

the modern domestic woman



January Profile



Anique Drouin - Rewriting the Story of
Divorce with Empathy, Collaboration,
and a Teacher's Heart

January 2026

MDW MAG

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear MDW Family,

January always asks us to begin again. But this is not a “new year, new me” issue.

I like myself. And honestly, I'm tired of being told that growth has to look like becoming shinier, calmer, more productive, or easier to digest. I've spent enough time chasing versions of myself that looked good on paper but felt hollow in practice.

What 2025 did, very effectively, was strip away the nonsense. Surviving last year made me question everything: my values, my relationships, and the way time slips through our hands while we're busy documenting our lives instead of actually living them. Somewhere in the middle of all that, an uncomfortable truth settled in – life is short, and far too many of us are performing our way through it instead of participating in it.

That realization changed the question. Instead of asking how to reinvent ourselves, I started wondering what it would look like to simply reframe the way we're living.

What happens when we get radically clear on what matters, and let that clarity guide both the big, life-altering decisions and the small, ordinary ones? The conversations we lean into. The commitments we keep. The ones we quietly release without apology.

Values don't have to live only on a vision board. They can become filters, daily touchstones that help us decide what deserves our energy and what no longer does.

This magazine exists because I wanted something slower. Something physical. Something you can hold without being interrupted. No notifications. No algorithms. No one telling you what you should care about next. Just stories, ideas, and moments that invite you back into your own life.

If you're holding this issue, I hope it feels like permission—to pause, to question, to choose more intentionally. Not a reset. Not a glow-up. Just a return to yourself.

Here's to a year of oodles of clarity instead of noise.

Elizabeth Rago
MDW Founder & Editor



Tap on the cute icons or QR codes to shop instantly or learn more about the product featured.

PARTNER

A MAGAZINE WORTH SAVORING & SAVING

A 65+ page, full-color MDW magazine packed with mental health resources, local recs, and soulful lifestyle inspo. Plus a thoughtful free gift every issue.

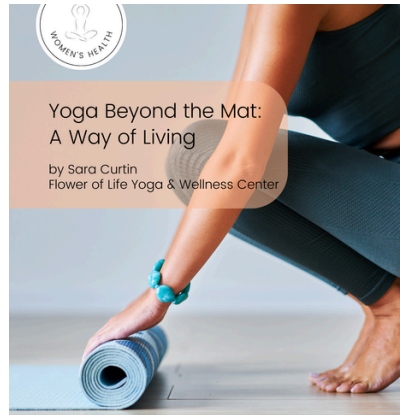
Pick your plan:

- \$15/single issue
- \$65/6 months
- \$120/1 year

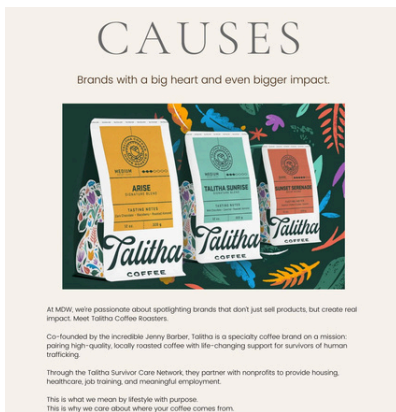
Save it, share it, revisit it.



Subscribe



SUBSCRIBE



JOIN OUR FIRST YEAR OF PRINT & MAKE AN IMPACT

Become a Year-1 Founding Partner and reach a deeply engaged MDW audience across print + digital.

Accessible rates (\$50-\$350) with options from quarter-page ads to full sponsor features (article, gift inclusion, socials).

Email

themoderndomesticwoman@gmail.com
to inquire about partnerships.



This month, we're honored to spotlight Anique Drouin as our Monthly Partner. Throughout the issue, we share her story, her voice, and her steady wisdom, woven naturally into the pages of the magazine.

You'll find thoughtful insights and practical guidance that reflect not just what Anique does, but how she does it: with care, clarity, and a deep respect for families navigating change.

We also highlight Anique's specialty in collaborative divorce, offering readers grounded tips and perspectives that focus on communication, dignity, and forward-thinking solutions. Her approach reminds us that separation doesn't have to mean destruction; it can be a process rooted in cooperation, intention, and long-term well-being for everyone involved.



the modern domestic woman

JANUARY SPONSOR



Subscriber Gift

As part of Anique's partnership, print subscribers will receive a thoughtful gift: a beautiful hardcover journal paired with custom sticker artwork created by local artist. Amanda Klosinski.

Together, they carry a simple but powerful reminder, that we are always finding our way.

In many ways, that's exactly what Anique strives to be for her clients: a light and a compass, helping families navigate difficult transitions and discover a next path that allows them to move forward peacefully.

about the artist.

Amanda Klosinski

Amanda Klosinski is a graphic design artist known for her ability to move seamlessly between whimsical, pattern-driven design and beautifully realistic portrait work.

Her art blends imagination with precision, making each piece feel both playful and deeply personal. We're honored to feature her custom artwork created especially for our MDW Sponsor.

Follow Amanda or commission her work at @klocreate on Insta.



7	PROFILE
14	MDW CARES
24	SLOW LIVING
34	WOMEN'S HEALTH
44	ACCESSORIES
48	WELLNESS
54	RELATIONSHIPS
66	PARENTING

TABLE OF CONTENTS



— Profile

Rewriting the Story of Divorce with Empathy, Collaboration, and a Teacher's Heart



Photo by Katie O'Brien

Before she ever stepped inside a courtroom, before she founded her own law firm, before she became one of Illinois' leading advocates for peaceful, future-focused divorce... Anique Drouin stood in front of a class of seventh graders in Baltimore, trying to teach English while also quietly learning one of the greatest lessons of her life: people can only grow when they feel understood.

Those early teaching years were loud, hilarious, unpredictable, and deeply human. They were also formative.

Anique had come to Baltimore through Teach for America after completing university in Canada. She arrived wide-eyed, idealistic, and determined to make a difference. What she didn't expect was how much this season would shape every chapter that followed.

In that middle school classroom, she learned patience from adolescents who tested boundaries as a sport. She learned emotional attunement from kids navigating stressors at home that no twelve-year-old should carry. And she learned that education, true education, is a form of empowerment, a belief that has never left her, even now in a completely different profession.

"Those years taught me," Anique shared, "that people open up when they feel safe. And that's still my job today."

The Moment of Shift

By her fourth year of teaching, Anique felt the familiar tug many teachers feel:

Is this still where I'm meant to be? Or is the next version of me waiting somewhere else?

So, she plotted possibilities with her characteristic blend of practicality and heart: Social work? Nursing? Maybe even law school?

Or, possibly Starbucks, just to buy time to think.

But law kept rising to the surface, not as a glamorous courtroom fantasy, but as a pathway into public-interest work. She enrolled in law school and immediately immersed herself in the kinds of cases that don't make headlines but absolutely change lives:

- Supporting survivors at House of Ruth, a domestic-violence shelter, with legal issues
- Helping people appeal the loss of life-sustaining benefits through the Homeless Persons Representation Project
- Working in the family law clinic as a student attorney, guided by seasoned attorneys who knew the importance of real legal case work for students

It was here, amid files, client narratives, and the quiet bravery of people in crisis, that Anique realized she was exactly where she was meant to be.

She loved helping people on the ground, in the moment their life was shifting. She loved family law, but Anique was drawn, from the very start of her legal career, to mediation and the emerging field of Collaborative Divorce.

Mentors like Maureen Sullivan Taylor deepened that conviction, showing her that while litigation is a necessary option in some cases, there were better ways to help families transition without destruction.



A Different Way Forward

After more than fifteen years of litigation experience and serving regularly as a guardian ad litem for children, Anique knew three things:

1. She was fully capable of litigating difficult cases.
2. She no longer wanted adversarial lawyering to be the center of her career.
3. And she didn't want conflict to be the default for people facing divorce.

Drouin Family Law was born from that conviction. A woman-owned firm designed for people who want a divorce that is thoughtful, private, and future-focused. One that protects children, preserves assets, and allows families to move forward without unnecessary damage.

She envisioned a practice rooted not in battle, but in scaffolding. A supportive structure around families who were at their most vulnerable.

The foundation of her work is giving clients options and using Alternative Dispute Resolution processes. She is a certified mediator who helps some couples facilitate the discussions needed to settle divorce terms. Some people have simple situations and need her assistance to complete an uncontested divorce. Still others could benefit from the Collaborative Divorce Process, a model rooted in dignity rather than dominance.

As part of her commitment to offer solutions-based, non-litigious options, Anique is an active member of Collaborative Divorce Illinois (CDI).

This interdisciplinary group of divorce professionals is dedicated to helping Illinois families resolve divorce with respect and transparency, outside of the courtroom whenever possible.

And Anique's approach begins with the very first consultation.

"I know they're often scared in the initial consultation," Anique said.

"When someone sits across from me, even if they are already certain that divorce is the right decision, they may still be dealing with trauma or fear or uncertainty. In many cases, they can't think objectively at those beginning stages.

So I meet them where they are. Then, slowly, we begin envisioning what their life could look like, during the divorce process and after."

Empathy, yes. But also boundaries. She is a lawyer, not a therapist, after all, and that's the beauty of the Collaborative Process: it's a team effort.

When using the Collaborative Process model, Anique builds each team with her clients intentionally: collaboratively trained attorneys, financial neutrals, divorce coaches, and child specialists when needed. The facts in each case help determine what team members will be most useful.

Not everyone works at once; the process is efficient and purpose-driven. But together, the professionals help guide the clients through the emotional, financial, and logistical complexity of divorce in a way that keeps the future in view and puts the spouses in the driver's seat when it comes to making decisions.

"People think peaceful divorce is a fantasy," Anique explained.

"But it's not. Many people want to end their marriage in a way that honors the relationship that existed, supports their children, and preserves dignity and privacy."

Not everyone works at once; the process is efficient and purpose-driven. But together, the professionals help guide the clients through the emotional, financial, and logistical complexity of divorce in a way that keeps the future in view and puts the spouses in the driver's seat when it comes to making decisions.

Changing the Narrative

Say "I'm a divorce attorney" at a party, and the room shifts. Anique laughs knowingly; she's felt that shift many times when discussing her career.

But she wants people to understand the truth:

- > Not all divorces are war stories.
- > Not all attorneys are bulldogs hired to "win" at whatever cost.
- > And not all families are doomed to be casualties of the process.

"There is such a thing as a good divorce," Anique shared. "One that protects children, preserves emotional stability and financial resources, and lets people walk into their future more certain and less scarred."

The Collaborative model started in the early 1990s with longtime litigator Stu Webb, who knew adversarial law was breaking families apart. Anique carries that torch today, offering families something revolutionary: a process that de-escalates instead of destroys.

Sometimes, when using a non-litigation process, the transformation is profound. Anique has been in rooms where one partner finally names the deep hurt, an affair, a betrayal, a disappointment, and the other person truly hears it. Apologizes. A block dissolves, and the space shifts, making a way for a solution.

