *I Love Liberty*, and helped to create the national nonprofit, People for the American Way. Later, she served as a development executive at Zoetrope, Francis Coppola’s company where she worked on several projects, including *Godfather III*. Catherine has also worked for years in the public service sector. After having produced several large-scale events for national organizations, garnering a Gracie Award for best public affairs programming in 2009, Catherine was recruited by the Obama Administration where she was part of the core leadership team involved in communicating policy and political decisions impacting the federal workforce.

She continues to develop new projects and enjoys coaching others to become warriors in their own lives. Her memoir, *Becoming a Warrior* is scheduled to be published by Bold Story Press on October 25, 2022. It will be available everywhere.

"I read Madeleine L'Engle's award winning novel, *A Wrinkle in Time*, when I was ten years old and dreamt of one day making it into a movie. It would take five decades for my childhood dream to come true. My journey would include working alongside the television luminary Norman Lear in the creation of the nonprofit People For the American Way, and a 25 year-long conversation with author Madeleine L’Engle about her book. My memoir, *Becoming a Warrior: My Journey to Bring A Wrinkle in Time to the Screen* due to be released in October 2022 illustrates one woman’s persistence—through a demanding career in the entertainment industry, the sudden and unexpected death of my beloved husband, raising three young children on my own—and eventual success. In 2018, over fifty years after I first read *A Wrinkle in Time*, Walt Disney Studios released a major motion picture based on this beloved novel directed by Ava DuVernay, written by Jennifer Lee and starred Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, Mindy Kaling, Chris Pine, Gugu Mbatha Raw and Storm Reid." -- Catherine Hand

To learn more, see [catherinehand.com](http://catherinehand.com); <https://www.instagram.com/catherinehand5555/>;  
twitter: @madebyhand

**Raquel Benavidez**  
**Founder of The Truth Foundation and Angels at Work**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I practice acceptance. When I am judging myself and telling myself that I am not enough, then I am stopping myself. The more that I can let go, the more I can be in my fullness. When I am telling myself that I need to be the best, I am telling myself that I am not there yet. Then I can have more fun with myself.*

Raquel Benavidez joined us from San Diego to talk about how she employs the teachings of Toltec shaman, Don Miguel Ruiz, in her daily life and work. Don Miguel Ruiz is the author of the bestselling *The Four Agreements* and *The Mastery of Love*. Raquel maintains that *The Mastery of Love* is about the compassion that nurtures the four simple, logical agreements in Don Miguel's seminal work, *The Four Agreements*, which changed my life. "We are here to create ourselves only," Raquel says. "We can disagree, but we do not have to judge. As long as others are not hurting me...people have the right to think however they'd like. What gives me the right to think I know the only truth? We must stop our righteous indignation because being righteously indignant puts us in the same trap."

Raquel has launched The Truth Foundation, dedicated to educating and expanding the perceptions of identity and race both in the workplace and one's personal life. The program works in partnership with her corporate clients to bring empowerment and hope to local underserved communities through guidance programs that broaden the opportunity to achieve real success and happiness among their constituencies.

"The Truth Foundation was born out of a necessity to help and share the opportunities given to us. As women, we want to nourish and be able to provide to those in need. We get inspired by Mother Nature, and in current times, we feel more than ever that we need a collective need for change. We are ready to let go of the old paradigms and bring light into this new era, with transcendental love-universal love and compassion. Seeding fortitude and resilience in young women to embrace and nurture their inner truth, cultivating a community of rising luminaries to trust and harness the experiences of life through power of choice, respect, and faith in oneself. The Truth Foundation is a registered 501(c)3 in the US, that endeavors to help people identify and pursue their passions and live in their truth. We empower and support a more mindful approach to business & life. Goals: Professional Development. Education. Spiritual Journeys. Activism."

"Angels at Work exists to support the success and wellbeing of all individuals working in the corporate business world, the education sector, and small businesses alike. Our work focuses on complementing institutions' existing strategies, aiming to assist them in building a more dynamic workplace. We also offer a range of services to build and maintain mindfulness within the workplace."

See [TheTruthFoundation.org](http://TheTruthFoundation.org) and [AngelsAtWork.org](http://AngelsAtWork.org) for more information.

