

MAY 2026

## KELLY VIDA

Founder of Empower Her Fitness in Batavia, Kelly is redefining strength through a community-centered approach to women's health. Rooted in her own journey, Kelly's work helps women reconnect with their bodies and feel supported through every stage of life.

the modern  
**domestic  
woman**

May 2026

# MDW MAG

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



*Dear MDW Community,*

The name “Modern Domestic Woman” came long before any of this existed. Before the magazine, before the market, before MDW Cares. It came from a question I couldn’t quite shake while writing an article for Christianity Today in 2014.

At the time, I was wrestling with a word that felt complicated. Domestic.

A word that, for so many women, had been shaped by history into something small and restrictive. Even confining. I kept coming back to Barbara Welter’s idea of women as “hostages in the home,” and I found myself asking: Is that still true? Is that the only way we’re allowed to understand this? Because it didn’t feel true to my life.

What I was experiencing and what I was seeing in the women around me was something entirely different. I saw women creating spaces that felt welcoming. Homes that held people, stories, hard conversations, laughter, and healing. I saw women who were working, caregiving, rebuilding, questioning, and still finding ways to make a meal, light a candle, text a friend, and chip away at that never-ending to-do list.

There was power in that. Care that wasn’t performative, but deeply rooted in love. And yet... at the same time, I also felt the weight of what “domestic” had become in a modern world, especially in the age of Pinterest boards, perfectly styled homes, and the pressure to do it all and make it look effortless. I knew that feeling too.

The never-good-enough spiral. The comparison. The belief that if I could just organize better, decorate better, be better, then maybe I’d finally feel at peace in my own life. But the more I sat with it, the clearer it became: perfection wasn’t the goal. It was the distraction. Because the most meaningful parts of our homes don’t come from a finished to-do list or a flawless aesthetic. They come from presence and contentment.

The modern domestic woman wasn’t a stereotype to reject or a role to perfect. She was something to reclaim. A woman who could define her life on her own terms. Who could hold both ambition and care. Build a career, rebuild her identity, raise children, not have children, start over, slow down, or simply make it through the day and still create a life that felt like hers.

MDW has grown into so much more than I could have imagined back then. But my goal has always been the same. To redefine “domestic” not as something confining, but as something deeply powerful: the ability to create homes that take root in our families and ripple outward into our communities.

*Feeling especially powerful today.*

Elizabeth Rago  
MDW Founder & Editor



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



# the modern domestic woman

## MAY SPONSOR

We're honored to feature Kelly Vida as this month's profile, a woman whose work is redefining what strength and wellness can look like.

Through Empower Her Fitness, Kelly brings her lived experience into every space she creates, helping women reconnect with their bodies in a way that feels supportive and sustainable. Her approach is rooted in understanding, reminding women that healing isn't something we rush; it's something we honor.

In building this community, Kelly is creating a space where women feel seen and never alone in the process.



## Subscriber Gift

The free gift for subscribers this month is a collection of Shower Affirmation Cards.

These moments of power are designed to turn your everyday routine into a moment of grounding and intention. These waterproof, reusable cards feature empowering quotes focused on strength, confidence, and resilience, and cling to your shower wall without any adhesive.

It's a simple, meaningful way to start your day.

# The Smallest Moments, Held Forever

Specializing in newborn photography, Becky Burger of Bloom & Gather Photography has worked with over 300 babies throughout her career, bringing both artistry and deep knowledge into every session.

As a safety-certified newborn photographer, her work goes beyond simply taking beautiful images. It's about creating a space where parents can exhale, knowing their baby is being handled with the utmost care and experience.

Whether you're expecting, newly postpartum, or simply wanting to document this chapter before it shifts again, reach out to Becky.



15% off any session for MDW readers with the code MDWmay.



(valid through the end of May).



BLOOM & GATHER  
*Photography*



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Katie McCall

Priscilla Dean

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Joy Rosini

Dennise Demitro

## MDW Contributing Partner

Kelsey Boyer, TCFS

## Photography

Becky Burger



MDW Magazine features individuals, businesses, products, and services that align with our mission of supporting women, community, and well-being.

While we make thoughtful efforts to highlight trusted resources and experiences, inclusion in MDW Magazine does not constitute an endorsement, guarantee, or certification of any product, service, or provider. Readers are encouraged to conduct their own research and use their own judgment when engaging with businesses, professionals, or products featured in our publication.

MDW Magazine, MDW Media LLC, and MDW Cares are not responsible for the actions, advice, services, or outcomes associated with any third-party individuals, organizations, or products mentioned in our content.

## Profile

There are moments in a woman's life that change everything. Not always in a loud, dramatic way, but the realization that something is missing.

For Kelly Vida, that moment came during pregnancy.

*"I couldn't find what I needed."*



Before 2022, Kelly had already spent years in the fitness world teaching barre, strength, and WERQ dance classes in local park districts. She knew the importance of movement and the power of community and was looking to specialize in an area, but she wasn't sure which path to pursue.

At the same time, Kelly was pregnant, and as she pursued classes for pregnant women, she was frequently told she couldn't, or shouldn't, attend classes.

"People get worried when coaching pregnant women, as they don't know what to cue or how to modify for our bodies," explained Kelly. "And I didn't really know either at the time, which is why I decided to earn specializations and learn for my own journey."

Now three months postpartum with her first child, Kelly decided to create it for herself.

The transformational experience was so fresh in her mind and body. And while she didn't have a place to practice yet, Kelly hosted her first few classes in the upstairs room at Graham's 318 in Geneva.

And in that small space above a cute coffee shop, Empowered Mama Fitness was born. Not just the movement of bodies and strengthening of form, but the connection of honest stories and shared experiences.

"I try not to tell negative birth stories, unless people ask," said Kelly of the conversations that happened between the women in her classes. "I found that it was healing to be around other women who were enjoying the happy times of pregnancy and the hard times of parenthood. I found there were a lot of other women just like me, and we could all feel safe in a space that allowed us to share and cry and heal."

## WHEN YOUR STORY BECOMES SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFELINE

What Kelly didn't expect was how quickly her personal experience would resonate with other women. Because pregnancy, postpartum, fertility struggles, and hormonal shifts aren't just physical transitions.

They're isolating ones.

"The phases we touch on are some of the most isolating times in a woman's life," Kelly shared. "So having a chance to build that community is really important, not just for me, but for other women in the area."

Kelly's story resonates with so many women who feel dismissed by their health care providers or told, "That's just how it is." She found that women going through fertility struggles are pushed to IVF without more natural options being presented.