Suddenly, the future feels possible again.

"It matters," Anique said. "These moments of humanity matter for families to move forward."

Life Beyond the Law

Anique's life is not all negotiation tables and legal strategy. She intentionally built her business to be present with her family, raising her children in Batavia with her husband while pouring time into her community.

She has volunteered with the Batavia Mothers' Club, served as a Girl Scout leader, and in 2025, she was sworn in as a Batavia Park District Commissioner, beginning a six-year term dedicated to strengthening local parks and programming.

"Service has always been part of who I am," said Anique. "I want to make things better, for my clients, my family, and my community."



And it's fitting, really. Anique's work is about helping people rebuild. And her heart's work is about helping communities thrive. And at the center of it all is the thread that connects her earliest teaching days to her present-day law practice:

When people feel understood, they can move forward.

"Being aware of what's happening beyond yourself, that was instilled in me early," Anique recalls. "It's part of who I am."

A Better Ending Is Possible

At its core, Anique Drouin's work is about belief.

Belief that education empowers.
Belief that conflict doesn't have to define a transition.
Belief that families deserve better than a win/lose system.

Through her role at Drouin Family Law and her involvement with Collaborative Divorce Illinois, she is helping rewrite what divorce can look like, one family at a time.

Not louder. Not harsher.

But guided by empathy, intention, and respect for what comes next.



Representing clients in counties across Northern Illinois, including DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Will, Cook, and DeKalb counties.

630-560-6840
Anique@drouinfamilylaw.com

What Is Collaborative Divorce?



A voluntary, out-of-court resolution process



Both spouses hire collaboratively trained attorneys



Shared financial neutral organizes all financial data



Divorce coaches support emotional communication, parenting plans, and even guidelines for living together through the divorce transition



(Optional) Child specialists offer guidance when kids are involved



Everyone signs a participation agreement committing to transparency, confidentiality, and respectful resolution



THE TEAM

Attorney

Legal guidance + future-focused advocacy

Financial Neutral

Transparent financial analysis + scenario planning

Divorce Coach(es)

Emotional regulation + communication support

Child Specialist

Development-based parenting recommendations

Potential additional professionals

Specialized input when needed

WHY CHOOSE COLLABORATION INSTEAD OF COURT?

- More private
- More efficient with time and financial resources
- Less adversarial
- Protects children
- Future-focused, not blame-focused
- Parents remain better co-parents
- Decisions are made by the family, not a judge

Three Pillars for a Peaceful Divorce

Dignity

Honoring the relationship that existed while acknowledging individual needs.

Clarity

Understanding goals, concerns, and how various options address them.

Stability

Protecting children and long-term wellbeing for everyone.

Signs Collaborative Divorce Might Be Right for You

- You want a respectful process
- You want to keep children out of conflict
- You value privacy
- You want professionals guiding your decisions, not escalating tensions
- You prefer a team approach for a tailored solution rather than a win/lose fight

- Purposeful meetings scheduled at intervals that keep momentum
- Minimal court time/interaction
- Coaches handle emotional conversations, so attorneys don't bill for them
- Financial neutral reduces duplicated work between attorneys

How Collaborative Divorce Can Save Money



MDW Cares

MDW Cares is a mutual aid network for women navigating life's many transitions, from motherhood to career shifts to divorce and beyond. We connect you with trusted local resources and community support so you don't have to walk the journey alone.

The following pages highlight events, support groups and therapists with immediate openings to help you find care when you need it most.

MDW January Events



DIVORCED MOMS SUPPORT GROUP

JAN. 10, 2026 8:00 AM

Virtual Bi-Weekly Meet Up

Text 630-474-5275 to RSVP

VISION BOARD WORKSHOP

JAN 11, 2026 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Flower of Life Yoga & Wellness Center
102 N 5th Ave, St. Charles, IL

[RSVP](#)



MOMS SUPPORT GROUP

JAN. 14 & 28 2026 7:15 PM

Batavia Library, Batavia, IL

Text 630-946-9102 to RSVP

YOGA + COFEE FOR PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS OF ND KIDS

JAN 18, 2026 11:00 AM

Zen Loft Collective
103 E. Wilson St., 2nd Floor, Batavia, IL

[RSVP](#)

INVESTED IN HER (FINANCIAL LITERACY)

JAN 24, 2026 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Fox Valley Realtors Association
406 Surrey Woods Dr., St. Charles, IL

[RSVP](#)

Divorced Moms Support Circle

Single motherhood isn't about perfection, but about learning to trust the quiet strength you carry.



Join us virtually!

When: Saturdays 2x monthly

Date: Starting 12/13 (and every other Saturday)

Time: 8 AM- 9 AM

Where: Virtual Zoom (link provided after sign up)

Cost: FREE



A safe space for...

- Divorced moms rebuilding their lives.
- Moms feeling overwhelmed, isolated, or emotionally drained.
- Single moms seeking connection and support.
- Moms navigating co-parenting with a difficult or high-conflict ex.
- Moms currently going through a divorce.
- Moms wanting a community that gets what they're carrying.

Please pre-register here to receive your link:

Call/text: 630-474-5275 or E-mail: carrie@noreilahealing.com

“YOU DON’T NEED A NEW YOU.
YOU NEED A NEW STRATEGY.”

- Zoe Sherwin



— Financial Tips

Don't discount small beginnings.

People have been making New Year's resolutions for over 4,000 years. By the 17th–19th centuries, it evolved into the familiar “new year, new me” mindset we see everywhere this time of year.

And honestly? It makes sense.

Most of us are genuinely excited to close one chapter and open another, to imagine what's possible, to reset, to dream a little. A fresh page feels hopeful.

The easy part is buying the pretty planner, picking out new workout clothes, or deciding this will finally be the year you make a big move, maybe a new car, a home, or even just committing to something that feels like an investment in yourself.

Where it gets tricky is in the everyday moments. Because real change requires consistency.

Trust me, I get it. Every single day looks and feels different, yet we put so much pressure on ourselves to show up perfectly every time. When a goal feels too big, it can quickly feel overwhelming or completely unattainable.

So here's my encouragement: make the goal smaller... and do it anyway.

Take a deep breath before your feet hit the floor. Practice gratitude.

Save an extra \$5 a week. Aim to use 5% less of your credit card limit.

Choose one action that directly supports your bigger goal and make it non-negotiable.

Big change doesn't come from perfection; it comes from small, repeatable steps.

And you don't have to do it alone. Having someone beside you to ask questions, stay accountable, or simply remind you why you started can make a huge difference. Grab a friend and start together. It costs nothing, and the return can be life-changing.

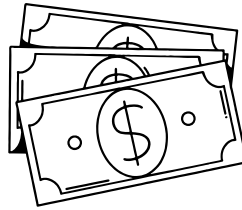
From a financial perspective, strong habits are built by understanding how motivation actually works. One of the most effective strategies is breaking large savings goals into micro-goals – small, intentional milestones that keep you moving forward.

Each small win builds confidence. That feeling of progress reinforces the habit, keeps you engaged, and connects you back to your “why.”

Over time, those wins compound. What once felt hard becomes routine. What felt overwhelming becomes manageable. And what once felt out of reach starts to feel possible.

That mindset shift doesn't just support your finances. It supports your mental and emotional well-being, too.

If you want to save money this year, prep is critical.



Creating your own timeline

If saving money is one of your goals this year, especially if you're working toward a larger purchase in 2026, preparation matters. I often remind my clients that being a few steps ahead can make all the difference.

Here's the truth: markets fluctuate, rates change, and headlines can be loud. But most major financial decisions don't happen because the timing is "perfect." They happen because your timing makes sense.

Life changes. Families grow. Chapters end, and new ones begin.

Sometimes people are moving toward something exciting; other times, they're navigating something tender or unexpected. And often, your personal readiness, not external conditions, is the deciding factor.

That's why creating your own timeline is so powerful.

When you focus on saving, planning, and preparing at a pace that works for you, you regain a sense of control. You're no longer reacting, you're choosing. And that confidence carries into whatever comes next, whether that's a big purchase, a new chapter, or simply more financial breathing room.

Supporting women through these moments, big and small, is truly an honor. My role is never just about the transaction; it's about helping you move forward feeling informed, empowered, and supported.

When you show up authentically and take consistent, thoughtful steps toward what you want, your life does begin to shift.

So start small.

And remember – you deserve to build a future that feels steady, aligned, and truly yours.



About the Author:

Zoe Sherwin
Realtor with Keller Williams Inspire
Geneva, IL

In 2026, we ride toward a powerful financial future.

Zoe Sherwin and The Modern Domestic Woman invite you to a free, welcoming evening designed to help women feel more confident with money, whether you're just starting to ask questions or planning for a major purchase in the years ahead.

This event is for women who:

- Want to feel more confident managing their money
- Are curious about investing, budgeting, or homeownership
- Own a business, are planning ahead, or want to better understand their options
- Believe financial literacy is a form of self-advocacy

What to expect:

- Accessible, judgment-free financial education
- Insights from trusted local experts in real estate, investing, and lending
- Tools you can actually use—no jargon, no pressure
- Community, conversation, charcuterie, and connection

Place: Realtor Association of the Fox Valley, St. Charles

Date: January 24 | 6:00–8:00 PM

Free to attend, but registration required in the link below



Invested In Her
A woman's Guide to Financial Freedom

JAN 24
6pm-8pm

REALTOR ASSOCIATION FOX VALLEY
406 SURREY WOODS DRIVE
ST. CHARLES

IMAGINE A SPACE WHERE
WOMEN FROM ALL WALKS OF
LIFE COME TOGETHER TO LEARN
AND GROW FINANCIALLY
REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Free Event
Sponsored By:

Guest Speakers

ESTHER RAYDES
FINANCIAL ADVISOR

ZOE SHERWIN
REALTOR

NATALIE MATHEU
VP OF MORTGAGE

ELIZABETH RAGO
FOUNDER OF MDW

the modern domestic woman

LENDER

kw INSPIRE
KELLER WILLIAMS
NMLS 1667764
Home Loans

QUESTIONS? CONTACT ZOE: 331.425.1181

A square QR code located in the upper right section of the flyer, used for event registration.



CREATE YOUR OWN

vision board workshop

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11TH
1-3 PM

FLOWER OF LIFE YOGA &
WELLNESS CENTER
ST. CHARLES

the modern
**domestic
woman**

×


Noreila
HEALING & WELLNESS

RSVP

GROUND + GATHER

YOGA, COFFEE + CONNECTION
FOR PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS
OF NEURODIVERGENT KIDS

BEGINS JAN 18TH @ IIAM
ZEN LOFT COLLECTIVE
BATAVIA, IL



RSVP

MDW PROVIDERS

At MDW Cares, we don't recommend people willy-nilly. Every professional we refer you to is thoughtfully vetted. because when you're seeking support, quality, trust, and alignment matter. We want you to know that anyone you find here is someone we would confidently recommend to a friend, a sister, or ourselves.