**Amal Ghandour**  
**Author of *This Arab Life: A Generation's Journey Into Silence***

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *There is much distress and pain here, where I live. I fiercely resist optimism when it is not justified. I strive to create conditions in which we can contemplate possibilities, paths out of difficulties. In places and moments of serious hardship, the temptation is always to move on, forget, to focus on one's self, to move away. I become stubbornly engaged where it matters and where it counts.*

Amal Ghandour is a Lebanese-Jordanian author and blogger (Thinking Fits), with a career that spans more than three decades in the fields of research, communication and community development. Her book, *About This Man Called Ali* (2009), was named the first biography of a modern Arab artist by the renowned Historian, Philip Mansel. Amal's latest book, *This Arab Life: A Generation's Journey Into Silence* (2022), is her quest for clarity during difficult, unpredictable moments in the Arab world. She describes it "as a memoir that is not of an individual but of the generation that came of political age in the 1980s in the Levant," and admits that her book straddles genres to include history and cultural/political commentary. *This Arab Life*, she adds, "is an intimate rendition of the times that shaped us; the way we internalized our parents' myriad dejections and disappointments; the pragmatism and silence that defined us; and the dispiriting inheritance we inexorably bequeathed our own children." Amal had to do some "excavation" during the writing of this book, to explore and deal with the existential angst that arose in her. Amal laments her generation's failure to have a say in the geographies and social structures that shape their destinies and explains what she believes to have contributed to this situation, and what could have been done to avoid it.

In 2009, Amal became Senior Advisor to Ruwwad al Tanmeya, a regional community development initiative. She sits on the Boards of Directors of Ruwwad in Lebanon and Palestine, on the Board of Trustees of International College (IC), and on the Board of Directors of Synaps. She also served as Special Adviser to Columbia University's Global Centers, Middle East (2014-2017), and on the Board of Directors of The Arab Human Rights Fund (2011-2014). Amal holds an MS in International Policy from Stanford University and a BSFS from Georgetown University.

Among her works: Aeon, The Daily Beast, Washington Independent Review of Books, Midanmasr, Canvas. Website - <https://amalghandour.com/>; Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/amalghandour/>; Twitter - [https://twitter.com/ghandour\\_ag](https://twitter.com/ghandour_ag); Goodreads - <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/61908393-this-arab-life>; Amazon - <https://www.amazon.com/This-Arab-Life-Generations-Journey-ebook/dp/B0B6DGWW5Q>

**Vailes Shepperd**  
**Author of *A Good Ending for Bad Memories***

Q.     *What do you do to become your best version?*

A.     *There are things that you simply have to make a decision about. My decision can be that this is a good day, I am thankful to have this day, and I am going to take this time and do the best things I can with it. I am going to smile at this. I can make a decision to be happy. I am going to look at something beautiful and have that inform me. I also am careful about what I ingest in my mind. I keep so many things at a distance and do not take them in.*

Vailes ("Joye") Shepperd is a captivating author. There are few historical novels about the successful Black experience before, during and after slavery. Because of a lack of documentation about the African American experience and culture during the early part of U.S. history, *A Good Ending for Bad Memories* (Bold Story Press, 2021), while fiction, is a true account of Black reality and culture in the U.S. It is full of compelling characters and rich settings, and adds to an important narrative. "Our history was not compiled and kept like others, but we all know stories that are important to know," Vailes relates. Her book's characters bring to life multiple aspects of the American Black experience, and her readers, like me, are the beneficiaries of her shared work. *A Good Ending for Bad Memories* is a richly sensual novel about a prosperous African American family before, during, and after slavery. It threads truth, folklore, legend and fact, in a captivating exploration of a family's complex legacy. The plot frames their experiences and events in the United States, as well as in Mexico and Egypt. Vailes brings her characters to life in a way I have not experienced, in recent memories. She shares that her brother is a poet but, I believe, Vailes's work sometimes reads like poetry.

Vailes is one of the founding/member editors of the *Washington Independent Review of Books* ([www.wirobooks.com](http://www.wirobooks.com)), which began when *The Washington Post* ceased publishing Book World. She interviewed authors and wrote regular articles about writing for the *Washington Independent Review*. She designed a writing program for high school students while teaching in a Saturday program under the auspices of Substance Abuse Prevention Education. Vailes was editor of *The African Safari* by P.J. Fetner (St. Martin's Press) and *Take Me with You* by Scott Jackson, President and CEO of Global Impact. Her short story, "Monroe" was published in an anthology of women writing about men, *Brothers and Others*. She lives in Washington, DC with her husband and, sometimes, two sons. *A Good Ending for Bad Memories* is the first of four upcoming books.