"Thankfully, I've found so many amazing local resources, and that made me passionate about sharing them with others. In that way, they can connect with providers who make time for them and don't dismiss their concerns or need for clarity around health plans, or objections to medical suggestions like IVF."

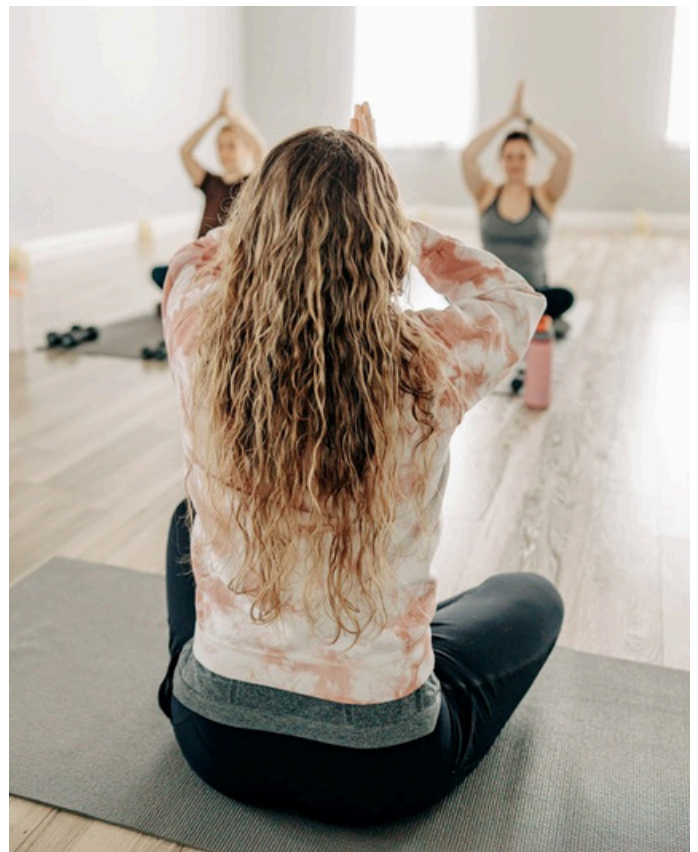
About a year later, a space in Batavia opened up. And at the same time, Kelly's friend and fellow entrepreneur, Emily Beaupre, was also looking to expand her successful massage therapy business in Aurora.

The timing felt aligned.

"We were both in a situation where we couldn't tackle the leap of launching a brick-and-mortar space alone, but we could do it as a team," Kelly reflected.

Together, they created what is now Zen Loft Collective, a space that blends fitness, yoga, bodywork, wellness, and community. Kelly would run the fitness and movement side through Empower Her Fitness in Batavia. At the same time, Emily would bring her talents to offer both massage and wellness in both Aurora and Batavia.

"I've never seen my business as just a yoga or fitness studio," Kelly explains. "I've always wanted a space where people could come for community... to plug into events, connect with resources, and feel supported."



## *Expanding the conversation and the support*

On the Empower Her Fitness side of the Collective, women in class who were beyond child-bearing years shared their stories of perimenopause and hormones, which quickly became a front-and-center topic that desperately needed attention.

“As I began digging into hormones as they relate to pregnancy and postpartum, I realized that there were so many implications to these other stages of our lives,” explained Kelly. “Just as I want women to feel empowered in pregnancy, labor, and birth, I want them to be able to regain control of how they feel as they work through fertility and experience the joys of perimenopause (or lack thereof).”

More than anything, Kelly didn't see many spaces talking about hormones and perimenopause, nor could she find a place where women could express their concerns, share stories, or connect to the local resources for support. And that didn't sit right with her.

So, once again, Kelly expanded.

In addition to strength training and yoga, Kelly built workshops around fertility support, perimenopause education, guidance from pelvic floor therapists, somatic movement classes, and the importance of breathwork.

“So many people felt dismissed by their healthcare providers or told, ‘that's just how it is,’” said Kelly. “My mission has always been to empower women around their health so they can be educated and informed to make their own choices.”

That belief is what led to the evolution of her brand, from Empowered Mama Fitness to Empower Her Fitness Batavia.

Because not every woman becomes a mother, and not every journey looks the same. “We truly get to know the women who come to classes, and conversations become more intimate as trust builds. Hearing the stories of women who aren't mothers gave me pause.

I didn't want the name of my business to exclude anyone,” Kelly explained. “Some women want to be moms and can't. Others are entering perimenopause and never became moms. I wanted everyone to feel like they belong here.”

And that sense of belonging is the thread that ties everything Kelly does together.



# The Power of Being Seen

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If you ask Kelly what women are looking for when they walk into Empower Her Fitness, she won't start with a toned body. Kelly will say it's a connection.

"The phases that women go through can feel very isolating, especially if you're the only one going through it in your circle of friends."