Our referrals must align with our core values of compassion, empowerment, and inclusivity. They must approach their work with empathy, honoring each person's lived experience, and creating spaces where all women and families feel welcomed, respected, and supported. That's why we're proud to feature three trusted professionals below, each of whom reflects these values in both their work and impact.

If you need additional resources, visit mdwcares.com



Lovey Kaur, LCSW
Hinsdale & Glen Ellyn, IL

Lovey Kaur is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and true powerhouse in the mental health space, known for her grounded, compassionate leadership and evidence-based care. With extensive experience supporting individuals and families, she specializes in women's issues, relationship concerns, navigating health challenges, and managing anxiety during times of change. Lovey's work blends clinical excellence with deep empathy, helping clients build clarity, resilience, and lasting progress toward their long-term goals.

✉ info@mosaiccare.com

☎ 708-628-8000

🌐 mosaiccare.com



Lauren Logsdon, MS
Wheaton, IL

Lauren Logsdon is a master's-level clinician who believes deeply in the healing power of being truly seen and heard without shame, expectation, or judgment. Their work centers on honoring the whole person (and family), especially parents, caregivers, and young people who have felt dismissed by one-size-fits-all advice.

With warmth, curiosity, and care, Lauren works with children 5+ and adolescents as well.

✉ hello@evergreencounseling.co

☎ 630-480-0060

🌐 evergreencounseling.co



Lindsey Liddicoatt
LCPC, CADC
Geneva, IL

Lindsey supports teens and adults navigating mood disorders, anxiety, substance use through harm-reduction approaches, and life transitions—both the big, obvious ones and the quieter shifts that can catch you off guard. Her style is warm, practical, and deeply grounded in real life, offering steady, nonjudgmental support that meets you exactly where you are.

Lindsey focuses on helping clients build clarity, resilience, and momentum toward where they want to go.

✉ lindsey@hebrighterdays.com

☎ 630-277-9491

🌐 hebrighterdays.com

SLOW MOT

STITCH KIT



This embroidery kit is an invitation to slow down and work with your hands, one careful stitch at a time.

Featuring lovely coral peony blooms pre-printed with soft shading, the design gently guides you as you outline each petal in backstitch, bringing the flowers to life with depth and realism.

Nestled in a classic blue-and-white vase, this piece blends timeless beauty with the calming rhythm of making, perfect for quiet evenings, mindful moments, and anyone craving a return to intentional, unhurried creativity.

Peony Embroidery Kit

THE WOMEN CREATE MARKETPLACE



PLANNING



This digital garden planner is the perfect winter companion when the ground is frozen, the seed catalogs are calling, and it's time to bust out the markers and start dreaming up your 2026 garden.

Cozy up indoors and map out beds, plan companion planting, and organize seeds with intention, so when spring arrives, you're ready to grow with clarity and confidence.

Thoughtfully designed for flower, herb, and vegetable gardeners alike, it turns off-season planning into a creative, grounding ritual.

Garden Planning Digital Download

BELOVEDCREATURES ON ETSY



BEE HAPPY

As you plan your 2026 garden, be sure to leave space not just for plants, but for pollinators, too. Bee Cups are small, handcrafted hydration stations that give bees safe, shallow access to water right where they forage.

Made in a zero-waste, plastic-free studio, each Bee Cup uses a special Bee Vision™ glaze that reflects ultraviolet light bees can see, acting like a quiet “water here” signal invisible to humans.

Tucked among flowers or raised beds, they support healthier pollinators, stronger blooms, and a more resilient garden ecosystem, one teeny cup at a time.



Peony Embroidery Kit
BELOVEDCREATURES ON ETSY



PEN + PAPER

2026 is the year of more green, less screen, and we're leaning all the way into slower, more meaningful ways to connect.

Remember the thrill of pen pals, folding a letter just right, sealing an envelope, and waiting days (or weeks!) for a reply?

This pretty letter-writing set is an open invitation to bring that magic back, one handwritten note at a time.



Meadow Letter Writing Set

PRETTY PAGES





WINTER CITRUS SALAD

By Katie McCall

We often think of citrus and associate it with summertime, but citrus is actually at the peak of its season in North America during the winter. This is when the fruit ripens to its sweetest and juiciest, so run to your local market and stock up!

For this recipe, I used naval oranges, pomelo, ruby red grapefruit, blood oranges and sumo mandarins, but any variety will do. As a kid, we'd visit family in California, and I have the fondest memory of picking kumquats from my aunt and uncle's tree and popping them whole in my mouth. That explosion of intense citrus with its slightly sweet yet tangy and sour flavor will forever stay with me.

I added toasted almonds for crunch, a sweet vinaigrette with a tiny kick of heat from Aleppo pepper, and fresh mint for brightness. Aleppo pepper is a wonderful spice to keep on hand; it comes from a burgundy chili, also known as the Halaby pepper, and is primarily sourced from Turkey. With it being about half the heat of red pepper chili flakes, this mild, flavor-enhancing spice is truly the perfect addition to any dish.

- *Katie*

INGREDIENTS

Recipe (serves 2-3)

- 1-2 blood oranges
- 1-2 sumo mandarins
- 1 naval orange
- 1 ruby red grapefruit
- 1 pomelo
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon
Champagne (or white wine) vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 teaspoons water
- 1/2 teaspoon Aleppo pepper
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup almonds, toasted and
chopped
- Fresh mint



METHOD

- Prepare all citrus using the "supreme" method. If you aren't familiar with this technique, I invite you to visit my Instagram page (@katielmccall) to view the how-to reel, or Google "how to supreme citrus."
- Once the citrus is prepared, place them artfully on a serving dish and set aside.
- Make vinaigrette: In a small bowl or jar, combine the oil, vinegar, honey, water, pepper and salt. Whisk or shake until emulsified.
- To assemble: Sprinkle the citrus with the chopped nuts, followed by the vinaigrette (as much or as little as you like). Garnish with fresh mint and serve immediately - OR - cover and store in the refrigerator until ready to serve.



About the Author:

Katie McCall is a Midwestern girl with a deep love for nature, food, and family. Raised in the rural suburbs of Chicago, she spent her childhood foraging for morel mushrooms, picking green beans, and exploring the outdoors. This connection to nature continues to inspire her work and lifestyle.

After earning a B.S. in Journalism from the University of Illinois, Katie moved to Chicago to pursue food writing. She later attended Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts to further her culinary skills, and eventually co-founded Two Wild Seeds, a gluten-free bakery she ran with her mom in St. Charles, Illinois. Though the bakery closed in 2021, Katie continues to freelance and share her passion for food.

Outside of writing and cooking, Katie enjoys living a self-sustaining lifestyle, gardening, decorating her 1905 farmhouse, and discovering new treasures at local farmers' markets and antique shops. Always in search of new ways to create, Katie is passionate about making life as delicious and fulfilling as possible.



What's your sign?





CAPRICORN (DEC. 22 – JAN. 19)

You're disciplined, ambitious, and somehow carrying everyone else's to-do list. January asks you to stop mistaking seriousness for strength. You're allowed to soften without losing authority.

Accessory of the Month: A structured leather tote. Polished, powerful, and capable of holding everyone's nonsense without spilling over.



CANCER (JUNE 21 – JULY 22)

It's lovely that you are nurturing, but you are quietly helping everyone co-regulate their emotions. January asks you to stop being the default caregiver for people who never reciprocate.

Accessory of the Month: A roomy, soft-structured bag. Practical and capable of holding snacks, a new book, and a witty comeback.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 20 – FEB. 18)

You're innovative, independent, and already thinking about February while everyone else is stuck in January. It's not aloof, you're just uninterested in small talk and outdated systems.

Accessory of the Month: Bold, slightly weird statement glasses. Bonus points if they have a bit of sparkle in the design.



LEO (JULY 23 – AUG. 22)

This month, you are feeling confident, magnetic, and born to shine. However, you don't have to be "on" or perfectly put together to be adored. You radiate with bedhead.

Accessory of the Month: Gold statement earrings are calling to you this month. Visible, big, and unapologetically extra.



PISCES (FEB. 19 – MAR. 20)

You are empathetic, intuitive, and absorbing emotional energy like it's your side hustle. But you're exhausted, my friend. January is here to remind you that boundaries are not unkind; they're essential.

Accessory of the Month: A soft scarf or wrap for hiding behind, warming up, and shielding you from overly emotional people.



VIRGO (AUG. 23 – SEPT. 22)

This month, you're feeling like you're one minor inconvenience away from reorganizing your entire life. January invites you to loosen the grip, just a little, and rearrange just one thing. Don't burn your life to the ground and rebuild - yet.

Accessory of the Month: A classic, minimalist watch that says, "I'm quietly in control of everything."



ARIES (MAR. 21 – APR. 19)

Aries, you are ready to charge ahead without waiting for a consensus. This month, you are meant to boost courage and lose impulse texting.

Accessory of the Month: Statement sneakers or boots. Built for movement, leadership, and dramatic exits.



LIBRA (SEPT. 23 – OCT. 22)

Exhausted from keeping the peace over the holidays? January says it's time to choose honesty over harmony. Reassess your friend group and pull that circle smaller, reserved for people who truly lift you up.

Accessory of the Month: A colorful crossbody bag, preferably with a pattern that says, "The BS is over."



TAURUS (APR. 20 – MAY 20)

You are reliable, sensual, and deeply committed to comfort. January is stressing intentional indulgence, not emotional retail therapy. Embrace the friend who gives you a thoughtful gift and keep a mental note of those who cheap out.

Accessory of the Month: A luxurious silk scarf or cashmere beanie. Timeless and so worth the investment.



SCORPIO (OCT. 23 – NOV. 21)

You are feeling extra intense and three steps ahead of everyone this month. It's seriously time to limit the access everyone has to you. At work, at home, online, in bed...

Accessory of the Month: A sleek leather cuff that oozes power with zero explanation or apology.



GEMINI (MAY 21 – JUNE 20)

You're mentally juggling fourteen ideas at once, but January wants you to finish one thing before starting five more. Make a punch list and stick to it.

Accessory of the Month: Stackable rings are your jam right now; flexible, playful, and adaptable to your mood of the day.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22 – DEC. 21)

Feeling adventurous and a little allergic to being boxed in? This month is all about saying "yes" to new things, but strategically making decisions based on your values and long-term plans.

Accessory of the Month: A Statement Belt for anchoring big ideas in real life. It pulls an outfit and your energy together, reminding you that boldness works best when it has a center of gravity.

WOMEN'S HEALTH



RELIEF

This magnesium oil spray offers targeted support for period discomfort by helping relax tense uterine muscles, which may reduce the intensity and frequency of cramps.

Its natural anti-inflammatory properties can also help calm the inflammation often linked to menstrual pain.

Applied directly to the skin, it's an easy, effective way to support your body during your cycle and bring gentle relief when you need it most.