Learn more (and check out her blog) here: <https://linktr.ee/vailesshepperd>;  
<https://www.vailesshepperdbooks.com/>

## Emma Payne Grief Coach

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *16-hour days! I am quite good at balancing. I have found ways to talk about my losses and express my feelings. I believe I am living my best life every day right now, by being in the center of my own Venn diagram.*

Emma Payne, who joins us from Vancouver, is the founder and CEO of Grief Coach, a text messaging service that delivers ongoing, expert grief support globally. Grief Coach, which was borne out of her personal loss, combines Emma's passion for mobile technology and engagement, with her deep commitment to providing affordable, accessible, and personal grief support. An MIT graduate and best-selling author who started building online communities before Netscape was born, Emma knows that, while grief is hard, it's a little easier when we have people by our side.

"Expert grief support for you. Gentle coaching for friends & family who want to help but may not know how. All via text. For less than the price of an hour's therapy, we'll send you thoughtful, personalized tips and suggestions all year long. Texts are curated by experts and customized based on your loss. Because nobody should have to grieve alone." (*source: grief.coach*)

Stark numbers exist regarding grieving. The U.S. Census recently reported the biggest jump in mortality rates in 100 years. Death spiked almost 19% in 2019-2020 (Covid, suicides and overdoses account for some of this). So that feeling that we have that so many are grieving is not just a feeling. It is real. Before the pandemic, it was hard to find a grief counselor. When we are grieving, there is vast data that indicates that we are at risk of negative health outcomes. This is especially true of vulnerable communities. But the health care system needs to acknowledge this, and has not. Yet. Grief Coach has filled a huge gap.

"No one teaches us how to grieve. We are in a grief and death illiterate society. It is scary to sit with someone in the depths of grief and depression. Grief must be relieved," Emma explains. We are all fortunate that Grief Coach is helping us process and move through our grief.

Learn more about Emma's work here: [www.grief.coach](http://www.grief.coach). Check out the Grief Coach blog for helpful tips: <https://grief.coach/blog/>; <https://www.instagram.com/grief.coach/>; <https://twitter.com/mygriefcoach>; <https://www.facebook.com/mygriefcoach>; <https://www.linkedin.com/company/griefcoach>; <https://vimeo.com/griefcoach>; <https://www.tiktok.com/@grief.coach>; <https://www.pinterest.com/mygriefcoach>

## Wendy Posillico Mindset Coach

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *Soulstigate. Soulstigating is about listening to my inner being and trusting, even when it does not seem to make sense. I disrupt my norm when I get too comfortable, instigate my soul so I can do my best and I can help others to do the same.*

Wendy Posillico, who joined us from Jupiter, Florida, by way of New York and Lake Tahoe, is an athlete, a coach, a single mother, an explorer, and the founder of WP Elite Mindset Coaching and Live Your June. After becoming a professional golfer in her 30s and a single mother through IVF in her 40s, Wendy's life went in a completely new direction, and she came to understand the importance of a flexible mindset, targeted goals, and clarity of self. Drawing upon her background in special education (she worked as a special ed teacher in Harlem) and human development, a lifetime of experience in competitive sports, and the most up to date research on high performance, Wendy created her Elite Mindset coaching program. She learned to embrace transition and trust her intuition in order to transform her life, and she wants to help others to do the same.

She encourages people to "live their June," explaining that "June is who you really are. It is an energy inside each one of us that is as unique as a fingerprint.... Live Your June offers self-assessments, online courses and private coaching to help instigate the connection with who you are and who you were born to be." Wendy describes "June" as the best in us, passed on from generations before we came into the world. She notes that, as children, we tend to live our uniqueness and are not hampered by societal judgments. She helps adults come back to who they really are before the world told them who they were supposed to be.

Wendy runs groups in which she provides safe spaces for participants to be vulnerable. "We all need space to speak the stuff that's scary," Wendy says. She continually challenges her clients to think bigger, and marvels at the "something in people's eyes when they believe in themselves." Her personal philosophy is that we should aim to "instigate our souls." She coined the term "soulstigate," which is "about listening to your inner being and trusting when something does not make sense."

Wendy also raises money for pediatric cancer research, in honor of her late niece, and funds for clean water efforts in Zambia, Africa. Check out <https://whitsway.org/> and <https://golfforeafrica.org/> to learn more about these organizations.

Learn more about Wendy's work at [liveyourjune.com](http://liveyourjune.com) and follow Wendy on Instagram and Facebook: @liveyourjune.