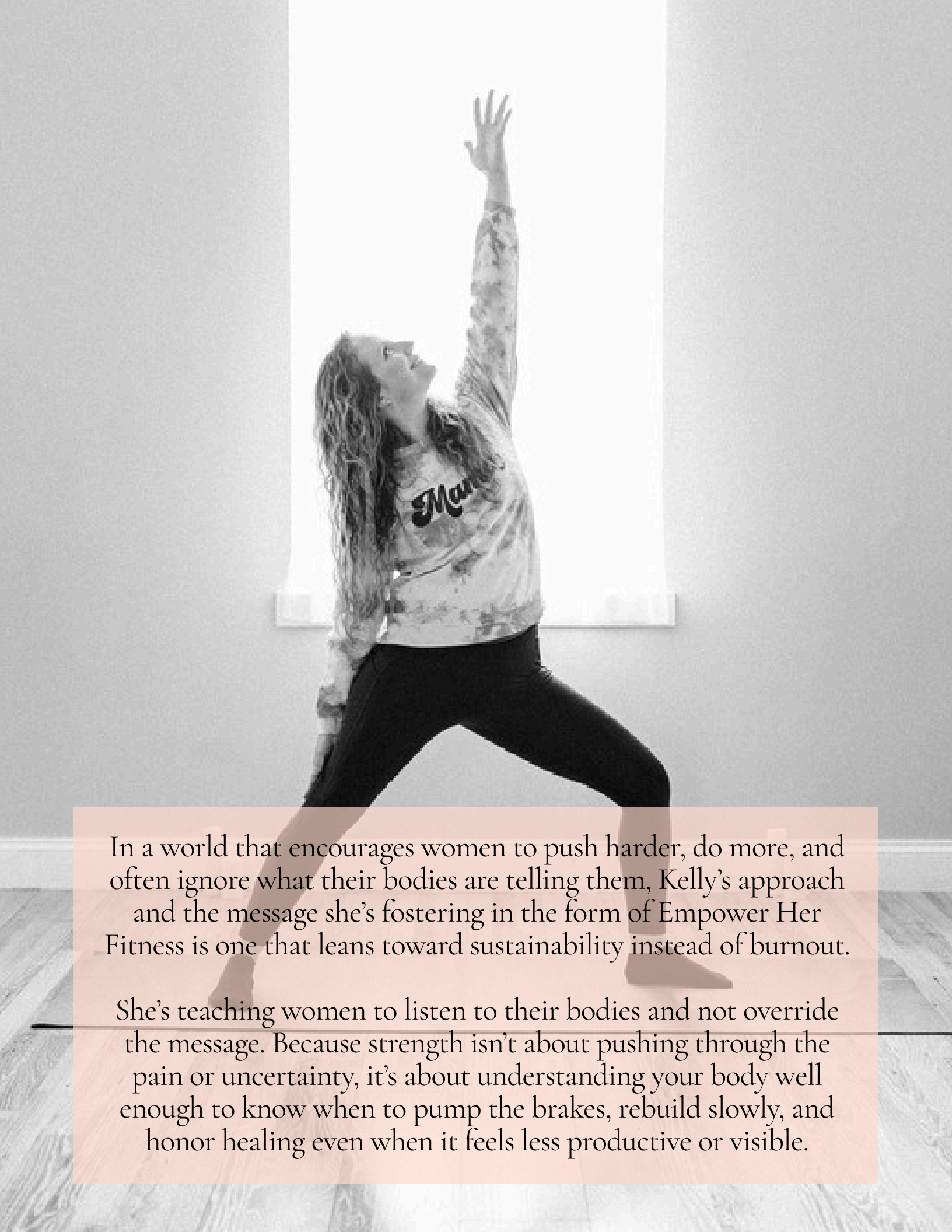
In Empower Her Fitness classes and workshops, the conversations range based on what each woman is going through.

Anything from healing your pelvic floor to recovering from a stressful week through the gentle movement of a yoga class. The community aspect of Kelly's business also centers around creating an environment that lets you know you're not alone and realizing you're not the only one who feels this way.

"We also focus on supporting the whole family. Whether that is through educational events or fun, entertaining events," says Kelly. "It's also hard to take care of yourself when logistics don't line up around childcare, which is why we build out staff to watch your kids for an hour so you can breathe."

And, it's true! Many of Kelly's daytime classes offer free childcare, because she knows that barrier firsthand.





In a world that encourages women to push harder, do more, and often ignore what their bodies are telling them, Kelly's approach and the message she's fostering in the form of Empower Her Fitness is one that leans toward sustainability instead of burnout.

She's teaching women to listen to their bodies and not override the message. Because strength isn't about pushing through the pain or uncertainty, it's about understanding your body well enough to know when to pump the brakes, rebuild slowly, and honor healing even when it feels less productive or visible.

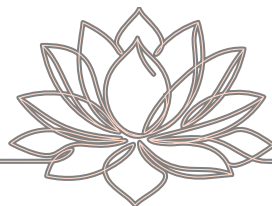
# Building Community When You're In the Middle of the Journey

Kelly isn't building this work from a distance; she's building it while she's living it. She's deep in the throes of motherhood, growing a business, and smack dab in the middle of trying to show up in both places, knowing that some days balance is just out of reach.

"Finding the time to give as much of myself to both 'sides' of my life is the hardest part," Kelly shared. "Time and energy are in limited supply, and staying present with my family can sometimes be a challenge because work is always on my mind. I just hope I'm doing it all okay...but some days I don't feel like it."

A real and disarming honesty is wrapped up in that statement, as so many women feel similarly. Kelly's doing meaningful work on both ends of the spectrum, plus the invisible load of motherhood in between.

And maybe that's why Kelly's work resonates so deeply as it does. Because it's not coming from a place of perfection. It's coming from lived experience.





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Yet a crucial element to listening to your body isn't just the movement aspect of Kelly's business. Inside the space of a workshop or a fitness class is the feeling that you are not doing this work alone. You're surrounded by other women who are navigating their own versions of change and healing. There's a shared understanding that not every day feels strong and some weeks might feel slower in the process.

Something deeper takes root when women are allowed a space to show up without expectation of performance and not rushed through their understanding or healing. They begin to care for themselves differently, and just as importantly, they have the capacity to care for one another.

For Kelly, the mission of her business was never a straight line toward rebuilding the strength of people's physiques. It was about acknowledging the complexity of being a human being and creating space for women to rebuild and feel empowered instead of alone. ♦



[zenloftcollective.com](http://zenloftcollective.com)



## 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.

# WELCOMING THE AURA FOUNDATION TO THE MDW COMMUNITY

We're so excited to welcome The Aura Foundation into the MDW community!

As MDW continues to grow, one of the things that matters most to us is who we're growing with. The organizations, leaders, and spaces we bring into this community aren't just aligned in mission; they're aligned in how they show up for people. Thoughtfully and with a deep understanding that real support has to be accessible, not just aspirational.

That's exactly what The Aura Foundation is building.

Based in Aurora and serving all surrounding communities, The Aura Foundation is a community-driven nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to holistic wellness, trauma-informed care, and leadership development. Their work sits at the intersection of mental health, education, and business empowerment, creating opportunities for individuals to not only heal but to grow, lead, and reconnect with themselves in meaningful ways.

And what stands out immediately is how they're doing it.



aura  
FOUNDATION

Through community wellness events, they're creating low-barrier entry points into healing. Free mini-sessions like Reiki, massage, acupuncture, and facials offer something many people don't often experience. An opportunity to pause, to be cared for, and to explore what support can look like without financial pressure or unrealistic expectations.

Because for so many people, especially those navigating stress, burnout, or transition, access is the barrier.

And the Aura Foundation is actively working to remove it.

## Creating Access to Wellness, Leadership, and Meaningful Growth



### Community Wellness

Accessible holistic and trauma-informed care for individuals and families.



### Women's Leadership

Women's empowerment and leadership development.



### Holistic Education

Workshops, retreats, alternatives, and community learning experiences.



### Business Empowerment

Career pathways, small business support, and entrepreneurship development.



### Mental Health & Trauma-Informed Care

Destigmatizing, teaching, and expanding access to mental health resources.

# Founder Feature

Executive Director of The Aura Foundation, Jen Mendoza, also Founder of InspiHER, the Women's Leadership pillar of the Foundation, brings women together around leadership, mentorship, and entrepreneurship in a way that feels grounded and sustainable.