Magnesium Oil Spray

MION ARTISAN SOAP





A Monthly Rhythm: The Menstrual Cycle as Seasons

by Blakely Kresl

If you've only thought of the menstrual cycle as a period marked by cramps, aches, and discomfort, you're not alone, but there's far more happening beneath the surface. While this phase can feel like an unwelcome knock on your door, the menstrual cycle is actually a complex rhythm of hormones dancing together to support overall health and prepare the body for potential pregnancy.

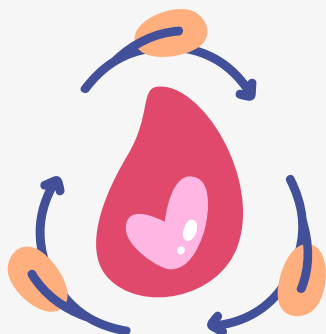
A menstrual cycle consists of four main phases: menstruation, follicular, ovulation, and luteal.

By understanding the four phases, we gain insight into our body's natural rhythms and the hormonal changes that support and protect us throughout the month.

This knowledge helps us better understand reproductive health as a whole, but also how we can manage our own symptoms and support ourselves through each phase. For many women, this understanding is an empowering act.

Women typically experience a hormonal cycle that lasts around 21–35 days, which differs from men's roughly 24-hour hormonal rhythm. These monthly fluctuations influence far more than fertility.

They affect energy levels, mood, focus, and overall capacity throughout the month. While modern society may not always accommodate these cyclical changes, there are small, intentional ways we can support ourselves daily through each phase of the cycle.



Working With Our Bodies, Not Against Them

It's time to shake the stigma around periods and stop treating a natural, monthly body function as something shameful or inconvenient.

When we understand our cycles and work with our bodies instead of against them, we create more space for care, clarity, and compassion.

Menstrual Phase – Inner Winter: Rest + Repair

What's Happening in Your Body & Hormones

During the menstrual phase, estrogen and progesterone levels are at their lowest.

This hormonal drop causes the uterine lining to shed, resulting in menstruation. Iron and fluid loss can occur, contributing to feelings of fatigue or weakness.

At the same time, the decrease in hormones signals the pituitary gland to release follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), which begins the process of initiating the next cycle.

How It May Feel

This phase is often associated with lower energy and a natural desire to slow down.

Many people experience cramping, sleepiness, or mental fog, along with a need for rest and solitude.

Just as winter is a time of stillness in nature, the menstrual phase supports restoration and inward focus.



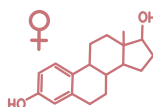
Follicular Phase – Inner Spring: Growth + Preparation

What's Happening in Your Body & Hormones

As menstruation ends, estrogen and testosterone levels begin to rise.

FSH stimulates ovarian follicles to mature, and increasing estrogen helps thicken the uterine lining in preparation for ovulation.

Although several follicles begin developing, typically only one becomes dominant and continues toward ovulation.



How It May Feel

Rising estrogen is often linked to improved mood, increased energy, and sharper focus.

Many people feel more optimistic, motivated, and creative during this phase.

It's common to feel a sense of renewal and readiness for new projects or ideas, similar to the fresh growth seen in spring.



Ovulation Phase – Inner Summer: Expression + Fertility

What's Happening in Your Body & Hormones

Ovulation occurs when a surge in luteinizing hormone (LH), alongside high estrogen and testosterone levels, triggers the release of a mature egg from the ovary into the fallopian tube.

Fertility is highest during this time.

Physical signs may include changes in cervical mucus, becoming clear and stretchy, and a slight increase in basal body temperature.

How It May Feel

This phase is often marked by confidence, sociability, and outward energy.

Many people report feeling more expressive, magnetic, and connected to others, along with an increase in libido.

The ovulation phase mirrors summer, a time of peak vitality.



Luteal Phase – Inner Autumn: Reflection + Release

What's Happening in Your Body & Hormones

After ovulation, progesterone rises to support the uterine lining in case implantation occurs.

If fertilization does not happen, progesterone and estrogen levels gradually decline.

This hormonal shift signals the body to prepare for menstruation, ultimately leading to the shedding of the uterine lining.



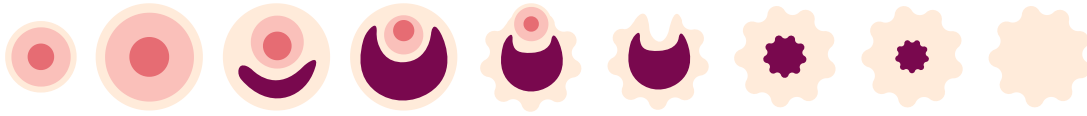
How It May Feel

Energy often begins to taper during the luteal phase, and many people often feel more introspective or sensitive.

Cravings for comfort, nourishment, and rest are common.

Some may experience premenstrual symptoms such as mood changes, bloating, fatigue, or irritability as hormone levels fluctuate.

Like autumn, this phase encourages slowing down and preparing for rest.



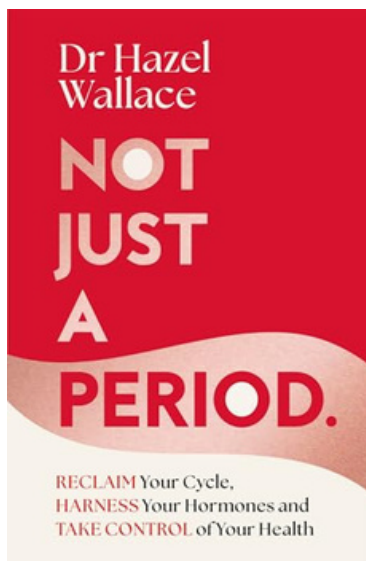
When we accept the entirety of the menstrual cycle as a series of complex seasons, it allows us to step out of the frustration or self-judgment that can come with having a period and toward compassion for our bodies and all that they do.

Through the pain, the discomfort, and the embarrassment tied to menstruation, there is a reason. Each phase serves a purpose, and our body is working overtime to maintain a healthy hormonal balance, offering different strengths, needs, and signals along the way.

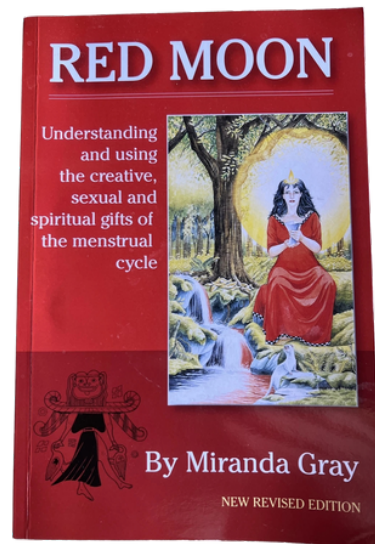
By recognizing these shifts and honoring their purpose, we can all allow ourselves the rest, nourishment, movement, and boundaries that align with where we are in the cycle.

Learning More About Your Cycle

For readers who want to explore cyclical living more deeply, these recommendations offer both practical guidance and intuitive wisdom, helping you understand what's happening in your body, advocate for your needs, and support your health across every phase of the cycle. Together, they invite a more compassionate, informed relationship with menstruation that honors both science and the deeper emotional and symbolic rhythms of being cyclical.



A practical, science-backed guide to understanding and working with your menstrual cycle to improve your energy, periods, mood, health, and self-advocacy, so you can stop tolerating what isn't normal and start supporting your body through every phase of the month.



A spiritually grounded guide that reconnects modern women with the creative, emotional, and intuitive power of their menstrual cycle through ancient wisdom, storytelling, and practical rituals for living in alignment with their cyclical nature.

About the Author:

Blakely Kresl

Women's Wellness & Lifestyle Writer

Blakely is a contributing writer for The Modern Domestic Woman and a freelance writer, content creator, and social media strategist with a deep love for working alongside small businesses and community-driven organizations. With hands-on experience across marketing, PR, and brand strategy, she specializes in helping purpose-led brands tell their stories in ways that feel authentic, human, and connective.

She has supported mission-based companies like FemPAQ, a sustainable menstrual health brand focused on period equity and destigmatization, and Asami Naturals, an African tea company rooted in tradition and wellness. Whether she's developing content, coordinating events, managing farmers market outreach, or shaping digital campaigns, Blakely brings curiosity, empathy, and a community-first mindset to every project, believing that the most meaningful brands are built through shared stories and genuine connection.



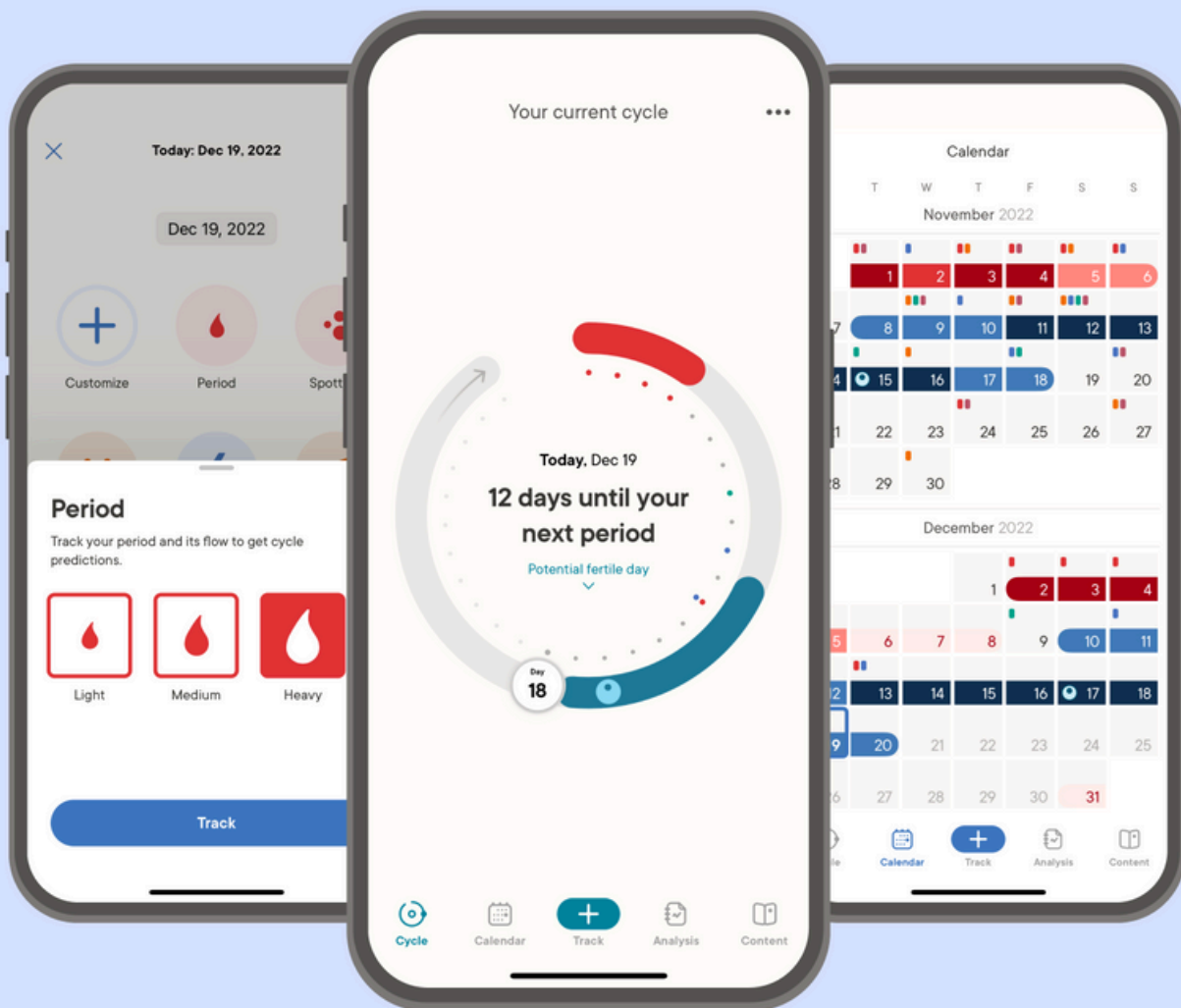
Connect with Blakely on LinkedIn to reach out, collaborate, and learn more about working with her.