**Dr. Robin Davisson**  
**Scientist, Professor and Artist**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I follow my intuition. It may take a lifetime to develop one's intuition. You have to be at a certain stage of life to begin to really follow it. That is how a whole life change came about for me. Intuition is a combination of our histories, our emotions and our intellect.*

You might be wondering how someone transitions from scientist with a tenured professorship at a major research university to uncovering hidden truths with paint and brushes. Dr. Robin Davisson's career is as interesting, unpredictable and exciting as her abstract expressionist paintings. Robin recently left a 25-year career as a biomedical scientist in academia to pursue her passion for painting--a startling and exhilarating second act! She just opened StudioLab RD, a new and unique creative hub where they are creating connection through art in the heart of Georgetown, in Washington, DC. Robin started her professional life as a biomedical scientist in the field of molecular physiology. Her work over nearly three decades contributed in major ways to our understanding of the control of the circulation in health and disease, relevant to disorders as varied as high blood pressure, heart failure and obesity. She was honored with many major national and international awards by her scientific peers and was an endowed professor at Cornell University. She is currently Professor Emerita at Cornell and Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Georgetown University. Throughout this award-winning career, Robin's passionate avocation was textile art, including spinning, natural dyeing, knitting and weaving. Eventually, the pull of art was irresistible, and she decided to close her research laboratories to devote her efforts completely to abstract painting. Robin's lyrical, process-driven work is rooted in eclectic curiosity and the material surprises she discovers working with her finely-developed visual vocabulary. Her debut exhibition opened at Calloway Fine Art in Georgetown, Washington, DC in Spring of 2021, where she continues to show. Robin is currently one of three finalists for the 2022 DC Mayor's Arts Awards in the Emerging Creative category. This spring Davisson opened a unique new creative hub in Georgetown called StudioLab RD. Visitors to StudioLab can browse available art, flip through her art library and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea on the studio's sun-filled street level. Upstairs, guests can watch Davisson at work, from testing ideas in her sketchbook and prepping canvases, to mixing and applying paints and discerning the final touches on completed pieces. Davisson is accessible and available to chat with visitors and exchange ideas. She often gives observers a chance to explore their creativity. Her intention is to explore the creative process together. Salons, a creative-in-residence program and other offerings are also currently in the works. Today, Robin follows her intuition. She describes it as a combination of her history, her emotions and her intellect. She recognizes that, for her, it took a lifetime to develop and follow her intuition.

You can learn more about her work here: [www.robindavissonart.com](http://www.robindavissonart.com); @robindavissonart; @studiolab\_rd

## **Roxanne McCarty-O’Kane** **Writer and Writing Mentor**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I found a huge shift when I found a book called, *The Four Agreements*, by Don Miguel Ruiz. That book really changed my perspective on who I am and how I show up in the world. The agreements are: (1) Be impeccable with my words. We have the ability to build someone up or to break someone down with our words. (2) Don’t take anything personally. As a reformed people pleaser, I work on understanding that we can’t take responsibility for how others show up in the world. I don’t carry this heavy energy anymore. (3) Don’t make assumptions. To assume makes an ass out of you and me! Always be clear about what you want to say and understand what others are trying to say. (4) Always do your best. And know that that is enough.*

Roxanne McCarty-O’Kane is a ghostwriter and writing mentor who works closely with aspiring authors to empower them to become the changemakers they dream to be through authorship. Storytelling has been Roxanne’s bread and butter since 2007 with a long career as a journalist for newspapers, magazines, and online publications before transferring her skillsets into non-fiction book creation. Her emphasis on connection to her authors and honoring the uniqueness of their stories has seen her recognized by numerous awards.

Roxane McCarty-O’Kane joined us on the podcast from Australia. Her Phoenix Phenomenon project showcases inspiring people's stories. She now focuses on authors' stories. Get help with your book by contacting Roxanne at the links or email below. She also does service work helping victims heal from sexual abuse, as part of the No More Fake Smiles organization.

Roxanne follows the premises of the seminal book, *The Four Agreements*, by Toltec shaman, Don Miguel Ruiz. She is mindful about her words, and she strives not to take things personally or make assumptions and always to do her best in any situation.