It's not about pushing harder or chasing growth at all costs. It's about alignment. It's about building something - whether that's a business, a career, or a new chapter of life - that actually supports your well-being instead of working against it.

That same philosophy carries through their workshops, retreats, and holistic education offerings, all designed to support mental health, personal growth, and connection. And in their free yoga for healing sessions, that support becomes even more tangible, creating space for nervous system regulation, stress reduction, and trauma-informed care that meets people exactly where they are.



At the center of it all is Jen, whose leadership brings both depth and lived experience to this work.

With a background that includes roles with the Better Business Bureau, World Relief, and the Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce, Jen has long been committed to strengthening communities through connection, education, and opportunity. But what makes her leadership especially impactful is her understanding of how personal healing and community care intersect.

She leads with the belief that when people feel seen, supported, and resourced, they're able to move forward in ways that create lasting change—not just for themselves, but for those around them. And that belief is reflected in every layer of The Aura Foundation.

From youth development and community partnerships to women's leadership initiatives and holistic wellness programming, they're creating multiple pathways into support because not everyone's starting point looks the same.

*Learn More & Get Involved*



[theaurafoundation.org](https://theaurafoundation.org)

That's something we deeply understand within the MDW community.

We've always believed in being a starting point. A place where people can begin to explore what they need, connect with trusted resources, and take that next step in a way that feels manageable and supported.

The Aura Foundation fits seamlessly into our ecosystem.

# MDW May Support Groups



**FREE**

**COME AS YOU ARE COFFEE:  
SUPPORT GROUP FOR ALL WOMEN**

Every Saturday, 8 AM – 9 AM  
Storybook Cafe in Geneva, IL

Text 630-946-9102 to RSVP



**FREE**

**MOMS SUPPORT GROUP**

MAY 13TH & 27TH, 7:15 PM – 8:30 PM  
Batavia Library, Batavia, IL

Text 630-946-9102 to RSVP



**GUEST SPEAKER: LISA JAROT  
OF HEADSTRONG WELLNESS**

May 13th, FREE EVENT  
but please RSVP here



**FREE**

**DIVORCED MOMS SUPPORT  
GROUP**

SATURDAY MORNINGS  
Virtual Bi-Weekly Meet Up

Text 630-474-5275 for more info



# When Your Body Is Trying to Tell You Something

by Elizabeth Rago

There are certain people who come into the MDW community and just fit because they understand the questions and struggles women are carrying.

Lisa is one of those people.

Her path to creating Headstrong Wellness didn't begin with a business plan or a perfectly mapped-out vision. It began in 2023, during a season she describes simply and honestly: her family crashed and burned.

Like so many women navigating the weight of caregiving, stress, and the pressure to hold everything together, Lisa found herself searching for answers when things no longer made sense.

"I've always believed that all behavior is communication," she shares. So when she began seeing concerning behaviors in her children, she didn't rush to fix or label them.

Instead, she paused and asked a different kind of question...

What story are you trying to tell?

That question became the starting point for something much deeper.

As Lisa and her family explored different paths to healing, they were eventually introduced to neurologically focused nervous system support. It wasn't an overnight transformation, but it was the first time things began to shift in a way that felt meaningful. There was progress. There was hope. There was a sense that healing might actually be possible.

At the same time, like many women who are caring for everyone else, Lisa began to realize her own body had been trying to get her attention, too.

Burnout had taken hold. Her cortisol levels were high, and she was navigating an autoimmune disease, hormonal imbalances, and thyroid issues that left her feeling depleted in ways that rest alone couldn't fix.

What she was experiencing wasn't just stress; it was a system that had been pushed beyond its limits. Instead of ignoring it, she leaned in.



Her search led her to functional medicine, where she began to understand how deeply connected the brain and body really are. It wasn't just about symptoms—it was about getting to the root of what was happening beneath the surface. By supporting both her nervous system and her overall physical health, Lisa began to experience a shift that felt both grounding and sustainable.

And from that lived experience, Headstrong Wellness was born.

What Lisa has created isn't just a wellness space; it's a place where people can finally feel understood. At Headstrong, the focus is on root-cause healing, with the belief that when the brain and body are supported together, real change can happen.

Through services like IASIS microcurrent neurofeedback, Lisa helps clients gently guide their nervous systems out of stuck patterns and into a more regulated state.

# What's Neurofeedback?

It's a subtle, non-invasive approach that allows the brain to reset without force or pressure, something many people don't realize is even possible.

Alongside that, epigenetic hair analysis offers a deeper look into how the body is functioning in real time, helping uncover imbalances and guiding personalized support for everything from stress and inflammation to digestion and detox pathways.

But what truly sets Lisa apart isn't just what she offers; it's how she shows up for her clients.

Her work is rooted in compassion, curiosity, and the understanding that healing isn't linear. It's especially meaningful for families navigating complex trauma, including foster and adoptive families, who are often left feeling unseen or unsupported in traditional spaces. Lisa has intentionally created an environment where those families are not only welcomed but deeply understood. And that's exactly why she feels so aligned with this community.

At MDW, we talk a lot about the realities women are navigating behind the scenes. The mental load, the emotional weight, the chronic overwhelm that doesn't always have a clear name.

Lisa's work meets women right in that space, offering not quick fixes, but thoughtful, whole-person support.

She's someone who understands that sometimes anxiety isn't just anxiety. That exhaustion isn't just about needing more sleep. And when your nervous system is overwhelmed, your body will keep trying to get your attention until something shifts.



And more importantly, she's someone who believes that shift is possible.

We're so grateful to welcome Lisa and Headstrong Wellness into the MDW community, not just as a resource, but as a reminder that you don't have to figure this out on your own.

Because when we begin to understand what our bodies are trying to tell us, everything starts to change. And having the right support along the way makes all the difference.

Lisa will also be joining our Moms Support Group on May 13th for a free conversation focused on nervous system support, helping overstimulated moms better understand what's happening in their bodies and how to gently move out of that constant fight-or-flight state. If you've been feeling overwhelmed, stretched thin, or like your nervous system is always "on," this is a space to come as you are, learn something new, and feel supported in real time.

Learn more and RSVP here.



# 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: 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](mailto:carrie@noreilahealing.com)

# forest bathing

Sunday, May 17

11 am - 1:30 pm

Tekakwitha Woods  
Forest Preserve,  
South Elgin

Sign up



the modern  
**domestic  
woman**

# MAY EVENT: FOREST BATHING

Slow down and  
step into nature.