APP

Clue is a science-backed period tracking app and trusted menstrual health resource designed to support people with cycles from first period to last. Grounded in research, privacy, and transparency, Clue offers data-driven tools, trustworthy education, and emotional support while centering inclusivity across gender, age, race, ability, and lived experience.

Available in more than 20 languages, Clue empowers users worldwide to make informed choices about their menstrual, sexual, and reproductive health.



Menstrual and Reproductive Health App

CLUE



LAVENDER

Using lavender oil as an aromatherapy massage oil can help ease menstrual cramps by promoting muscle relaxation and calming the nervous system, making it a gentle, supportive tool during your period.

We especially love sourcing ours from The Tea Tree, a local favorite offering thoughtfully curated bath, body, tea, and pantry items that make self-care feel both grounding and indulgent.



Lavender Oil

THE TEA TREE



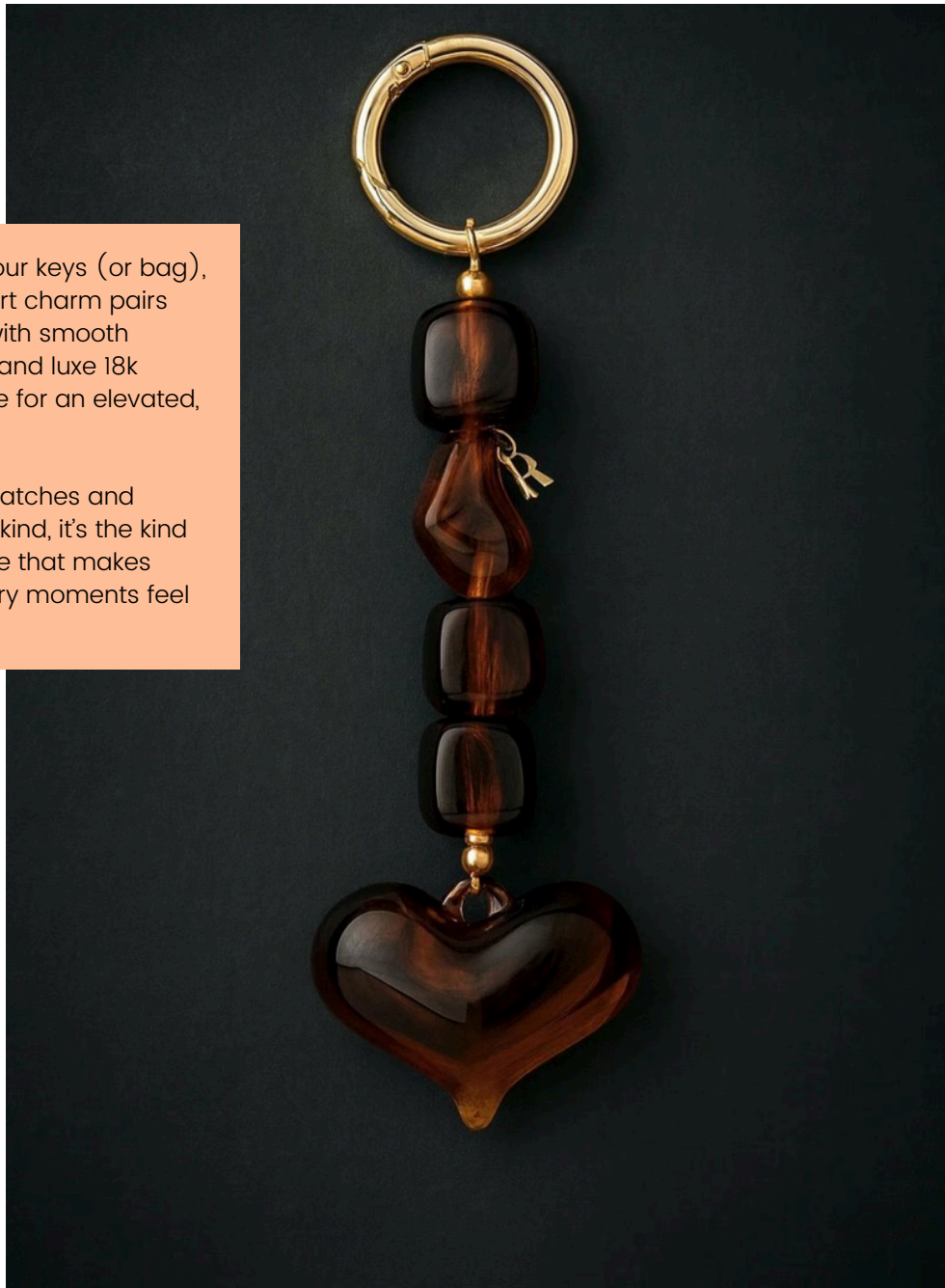
ACCESSORIES



KEYCHAIN

A little love note for your keys (or bag), this tortoise-shell heart charm pairs deep cognac tones with smooth brown artisan beads and luxe 18k gold-plated hardware for an elevated, everyday feel.

Handmade in small batches and beautifully one-of-a-kind, it's the kind of functional keepsake that makes even the most ordinary moments feel fancy.

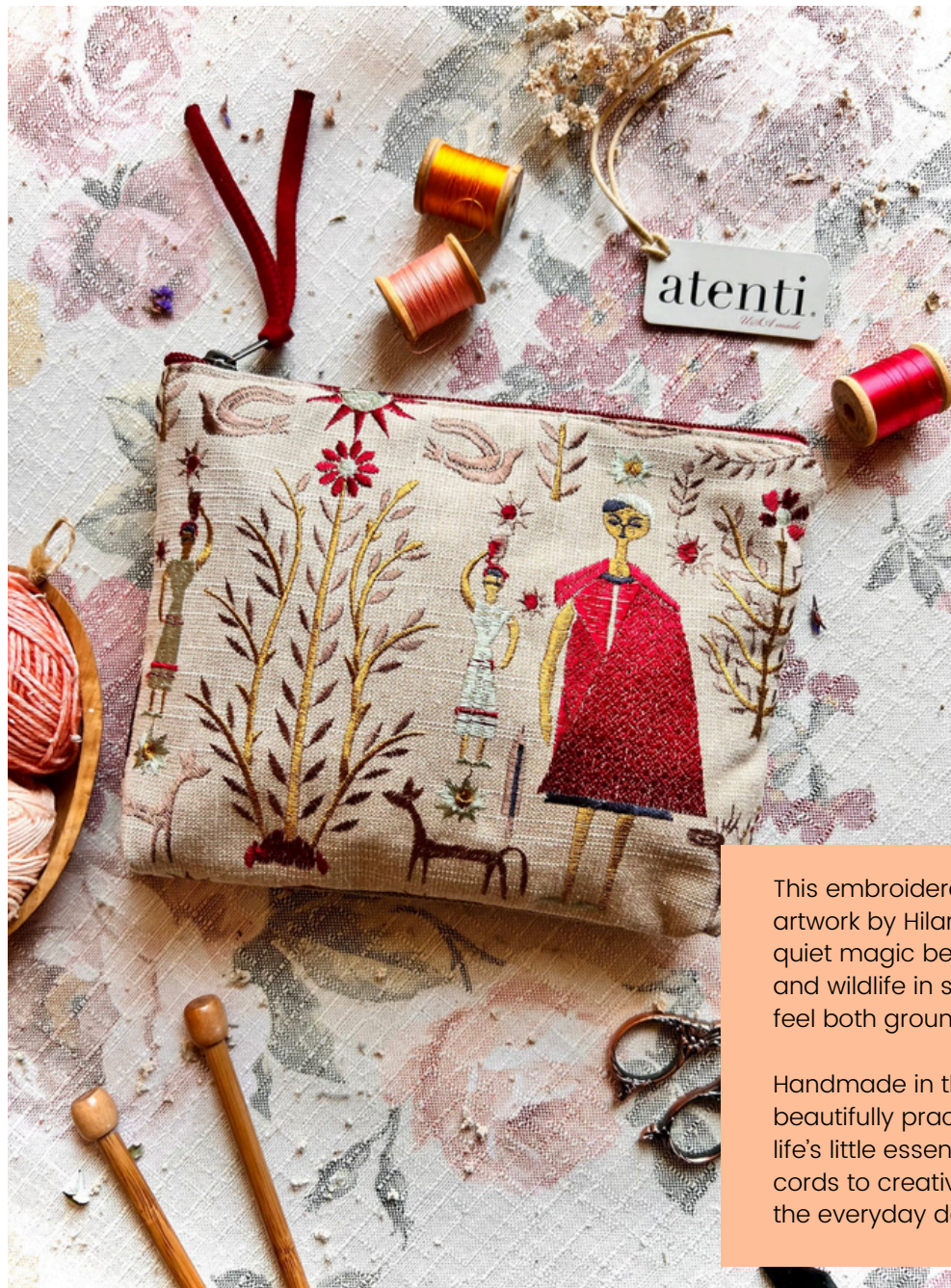


Handmade Beaded Bag Chain

CHARMandBRONCO ON ETSY



POUCH



This embroidered pouch, featuring artwork by Hilary Farr, captures the quiet magic between humanity, nature, and wildlife in soft, autumnal tones that feel both grounding and artful.

Handmade in the U.S.A., it's a beautifully practical place to gather life's little essentials—from makeup to cords to creative tools, because even the everyday deserves a bit of wonder.