Roxanne has penned her own book, *Ignite & Write*, a resource for fellow authors. Learn more and follow her work: <https://www.roxannewriter.com.au/>

Email: [hello@roxannewriter.com.au](mailto:hello@roxannewriter.com.au); Instagram: @roxannewriter;

Facebook: [facebook.com/roxannewriter](https://www.facebook.com/roxannewriter); LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/roxannemccartyokane/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/roxannemccartyokane/)



## **Faigie Kobre Creativity Igniter**

Q. *What do you do to become your best version?*

A. *I constantly work on myself to become a better human being. I work on my relationships. I have six children, so I work on changing my way of dealing with each of my children, according to their needs and temperaments. Any relationship requires you to give of one's self. We are never finished, because there is so much to work on and to change.*

Faigie Kobre (Faigie is Yiddish for bird) is an elementary school art teacher in Long Island, New York, who also works with women who love art but don't feel artistic. She helps them reignite their creativity through the medium of alcohol inks. She started her career as an early childhood educator (she got her master's in education in the 1980s) and then spent 25 years as a high-end portrait photographer. She conducted workshops on creativity and how to give kids art that feeds them. While she loved helping children enhance their creativity, she switched careers in her 50s (after her children were grown) and loves teaching women how to tap into their untapped creativity. Locally, she conducts art parties in her community, but her coaching and workshops are offered online as well.

Learn more about her work here: [www.creativityreignited.com](http://www.creativityreignited.com); [@creativealcoholinking](https://www.instagram.com/creativealcoholinking); [www.facebook.com/creativealcoholinking](https://www.facebook.com/creativealcoholinking)

**What do I, Maria Leonard Olsen, do to become my best version? I keep learning. I surround myself with people who encourage me to become my best version, and I avoid energy vampires. I seek out the work and words of inspiring people, like those I have featured in this book and on my podcast.**

# **What will *you* do to become your best version?**

**Please email me your ideas at [FiftyAfter50@gmail.com](mailto:FiftyAfter50@gmail.com) or post on social media on [@fiftyafter50](https://www.instagram.com/fiftyafter50)**

**Contact me with podcast guest ideas, or if you need a public speaker for an event or club**

**Please listen to and like my TEDx Talk, “Using Life’s Challenges as a Force for Good.” It has the capacity to help many not feel so alone (and likes moves it up in the visibility algorithm): <https://youtu.be/nR3cM9aRjes>**

**And don’t forget to subscribe to and review the *Becoming Your Best Version* podcast:**

**<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/becoming-your-best-version/id1562910379>**

## About the Author

Maria Leonard Olsen is a biracial attorney whose parents were forbidden by law to marry in their home state of Maryland in the early 1960s. She is the mother of two children, journalist and author of two children's books and two nonfiction adult books. She leads writing/empowerment retreats for women, is host of the podcast, “Becoming Your Best Version,” presented the TEDx Talk, “Using Life’s Challenges as a Force for Good,” and is a co-host of the “Inside Out” radio show on WPFW-fm, 89.3, in Washington, D.C.