Join us Sunday, May 17, for a “forest bathing” walk in the woods with nature expert Susan Kritzberg. Susan, born and raised in Yorkville, Illinois, grew up in the rural Midwest and has spent her life immersed in the outdoors through gardening, mushroom foraging, and wildlife education.

During the walk, guests will engage the five senses on a deeper level ... we will provide a fun and informative scavenger hunt, encouraging you to stop and look a little closer at nature’s beauty. We will listen for bird calls and insect sounds, smell flowers and plants, and discover new textures along the way.

In addition to the scavenger hunt, each guest will receive:

- A mini flower press
- Nature sticker
- Homemade granola bar from MDW’s Katie McCall

All attendees will be entered to win our Forest Bathing Gift Basket (\$125 in gifts!), including:

- Just Bee Sandlewood Fern Diffuser, \$18
- Your Guide To Forest Bathing Journal, \$17
- Your Guide to Forest Bathing Book, \$17
- MDW DIY Bracelet DIY Kit (Nature Theme), \$14
- S’well Recycled Stainless Steel Explorer To-Go Bottle, \$32
- Pain Relief Roller, Urban Apothecary, \$25
- All-Natural Bug Spray

*Sneak peek  
of a few of the  
items!*



## Details:

Date: Sunday, May 17, 2026

Time: 11 AM - 1:30 PM

Place: Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve, South Elgin, Illinois

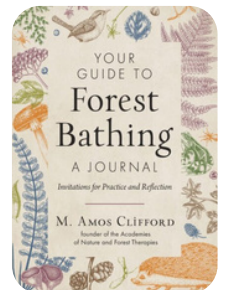
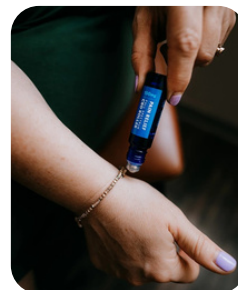
Cost: \$25

*Sign up!*

Register at  
[mdwshop.com/events](http://mdwshop.com/events)



\*Please wear long pants, socks, long sleeves, close-toed shoes, tick/insect repellent, and bring a water bottle, cross-body bag, or lightweight backpack.



# GROUND + GATHER

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

Designed especially for parents and caregivers of neurodivergent kids, this offering includes a grounding yoga practice followed by coffee and connection, creating intentional space to rest, recharge, and feel supported.

Date: Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

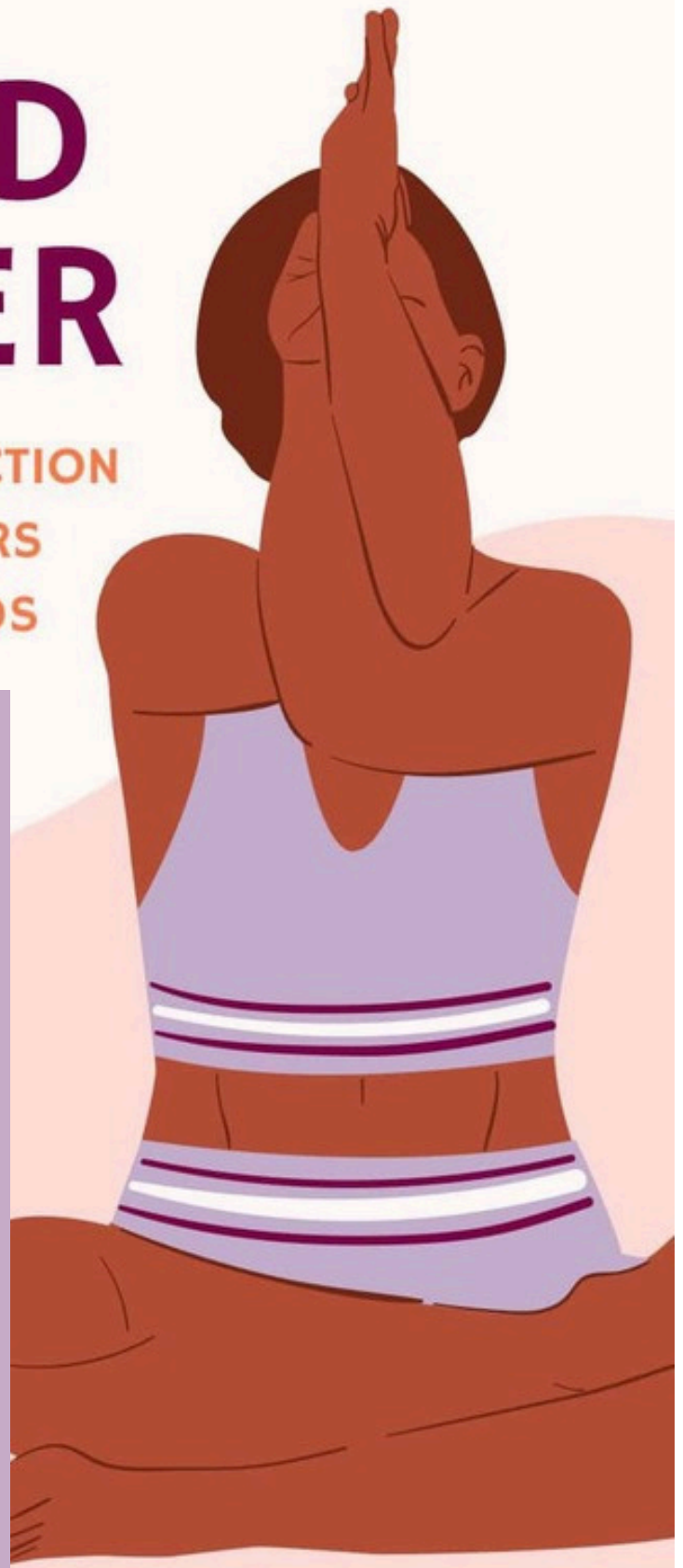
Time: 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Place: Zen Loft Collective

103 East Wilson Street, Batavia, IL

Cost: \$30 for class, coffee/tea, and a light brunch.

Sign up here!



# MDW MARKET

## calendar

16  
MAY

Batavia  
Farmer's  
Market



Wildflower  
Mercantile in  
Wheaton

23  
MAY



House of 423  
in Geneva

30  
MAY

7  
JUNE

St. Charles  
Pride Fest @  
Mt. Saint  
Mary's Park



More pop-ups will continue to find their way onto the calendar, each one a little different, each one shaped by the spaces and people who help bring it to life. You can check out our Market Calendar in the MDW Shop.