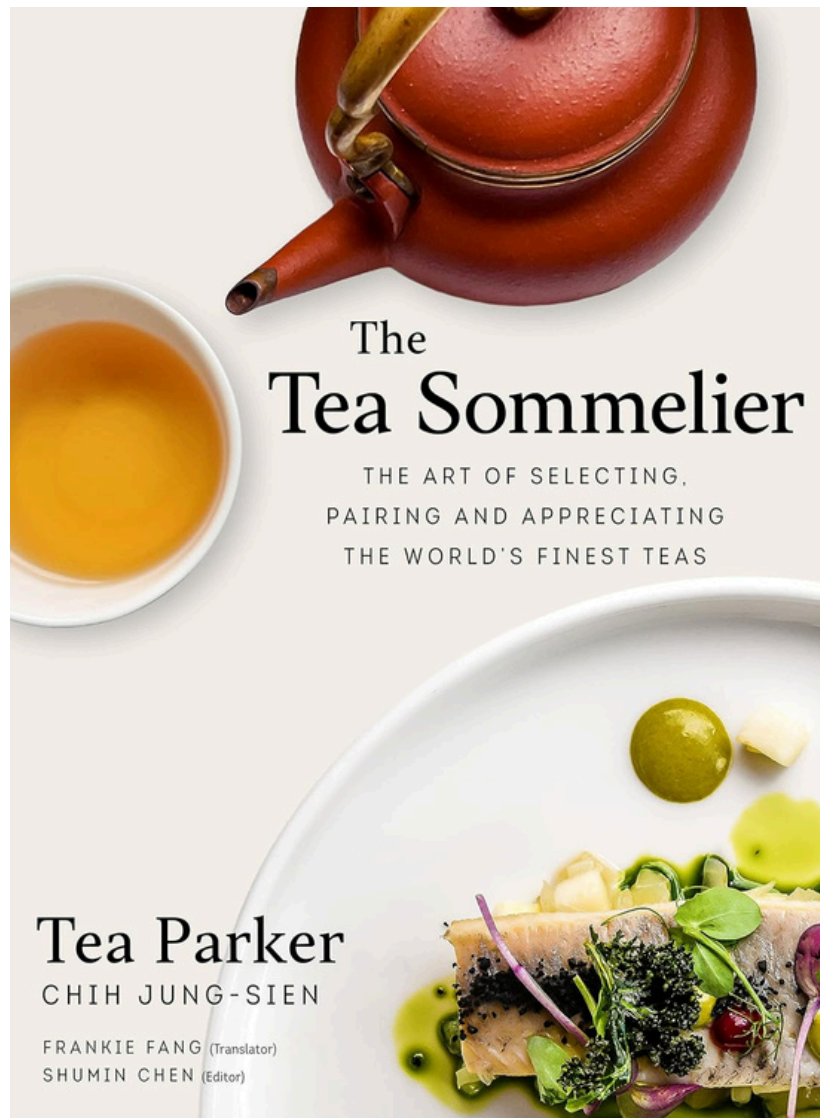
Harvest Accessories Pouch

ATENTI



BOOK

Yes, books are accessories in our world. This beautiful guide explores the art of pairing tea with food, inviting you into a sensory world where Oolong, Pu-erh, and Darjeeling elevate everything from simple home meals to cheese boards and multi-course dining, proving that tea can be just as expressive (and sometimes even better) than wine at the table..



The Tea Sommelier Book

HAPPY EARTH TEA



WELLNESS





Strong + Lean: A Whole-Food Reset Designed for Real Life

by Elizabeth Rago

The Reset That Works With Your Body, Not Against It

January always arrives with a mix of hope and hesitation. I want to feel healthier, clearer, more energized, but I'm also coming off a season of happy indulging: cozy meals, extra cookies, festive cocktails, and a lot of life lived indoors.

This year, instead of jumping into something extreme, I'm choosing a reset that feels grounded, supportive, and realistic. One that doesn't punish me for December, but helps me feel like myself again.

That's why I'm excited to share Strong + Lean, a 4-week nutrition and lifestyle program created by holistic nutritionist DeeDee Mehren.

I've personally experienced DeeDee's annual 30 Days to Feeling Fabulous program, and it was one of the most nourishing, sustainable resets I've ever done. Strong + Lean is the evolution of that work, and thankfully, it's designed for real adults with real lives.

Thank goodness, because I can't handle complicated nutritional programs, how about you?



Meet DeeDee: A Practitioner Who Gets the Bigger Picture

DeeDee's work is rooted in both science and lived experience. She's an honors graduate of the Edison Institute of Holistic Nutrition, a Certified Culinary Nutrition Expert, and was named a Top 25 Coach by Chicago Entrepreneur Magazine.

But what truly shapes her approach is her story.

After years as an advertising executive with a Master's in Marketing, DeeDee faced significant family health challenges, including a hereditary lung disease affecting her mother and an autoimmune condition she developed postpartum. Those experiences led her to dig deeper into root causes, inflammation, stress, and how food and lifestyle truly impact the body.

what is strong + lean?



Strong + Lean is a 4-week, whole-food nutrition and lifestyle program designed for busy adults who want to feel strong, clear-headed, energized, and lean (without obsessing over food).

STRONG
+ LEAN
feed **mind** **body** **soul**



*This is not a
shred, detox,
or "all-or-
nothing"
challenge.*

IT'S SCIENCE-INFORMED

A reset that addresses what many of us are actually dealing with:

- under-fueling
- chronic stress
- low protein intake
- stalled metabolism
- exhaustion disguised as "lack of willpower"

WHAT'S INCLUDED (AND WHY IT'S SO SUPPORTIVE)

Done-For-You Nutrition

- 4 full weeks of meal plans
- Whole-food, macro-balanced menus
- Daily macros, recipes, and shopping lists

Two Plan Styles

- Omnivore
- Plant-focused (with clear protein guidance)

Both Options are:

- Gluten-free
- Refined sugar-free
- Seed-oil-free

Over 100 High-Protein Recipes Created to Support:

- muscle
- metabolism
- blood sugar
- sustained energy

EDUCATION + COMMUNITY (WHERE THE SUPPORT HAPPENS)

This program doesn't stop at food.

Weekly Education Videos

Short, practical lessons on:

- metabolism
- hormones
- blood sugar
- stress
- sleep

Weekly Emails

Coaching, reminders, and encouragement—straight to your inbox.

Private Support

- A private online community
- Live Q&A sessions with DeeDee
- Space to ask questions, share wins, and stay accountable



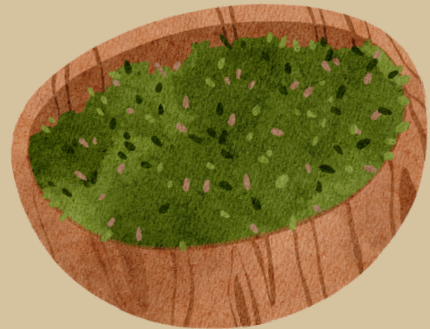
Extra Perks:



Partner deals +
wellness discounts



Chicago-area food
ordering and pickup
options



Why This Approach Works (When Diets Don't)

Strong + Lean focuses on systems care, not restriction.

The core pillars:

- Protein-first nutrition to support muscle, hormones, and blood sugar
- 25+ grams of fiber daily from whole foods
- Balanced macros (30% protein / 35% carbs / 35% fat)
- No tiny portions, no extremes
- Stress + nervous system support, because metabolism doesn't live in a vacuum

This structure helps your body feel safe, fueled, and supported.

Program Details:

A virtual meet-up will kick off the program on January 12th, but you can download and start any time to align with your schedule.

MDW will also be hosting a social media giveaway for one free spot, so be sure to keep an eye on our Instagram and Facebook in January for more details.

Program Cost: \$75 for the full 4 weeks (Truly less than a week of takeout, and the benefits last much longer.)

Sign up here! →



Learn more at:

feedmbs.com

A Reset That Respects Your Life

Strong + Lean is about fueling your body, calming your system, and building strength, from the inside out.

If you're craving a reset that feels thoughtful, doable, and deeply supportive, this one is worth your attention. I'll be there. I hope you'll join us!



Ko, Elizabeth



RELATIONSHIPS





How to Talk About Divorce With Respect, Clarity, and Care

This issue features the wisdom and guidance of lawyer Anique Drouin, and we are happy to include the infographic, “Communicating With Your Spouse About Divorce,” on the following page to help you or someone you know during this transition.

Centered on respect, reducing harm, and keeping children at the heart of every conversation, Anique draws from her collaborative divorce practice to offer clear, compassionate guidance on how to prepare for difficult conversations.

The infographic emphasizes practical tools like active listening, de-escalation strategies, and knowing when to bring in professional support that protect emotional well-being during an already tender time. It’s a steady, grounding resource for anyone seeking a more humane, forward-focused path through divorce.

Communicating With Your Spouse About Divorce

If safety is a concern, seek professional guidance before initiating the conversation.

1

Before the Conversation - Set the tone before you say a word

- Assess emotional & physical safety first
- Choose a calm, private setting (never with kids present)
- Avoid major dates (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays)
- If possible, use a therapist or counselor as support
- Be clear on your intention: respectful separation, not blame



2

How You Share the Decision - Lead with empathy, not aggression

- Speak calmly and clearly, and acknowledge that this may be hard to hear
- Expect emotional reactions like shock, grief, and anger
- Share resources (mediation, collaborative divorce)
- Reassure your spouse that you want a process that serves the whole family
- Give them time to process and set up a time to talk again soon about next steps



3

Maintain Respect - Conflict doesn't require cruel communication

- Watch your own tone—maintain a neutral tone when discussing
- Avoid blame and rehashing the past
- Focus on present decisions & future needs
- Take breaks when emotions run high
- Treat your spouse how you'd want to be treated



4

Practice Active Listening - Being heard starts with listening

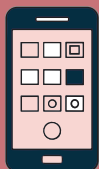
- Listen without planning your response
- Reflect back what you hear
- Clarify before reacting because you may have misjudged their intent
- Use neutral third parties when needed (therapist, divorce coach)



5

Know When to Bring in Support - Some conversations need structure

- Use divorce coaches or mediators for emotionally charged topics
- Set boundaries around when and how you discuss divorce matters
- Decide which issues are handled only with professional support
- Let experts help keep discussions productive and respectful



6

Tools to De-Escalate Conflict - When emotions run high, structure helps

- Use the BIFF Method for written communications and avoid adding emotional commentary - Brief, Informative, Friendly (but not fawning), Firm
- Consider co-parenting apps for: Shared calendars, Messaging, Expense tracking



7

Looking Ahead - How You Communicate now Shapes Your Future

- Strong, civil communication supports healthier co-parenting
- Reducing conflict eases children's anxiety and emotional harm
- Respect now makes future shared moments possible in a way that benefits your children (school events, graduations, weddings)

RESOURCE

OurFamilyWizard is a co-parenting app designed to simplify communication and reduce conflict between parents.