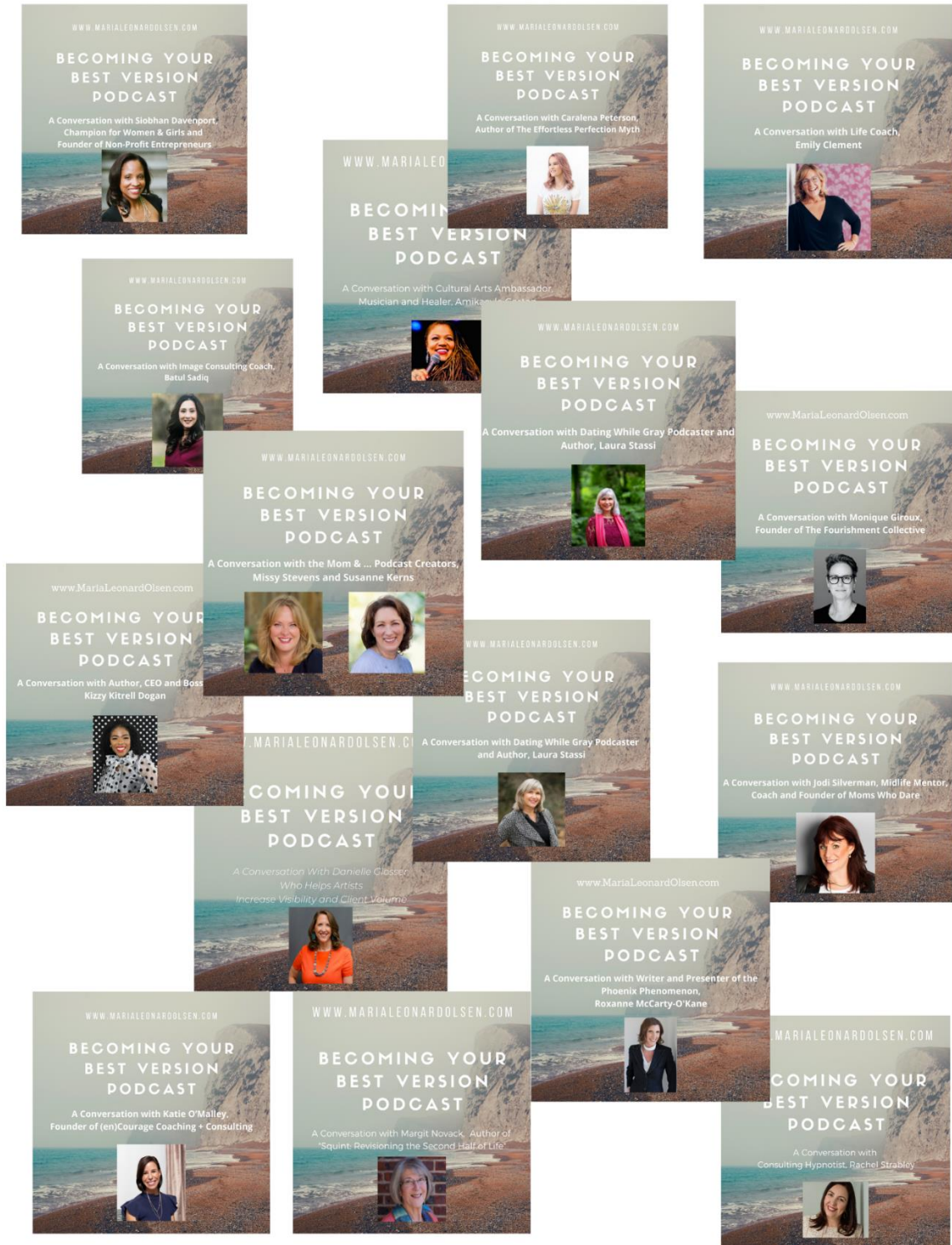
Maria graduated from Boston College and the University of Virginia School of Law, served in the Clinton Administration's Justice Department, fostered newborn babies awaiting adoption, and has been on the boards of Children's National Medical Center Board of Visitors, the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, GirlsUp and the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Washington. She has written for *The Washington Post*, *Washingtonian*, *AARP's The Ethel*, *Thrive Global*, *Authority Magazine*, *Bethesda Magazine*, *Parents Magazine*, *Parenting* and *Washington For Women*. She returned to practicing law after her children were launched. *Mommy, Why's Your Skin So Brown?* (Mirror Publishing, 2013), about being mistaken for the nanny of her lighter-skinned children, is her first children's book. *Healing for Hallie* (Mirror Publishing, 2016), about the importance of expressing one's feelings, is her second children's book. *Not the Cleaver Family—The New Normal in Modern American Families* (Tate 2013), explores common changes in the composition of American families during this past decade, and *50 After 50: Reframing the Next Chapter of Your Life* (Rowman & Littlefield 2018 hardcover, 2019 paperback and audiobook), is a widely used vehicle for people to become the best versions of themselves.

Maria gave a TEDx talk at City University of New York in November 2021 on “Using Life’s Challenges as a Force for Good.”<sup>1</sup> She has spoken at numerous schools and events, including the Pennsylvania Conference for Women, the National Press Club's Book Fair, the Mixed Remixed Festival in Los Angeles, the Japanese American National Museum's Family Day, the National March to End Rape Culture, the Washington Independent Review of Books, and the U.S. Department of Justice's Asian American Month Celebration (as the highest ranking Asian American political appointee then at the Justice Department). Maria counsels women recovering from alcoholism and trauma, including DNA test discoveries. Go to [www.MariaLeonardOlsen.com](http://www.MariaLeonardOlsen.com) for additional information.

<sup>1</sup> This TEDx Talk is available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/nR3cM9aRjes>. Please hit the like button on the Talk to help it move up in the visibility algorithm, because I believe it has the capacity to help many people not feel so alone.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the women who shared their stories on my podcast, *Becoming Your Best Version*. The light you put in the world illuminates my spirit and that of so many others.



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