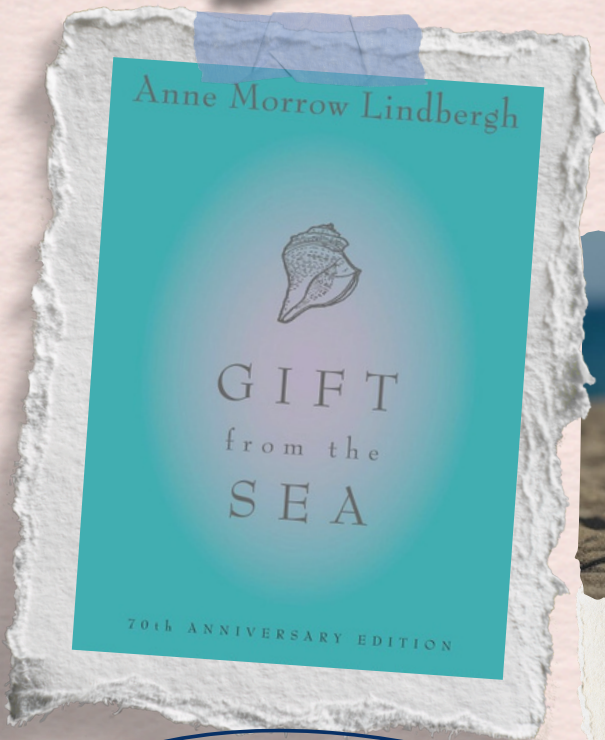
If you have a space that could hold something like this, we'd love to explore it with you. And if you're a maker creating something thoughtful, useful, or a little bit lovely, we'd love to see what you're working on.

Interested in hosting the MDW Market pop-up or have a product you'd like us to consider? Email us at [themoderndomesticwoman@gmail.com](mailto:themoderndomesticwoman@gmail.com)

# June

## MDW Book Club

“Gift from the Sea”  
by Anne Morrow Lindbergh



Why We  
Recommend It:



First published in 1955, the author provides deep wisdom and insight as she reflects on the evolution of relationships, the technology that complicates our lives rather than simplifies them, and the responsibilities that take us from our families.

This is a read that transcends time and will have readers contemplating the need for creativity and how they spend their time.

Where we're  
meeting:

Sunday, June 14th  
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
Harvey's Tales Bookstore in Geneva



Cost: \$10 (gets you a coffee/tea and additional proceeds go to MDW Cares our Non-Profit)

Sign up at [mdwshop.com/events](http://mdwshop.com/events)  
or in this QR code



# WOMEN'S HEALTH





# Top 10 Diet Culture Myths

by Priscilla Dean, LCPC  
Owner and Clinical Director  
Evergreen Counseling, LLC





## MYTH TALK

I've been following Jameela Jamil, an actress and blogger for several years now, even though I usually don't keep a close eye on celebrity culture. I find her transparency on her eating disorder recovery journey to be refreshing.

She recently started openly challenging "Ozempic culture" among her fellow celebrities to be aggressively dangerous and misogynistic. She noted "the funeral of the body positive movement" is now here, as a decade or so ago there was a pretty notable shift in the 2010's to be more "body inclusive".

However, since Ozempic hit the market (and let's be real, probably fascism too), celebrities and influencers seem to have abandoned any idea of body positivity lightning fast in favor of sharp collarbones and cheekbones, thigh gaps and razor-thin arms. As an eating disorder specialist and trauma therapist working with disordered eating for 16 years, I, too, have been distressed at these dangerous trends returning. How have we regressed so spectacularly as a society?

I've known for decades that diet culture and the wellness industry absolutely hate women, girls, and human bodies in general. It hates anything that is not white culture (cultural foods are not respected or celebrated; they are dismissed as unhealthy). In fact, the diet industry hates pleasure in general in favor of "self-discipline", all while it makes abhorrent amounts of money on these body-hatred beliefs that we willingly accept as facts.

While people literally die at alarming numbers from eating disorders (Eating disorders are the most fatal disorder in the DSM, which stands for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, more than Bipolar, Schizophrenia, or Major Depressive Disorder).

But these so-called "facts" about diets, food, and our bodies are mostly profit-driving myths. As the saying goes, the fish don't know the water is wet, right?

Well, call me the fish prophetess declaring the wetness of water, so here we go:

### #1 "Weight loss = Healthy"

This diet culture assumption is quite dangerous. For instance, one of the earliest symptoms of cancer detection is actually unexpected weight loss. Weight loss is also extremely common when you lose a significant other or loved one. Imagine if we treated weight loss as a concerning symptom instead of something to affirm as automatically healthy or something to praise?

Of course, sometimes losing weight can increase health outcomes, but it can equally indicate poor health or a grief process.

Large-scale studies (including millions of participants) have found that people in the "overweight" BMI range sometimes have equal or even slightly lower mortality risk than those labeled "normal weight" – a finding known as the "obesity paradox." However, this does not mean higher weight universally improves health, and outcomes vary widely depending on individual factors.

### #2 You're lazy, which is why you can't lose weight.

Billions of dollars are made by diet culture with this horrifically false idea. Shame and blame the human for lacking "discipline" because they "fall off the wagon" by needing more calories than their diet allows to function properly. If your body doesn't lose weight on their diet or exercise plan, then you're clearly doing it wrong. There's nothing wrong with their diet. It's YOU. When in fact, bodies need diverse kinds of calories to function, or they lose muscle mass, cognitive and organ function.

### #3 Junk food and processed foods are bad and should be avoided at all costs."

Food isn't morally "good" or "bad" – it's simply more or less nutrient-dense. While some foods fuel the body differently, labeling them as "bad" creates unnecessary shame. And yes, a lot of these foods are formulated in labs to be more addictive than broccoli, but that hardly makes them morally evil. I mean, no one calls coffee "evil," but sure, those Hot Cheetos are basically Satan.

## #4 “You cannot trust your appetite. You will lose control.”

The “lower your appetite” message is ridiculous if you want to have an enjoyable life. But happiness is not what the weight loss industry is selling.

The hidden message here is even more sinister: “Trust our company, and our special diet plan. Don’t trust yourself or your appetite; you need our product/exercise plan/subscription.”

The idea that bodies’ appetites need to be controlled is fascist, sexist, and racist. (If you feel out of control with food, I can tell you with 100% certainty that it isn’t food or your body’s fault, but it might be some very strong beliefs that were planted by diet culture long ago that you’ve accepted as fact...)



## #5 “I feel so fat.”

If I could erase one myth from society, this might be it. It’s extremely powerful.

Fat is not a feeling, plain and simple. It’s utterly ridiculous when you stop to think critically about it.