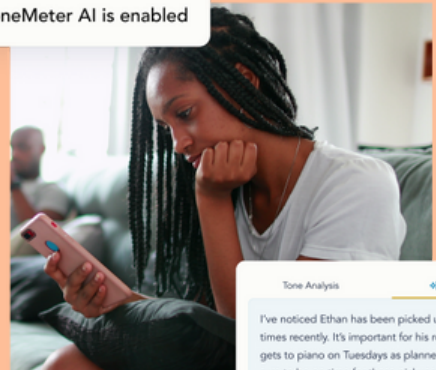
It offers shared calendars, messaging, journals, a “Tone Meter” (for respectful communication), expense tracking, and secure payment tools—all in one place.

Whether you're managing schedules or keeping records organized, it's a smart, stress-reducing resource for families navigating life after separation.

OurFamilyWizard also offers a Fee Waiver Program if a subscription is out of your budget, and a Military Family Discount.



☒ ToneMeter AI is enabled



Tone Analysis

Suggestion

I've noticed Ethan has been picked up late a few times recently. It's important for his routine that he gets to piano on Tuesdays as planned. Please make sure to be on time for these pickups.

Regenerate

Apply Suggestion

OUR FAMILY WIZARD APP





When Your Inheritance Is Stuff

By Elizabeth Rago

What happens when inheritance looks less like financial security and more like boxes, basements, and emotional weight.

OMG, the stuff.

We're living through an era of unprecedented transition.

The media is buzzing about the Great Wealth Transfer, an estimated \$84.4 trillion in assets being passed down from Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation to younger generations. But what often gets left out of the conversation?

The stuff.

China cabinets. Figurine collections. Souvenir spoons. Entire basements filled with once-precious belongings that now feel like an emotional minefield.

This isn't just about organizing a garage or sorting through keepsakes. It's about navigating grief, identity, guilt, and legacy—all while trying not to cry in your childhood bedroom.

We hope this article can help you unpack some feelings and give you tools to help you communicate and cope.



What Is the “Great Stuff Transfer”?

The Great Stuff Transfer refers to the monumental handoff of belongings—furniture, collectibles, memorabilia, even paperwork—from older generations to their adult children.

Why is it so overwhelming?

Because Baby Boomers, in particular, are a generation of collectors. Raised by Depression-era parents, they learned not to waste. But they also grew up in an age of consumer abundance. Their homes are full of both sentiment and “stuff.”

And now? The next generation has to figure out what to do with it all.



Why Letting Go Feels So Hard

This isn't just clutter. It's emotional weight. You might be feeling:

- Guilt: “If I throw this out, am I dishonoring my parents?”
- Pressure: “They saved this for me—should I keep it?”
- Overwhelm: “Where do I even start?”
- Grief: “This is all tied to memories of who they were—and who I was.”

Letting go isn't just about objects. It's about identity, relationships, and unfinished emotional business.

How to Talk to Your Parents (and Siblings) About All the Stuff

You don't have to tackle this alone—or carry the emotional load in silence.
Here are ways to open the conversation:

Start early, and gently.

Waiting until there's a crisis—like a sudden move or medical emergency—makes everything harder. Begin the conversation now, when everyone has the energy and emotional space to talk things through thoughtfully.



"I've been thinking about how we'll eventually go through everything in the house. I'd love to hear which pieces matter most to you."

Acknowledge their memories.

Before you make decisions about what to keep or let go, take time to listen. Many of these objects hold stories—and honoring those can be healing, even if you don't take the item itself.



"I know this tea set reminds you of Grandma. Can you tell me the story behind it?"

Be clear but kind.

You're allowed to have boundaries about what you can bring into your home or life. Communicate honestly, while reassuring your loved one that your decision isn't a rejection of them or their memories.



"I appreciate you saving this, but I don't think I have the space or a lifestyle that fits it."

Invite siblings in—without drama.

If possible, make this a team effort rather than a solo task. Dividing labor, sharing memories, and even disagreeing can be easier when everyone is included and expectations are set.



"Let's go through things together. Maybe we can each take what feels meaningful to us."

Offer options instead of rejection.

Instead of saying no outright, suggest alternatives. A sibling, cousin, or even a local organization might find real value in something you can't personally keep.



"This doesn't fit in my home, but maybe [Sibling] would like it?"
"Would it feel good to donate this to someone who would really use it?"

What to Do If They Get Mad

Sometimes, no matter how gently you approach the conversation, emotions flare up.

Anger, defensiveness, or guilt can surface—especially if your parent feels rejected or overwhelmed.

This isn't a sign that you've done something wrong. It's a sign that the conversation is hard.

Here's how to stay grounded when things get tense:



1. Keep your boundaries. If you've kindly expressed your limits, you don't have to backpedal to keep the peace. It's okay to repeat yourself calmly:

"I understand this is hard to hear. I'm still not able to take it, and I want to be honest with you."

2. Take a break. If the conversation is escalating, it's okay to pause. Step outside. Make some tea. Suggest picking it up another day when emotions have settled.

"Let's take a break and come back to this later. I don't want us to say things we'll regret."

3. Don't take the blame. You're not responsible for managing their emotional response. Their feelings are valid—but so are yours. You can care about their grief without absorbing it.

4. Offer a path forward. If you sense they need time, shift the focus away from decisions and toward gathering information or listening.

"I don't want us to make any fast choices. Maybe we can talk more about what's most meaningful to you."

5. Circle back when you're both calm. It might take a few conversations to make progress, and that's okay. Trust that giving space can be just as powerful as pushing through.

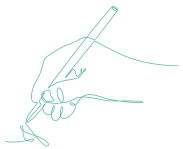
"Can we revisit this next weekend when we're both feeling a little calmer and clearer?"

After the Visit: How to Recover

Going through your parents' things whether during downsizing or after a loss can leave you feeling raw.

This is not just "spring cleaning." It's emotional labor. Be gentle with yourself.

Here are some suggestions to help you recover:



Journal about it. Let the feelings out without judgment.



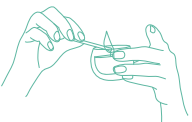
Move your body. A walk, stretch, or even deep breathing helps regulate the nervous system.



Talk to someone who gets it. A friend, therapist, or sibling with shared memories.



Give yourself permission to grieve. Not just the person or place—but the season of life you're saying goodbye to.



Create a small ritual. Make a pot of tea or a family recipe and sit quietly while it brews—letting it be an act of presence.

What to Do With Items You Don't Need

Letting go is never just about the object. It's about the history, the intention, and the emotional weight behind it.

Once you've decided what no longer fits your space or season of life, the next step is figuring out where it should go. Knowing your parent's belongings will be used, loved, or appreciated by someone else can make the process feel a little lighter.

Here are some thoughtful ways to pass things on with care, clarity, and maybe even a little relief.



Here's how to lighten the load:

- 1 Check with family first: Someone else may want it. Just because it doesn't hold meaning for you doesn't mean it won't be special to a cousin, sibling, or grandchild.

Tip: Share a folder of item photos so relatives can "claim" what they'd like.

- 2 Donate with purpose:
 - Habitat for Humanity ReStore – Furniture, appliances, home goods
 - Local thrift stores – Clothing, décor, collectibles
 - Books to Prisoners / Little Free Libraries – Books
 - Local shelters – Linens, unused hygiene items
 - Buy Nothing or neighborhood Facebook groups – Quick local pickups

- 3 Resell where it makes sense:
 - Facebook Marketplace – Fast and local
 - eBay – For collectibles or vintage pieces
 - Chairish/AptDeco – For mid-century or designer furniture
 - The RealReal/Poshmark – Designer clothes or accessories

Remember: Not everything has resale value, and that's okay.
The value may be in the story, not the price.



Grace over guilt...

You are not a bad child for not keeping the crystal.

You are not heartless for choosing space over sentiment.

And you are not alone if this feels harder than you thought it would.

The Great Stuff Transfer is about so much more than objects. It brings up family dynamics, generational values, long-held guilt, and sometimes grief that's been quietly sitting in storage, too. These moments, going through boxes, saying no to heirlooms, setting boundaries, can stir up emotions you didn't expect.

That doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. It means you're human.

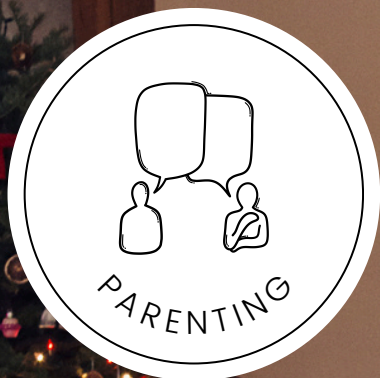
So here's your permission slip: Give yourself grace. This process doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be done in one weekend. And it doesn't have to be done alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, stuck, or emotionally tangled in the process, a therapist can be an incredible support. They can help you unpack not just the stuff—but the feelings about the stuff. And together, you can create a plan that honors your values, your mental health, and your future.

This isn't just about letting go. It's about holding onto what truly matters and gently releasing the rest.

PARENTING





When Divorce Involves Children: Protecting What Matters Most

by Elizabeth Rago

Divorce is not a single moment. It's a series of conversations, decisions, and transitions that ripple through an entire family.

When a marriage ends, adults are often consumed by logistics, grief, and uncertainty. But for parents, there is a deeper concern beneath it all:

How do we protect our children through something we never planned for?

Family law attorney Anique Drouin, whose work centers on children's best interests during divorce, often returns to one guiding truth: "The best security blanket a child can have is parents who respect each other."

That respect, even when emotions are high, becomes one of the most powerful forms of protection a parent can offer.



Children Experience Divorce Even When They're Not in the Room

Children may not sit in courtrooms or mediation sessions, but they feel the ripple effects of divorce immediately. They notice tension during handoffs, changes in tone, disrupted routines, and the emotional weight carried into everyday moments.

Even when parents try to shield them, children often fill in the gaps themselves, sometimes with guilt, fear, or self-blame. That's why how a divorce unfolds matters just as much as the decision itself. Traditional litigation, while sometimes necessary, is often slow and adversarial.

It can stretch on for many months or even years, escalating emotions and placing families in a winner-versus-loser dynamic. Judges, while knowledgeable in the law, don't know the daily rhythms of your family or the specific needs of your children.

A More Child-Centered Path Forward

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including options like private mediation or the Collaborative Divorce process, offers a different path; one designed to reduce conflict and keep children out of the middle.

In private mediation, parents work with a neutral professional to resolve issues together, outside of court. Unlike court-ordered mediation, private mediation allows flexibility in topics (financial issues can be discussed too), time, and pacing, giving families space to address what truly matters to them.

The Collaborative Divorce process takes a multi-disciplinary approach. Each parent has their own collaboratively trained attorney, and additional professionals, such as divorce coaches, child specialists, or financial neutrals, can be brought in to support the family's needs. Everyone involved commits to staying out of court and focusing on solutions rather than blame.

For children, these approaches matter deeply. ADR processes are meant to reduce hostility, increase efficiency to protect financial resources, preserve long-term co-parenting relationships, and keep children out of legal proceedings. These options take a major life transition and make the decision to divorce more focused on a good outcome for the entire family.