However, it absolutely matters how you’re feeling when you say this to yourself. If you catch yourself saying this, perhaps take another moment to ask,

- “What feeling is ‘fat’, anyway?”
- Do I feel sad? Unattractive? Embarrassed?

The emotions behind the word “fat” are real, and they matter more than we give them credit for when we reduce them to one word.

## #6 “Your ideal weight exists!”

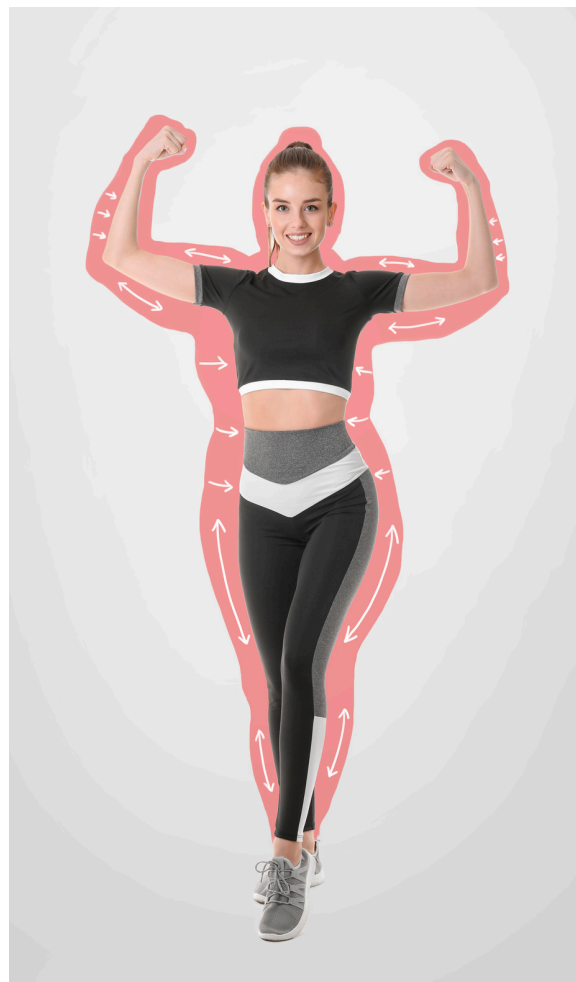
This is a very popular idea in weight loss programs – “get to your goal weight” – with zero space made for intuitive eating, your genetic factors, your health issues, or your stage of life. This is a highly simplistic and damaging idea.

In reality, your “ideal weight” doesn’t exist.

Your weight will increase or decrease, depending on a variety of physiological, emotional, psychological, age, and genetic factors. Your acceptance of the ever-changing shape and needs of your body, however, can be a permanent state of mindful acceptance.

It’s okay if you want to change your body, just be mindful of the brainwashing, and your “why”. We are told to change our bodies almost constantly by those who do not have our best interests at heart.

In my opinion, body acceptance is the best kind of rebellion, even while trying to increase more balance in our food intake.



## #7 Improve your health. Improve your body, the time is now!

On the surface, this myth seems pretty harmless. However, this overarching theme of addiction to health improvement is present in almost all wellness and diet companies' marketing strategies.

You're always URGENTLY chasing the next best thing for your health, always striving to be better, healthier. It's always a crazy sense of urgency, and never okay to accept where your health is at today. This is an exhausting mindset.

When we're constantly trying to improve our health, we forget to take joy and pleasure in what IS working in our bodies today. The only downside to that way of thinking is that body acceptance and gratitude hardly drive profit for diet culture companies.

## #8 People who restrict food or who are obsessed with dieting are vain and overly focused on their appearance.

This is usually a sexist idea, pointed mostly at girls and women (even though there are plenty of men who struggle, too). Like focusing on your diet and physique, is an affliction of vapid, shallow women, and if they were more informed or evolved, they wouldn't struggle with food or their body.

It doesn't account for so many real lives of women who struggle with food and body image. For instance, struggles with balanced food intake due to sensory sensitivities? Extremely common and amongst all genders, too. Even if you struggle with accepting your body's appearance, the fixation is rarely about the food itself; it's the desperate need to control something tangible (like food or the number on the scale!) when everything feels desperately out of control. This is not about vanity. This is a deeply painful experience that deserves more respect and compassion.

## #9 The "bounce back" movement is a healthy way to return to exercise after having a baby.

This myth openly hates mothers. It's infuriatingly normal for "post-baby" workouts to sneak in messages of "get your body back" (like, where did your body go?). Your body, which did the most incredible, miraculous thing, needs to be changed as quickly as possible.

New moms are extremely medically and psychologically vulnerable postpartum, but sure, they need to start pilates immediately. This predatory branding targets women at an already dangerous and fragile stage of their lives. And don't get me started on how I feel about the branding targeted at pregnant people who want to be fit by being "visibly pregnant only from the front."

## #10 "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels."

This one always makes me deeply sad. It's basically telling women that pleasure in your food is now revoked. You're not allowed to enjoy food, because feeling skinny is always better. God, how heartbreaking is that.

Can you imagine telling your 6-year-old niece that? Then don't say it to yourself. It is a human right to enjoy and take pleasure in your food.

In the ocean of diet culture and wellness industry we all swim in, we've been told ("fed", if you will) what our bodies should look, feel, and do to be acceptable. Not even happy, just acceptable!

But some of us are waking up.

Here's what all humans have a right to claim about our bodies\*:

- I have the right to take pleasure in my body, including enjoying all kinds of foods that are available to me.
- I have the right to gain weight and lose it without judgment, acknowledging and even celebrating my body as it changes, evolves, and develops as I age. This body is simply my home. My body is not morally superior or inferior to any other kind of body.
- I have the right to trust my body's cravings and food preferences, without being told my cravings are wrong or morally inferior.
- I have the right to experience health at every stage and size my body is in.

\*If these are uncomfortable to accept, you're on the right track! This feels discordant for most of us because we are far more comfortable with hating our bodies than loving and accepting them. Keep going!

You deserve to feel good and happy in the home that is your body.



## About the Author:

Priscilla Dean, LCPC, TTP, is a trauma-informed therapist, founder of Evergreen Therapy, and a longtime advocate for approaching mental health through a deeper, more human lens. With over 16 years of experience in the Wheaton area, her work centers on helping clients understand how trauma lives in the body, not just how it shows up as symptoms.

Priscilla has a special focus on disordered eating, supporting individuals and families across the full spectrum, from early concerns to more complex diagnoses. She also integrates tools like the Enneagram, as a certified teacher, and somatic trauma work, including Transforming Touch, to help clients access healing in ways that extend beyond talk therapy.