One Conversation That Matters More Than You Think

How children are told about a divorce can shape how safe or destabilized they feel in the months that follow.

Professionals consistently recommend that parents tell children together, with a plan and a script they've talked about in advance. That plan doesn't require every detail; in fact, it shouldn't. Children need reassurance and predictability more than explanations.

Helpful guidance includes agreeing ahead of time on what will and won't be shared with the children, avoiding laying blame on either parent, anticipating common questions, avoiding the conversation during bedtime or major transitions, and allowing children to process in their own way and on their own timeline. It will be normal for children to cry or get upset initially, but ultimately, they will remember how the news was shared.

Children don't need to understand the adult reasons behind divorce. They need to know they are safe, loved, and not responsible for the decision.

They need to be reassured that you all will still be a family—even if it will be in two homes.



What Protects Children And What Doesn't

Protecting children during divorce isn't about perfection. It's about consistency. What helps includes reassuring children repeatedly that the divorce is not their fault, supporting their relationship with the other parent, maintaining routines whenever possible, and remaining calm and respectful during transitions. Seeking your own support also matters, so children aren't carrying adult emotions that don't belong to them.

What causes harm, even unintentionally, includes speaking negatively about the other parent (even if you think the children cannot hear you), oversharing details, using children as messengers or emotional supports, or overcompensating with gifts or relaxed boundaries out of guilt.

Children don't need one "good" parent and one "bad" parent. They need permission to love both.

Why Reducing Conflict Is a Form of Care



Children don't need parents who agree on everything; they need parents who can manage disagreement safely.

Process options like mediation and Collaborative Divorce are designed to preserve respect long after the paperwork is signed. That respect matters when parents share school events, graduations, weddings, and milestones that still belong to their children. Those events should be about the children, not about their parents' conflict.


When conflict is reduced, children experience less anxiety, fewer loyalty conflicts, and greater emotional security. They also learn something lasting: relationships can change without becoming unsafe.

Moving Forward, Thoughtfully

Divorce will always be a significant transition for a family. But it doesn't have to define a child's emotional foundation.

With thoughtful choices, the right support, and a focus on respect, parents can jointly guide their children through this chapter with care rather than chaos.

Even here.
Especially here.





My Child Came Out to Me. What Do I Do?

by Lauren Logsdon

First, I want to recognize the emotions that are coming up for you.

Maybe in this moment you feel scared, surrounded by questions of the unknown.

“What might this mean for my child?”
“What will their future look like?”

You might feel isolated, worried that others could target your child or view their identity as a moral or parental failure. You might also feel an immense amount of relief, pride, or even joy that your child shared this part of themselves with you.

Please know: Your emotions are valid. These reactions are your body’s response to change. At the same time, no matter your emotions, values, or beliefs, it’s important to navigate this conversation with care.

I think about my own coming out story and my journey toward figuring out my sexuality. When I was in middle school, I was so ashamed of how I felt that I lost sleep, struggled to keep up with school, and struggled a lot with my mental health.

I didn’t know at the time how impactful and utterly life-changing it would be to have a safe adult with whom I could share this part of myself.



WHAT TO DO

If you feel stuck during this time, unsure of how to move forward or how to navigate conversations with your child, I have some insights for you. Please know that this comes from a place of empathy as a queer child who has lived this experience.

#1 - Lead with curiosity, not judgment.

Regardless of our upbringing, values and beliefs, we have one key thing in common: We are all hurt by judgment. It's okay to not understand queerness or the LGBTQ+ community, but at this moment your child does not need you to be an LGBTQ+ expert. They need a safe person to listen to them. Practice active listening by telling your child: "Thank you for being open with me. I am here for you." Remember: judgment will shut them down.

#2 - Recognize their strength as well as their concerns.

Although coming out is something that can be liberating (I described my experience as "a major weight lifted off my chest"), it can also be terrifying. While LGBTQ+ visibility is increasing, as are concerns for safety and accessibility to LGBTQ+ affirming services. The community feels scared right now, and your child very well may also feel that fear. Name the fear and remind them that you are here alongside them in it. You are not only a parent; you are an advocate.

#3 - Take time to learn about both your child's identity and the community as a whole.

When I work with clients, I refer to the concept of storytelling – that each experience is uniquely theirs. While it's important to listen to your child's unique story, it's also important to take time to educate yourself. Engaging with LGBTQ+ books, podcasts or YouTube videos by affirming creators and queer folx will help your child see that you care about them and their community.

#4 - Ask how they want to be supported.

This question does NOT make you a bad parent. If you are unsure about what you can do to support your child, that is okay! Children appreciate honesty. Directly asking them what they need is something that makes them feel respected and empowered. If they do not know what they need currently, that is also okay! Simply being with them as they navigate their identity can make a world of difference.

#5 - Remember... your child is still your child.

At the end of the day, your child's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression is a part of your child. They are the human that you have raised, nurtured and supported. Remember to tell them that this information does not change your love for them. They might need reassurance that everything is okay just like you might need some, too.

It's important for you to have support, too.

I am a big proponent of the saying: “I can’t provide support to others if I don’t accept support myself.” The emotions you feel are valid, of course, but it is your responsibility to find ways to process them in a way that does not shut the door your child opened.

Support also comes in the form of self-compassion. You do not need to get it right immediately. It is okay to be a work in progress. If your child comes out as transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming and uses different pronouns than the ones given at their birth, you may slip up at times and misgender them. Things take time, and you are trying. That is what matters the most – showing up for your child – and showing them that they matter just as they are.

Know, they trust you.

Please know that when your child comes out to you, it shows that they trust you. They want to be heard, and they chose you to listen. This is an honor. It speaks to the way they view you.

Your child needs emotional safety, and you may be one of the only sources they have at this moment. However, there are safe people and resources out there.

Resources

Below are some great resources – locally, state-wide, and even nationally – that are available for LGBTQ+ youth, parents and families.



As an LGBTQ+ affirming counselor and a queer person myself, I empathize with your experience as I have had – and continue to have – my own unique coming out journey. (and still do). I find great joy in working with families and youth who are LGBTQ+ as I personally know how powerful it is to have someone in your life who sees you for you. If you or your child are looking for an affirming counselor, I am actively taking clients and would be honored to explore this journey with you.

Warmly,
Lauren

About the Author:

Lauren Logsdon, MS
Evergreen Counseling
Wheaton, IL

Lauren Logsdon is a master's-level clinician who believes deeply in the healing power of being truly seen and heard without shame, expectation, or judgment. Their work centers on honoring the whole person (and family), especially parents, caregivers, and young people who have felt dismissed by one-size-fits-all advice. With warmth, curiosity, and care, Lauren tailors therapy to each client's social, emotional, and physical needs, helping people reconnect with their genuine selves and recognize that they are already more than "good enough."



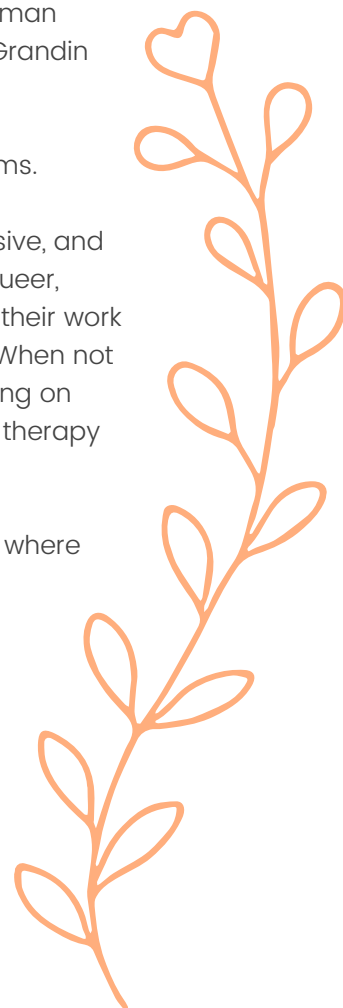
Grounded in lived experience, Lauren has been a therapy client since middle school and understands how vulnerable (and sometimes awkward) it can feel to share your story. They bring empathy, creativity, and even play into the room (yes, for adults too), believing human connection is a powerful driver of change. Inspired by neurodiversity advocate Temple Grandin and her reminder that we are "different, not less,"

Lauren works to gently dismantle shame fueled by narrow standards and harmful systems.

Outside the therapy room, Lauren is exactly who they are in session: empathetic, expressive, and occasionally delighting in cringy, chronically online dad jokes. A late-diagnosed ADHD, queer, non-binary clinician, Lauren brings an affirming, anti-ableist, LGBTQIA+-inclusive lens to their work and is committed to advocacy through both volunteerism and community connection. When not working, you'll find them drawing, painting, thrifting, listening to music, sipping coffee, loving on cats, admiring nail polish, or adding to their tattoo collection, and importantly, attending therapy themselves, because caring for the helper matters too.

If you, or your child or teen, are looking for a therapist who listens deeply and meets you where you are, Lauren would be honored to hear your story.

Evergreen Counseling
2100 Manchester Rd, Suite 610
Wheaton, IL 60187
630-480-0060



about **the modern domestic woman**

Supporting women from all walks of life.

At The Modern Domestic Woman (MDW), we are committed to addressing the holistic needs of women and recognizing the challenges they face in various aspects of life. Our vision is to create a nurturing environment where every woman feels supported and encouraged to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. Through our workshops and resource-sharing initiatives, MDW equips women with the tools and knowledge they need to overcome challenges and pursue their goals with confidence. We believe in providing practical resources tailored to women's needs, ensuring that they have access to essential support services.

MDW focuses on 3 pillars of living:

MENTAL HEALTH - MDW Cares is our support community of women rooted in making mental health a priority instead of an afterthought. Because nobody can pour from an empty cup.

LIFESTYLE - MDW loves creating safe spaces; at home and in the body you call home. We encourage a healthy lifestyle that meets you where you're at. Not where someone else wants you to be. We also love pretty things at MDW and celebrate style and the artistry of creatives.

ADVOCACY - At MDW, we go out into our communities and support women in crisis. We actively partner with organizations that support the rights, recovery, and well-being of women.

Beyond referrals, MDW has free support groups and community education workshops, and an informative and fun blog with free downloadable resources.

For more information, visit mdwcares.com or follow MDW on your favorite social platform @themoderndomesticwoman

Have a question or need a referral? Email us at themoderndomesticwoman@gmail.com



From One Woman's Story to a Shared Mission

At its heart, MDW Cares is about turning lived experience into lasting impact.

"What started as survival has become service," says founder Elizabeth Rago. "MDW Cares is the tangible extension of what The Modern Domestic Woman has always stood for, showing up for each other with compassion, courage, and care."

From workshops and magazine stories to one-on-one support and community partnerships, MDW Cares is growing into a movement of women helping women, right here, right now.

Get Involved

Follow along as MDW Cares continues to grow and connect women across our community.

Visit mdwcares.com

Follow us on social
@themoderndomesticwoman



Donate





Copyright 2026