Need support? Reach out to Evergreen Counseling at:

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# SKIN

Simple in the best way, this fragrance-free goat milk and honey lotion is made for evening rituals. It melts into skin with a silky finish, leaving it calm, hydrated, and deeply nourished. Crafted with farm-fresh goat milk, local honey, and shea butter, and housed in an adorable reusable glass jar, it's an everyday luxury you'll reach for again and again.



Harvest + Harmony Goat Milk + Honey Lotion

MDW Shop





Column:  
Asking for a Friend

by Katie McCall

Hi, V.R., I'm almost certain that every woman reading this right now can resonate on some level, including myself! Life is incredibly busy, and at the end of the day (for most of us), there's very little time for a regular wellness plan.

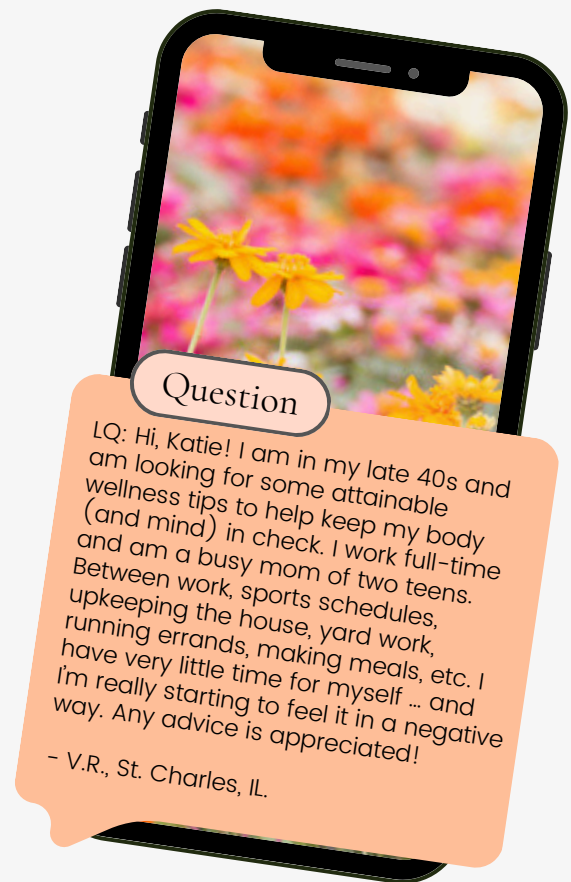
When we think about wellness, it truly comes down to one major factor: capacity.

Everyone's life looks different, and variables such as career, income, marital status, number of children, location/accessibility, age, and health issues/injuries can either support or hinder our ability to include wellness routines and rituals into our everyday.

In a perfect world – free of the distraction of responsibility – my wellness routine would look something like this: wake up, drink hot lemon water, take supplements, journal and meditate, then get my body moving with a power walk, trip to the gym, or Pilates class. Upon returning home, I'd dry brush, do a hair mask, shower, then follow up with gua sha and a full skincare routine. Nighttime would include some light stretching, red light therapy, a hot cup of tea, and a good book in front of the fireplace.

As I write this, it's laughable because I realize how unrealistic this routine is – at least during this stage in my life. And while I know it's important to prioritize my health and overall well-being, the key here is fitting in what I can when I can.

So instead of guilt and comparing myself to influencers on social media – who literally follow wellness routines for a living (and only show the best bits) – I decided to come up with my own "Wellness Menu" to offer simple suggestions for activities that can be easily incorporated into my busy lifestyle. Whether I have a spare 5, 10, or 15 minutes, it's a wonderful way to sneak in a little something to better my mind, body, and spirit.



*Have a question  
you'd like to ask Katie?*

Life, relationships, style, home decor, food, feelings – we're talking about it!

Send your question to Katie at [katie.mdwcares@gmail.com](mailto:katie.mdwcares@gmail.com)

And don't forget to follow her on IG

@katiemccall



Remember, wellness is in the eye of the beholder; what is healthy or makes one individual feel good or fulfilled may not carry the same weight for someone else. With that in mind, take the suggestions below as inspiration the next time you find yourself with a small pocket of uninterrupted time – just for you – and come up with your own rituals for a better self.

# WELLNESS MENU

## IF YOU HAVE... 5 MINUTES

- Make a cup of tea or hot lemon water
- Journal - I love this one with daily prompts
- Do a light stretching routine
- Give your scalp some love with an oil treatment (try local fave Ren Jord at ren-jord.com)
- Close your eyes and perform a simple breathing exercise
- Write a handwritten note to a friend or family member
- Dry brush before showering



## IF YOU HAVE... 10 MINUTES

- Read a chapter of your favorite book
- Put your legs up the wall at night - improves circulation & reduces swelling!
- Take a vitamin D walk outside or sit in the sun
- File nails, apply cuticle oil, and apply a rich hand cream
- Prep a healthy snack – try my Energy Bites
- Do a quick house tidy
- Tend the garden, water plants, or pull some weeds



## IF YOU HAVE... 15 MINUTES

- Try a new, full-body yoga or pilates routine at home
- Cook a simple, nourishing meal
- Craft - knit, crochet, paint with watercolors
- Listen to a podcast
- Take an Epsom salt bath
- Make green juice (Find my recipe in this issue!)
- Go for a nature walk to lower cortisol levels



An illustration of two women, one with light skin and dark hair in a bun, and one with dark skin and curly hair, standing in a meditative pose with hands pressed together in front of their chests. They are positioned under a large, light-colored archway. A bright yellow sun is visible in the sky above them. The background is a soft, light brown color. The women are standing on a set of light-colored steps. At the bottom of the image, there are various green plants and a pink flower.

# Reconnecting With Your Body (Without Forcing It)

*by Kelly Viola*

For many women, we move through our days taking care of everyone else, pushing through discomfort, and ignoring the signals our bodies are sending us. Somewhere along the way, our body becomes something we manage instead of something we listen to.

The idea of reconnection doesn't happen through an intense workout; it happens through awareness. And often, it begins in the most unexpected ways.

# The Moment Everything Shifts

One of the most common places I see this reconnection happen is in postpartum healing. Sometimes it looks like a woman taking time for herself for the first time in months. Other times, it's more physical, like rebuilding strength in the pelvic floor or addressing diastasis recti.

But here's what's really happening underneath: When the body begins to heal, symptoms that many women have been living with start to fade. Back pain eases. That "normal" leaking during workouts disappears. Movements feel more stable and supported.

And with that comes something bigger than physical strength - it's a sense of trust returning, many of us have been taught to push through.

If something feels off, we override it.  
If something feels weak, we push harder.  
If something feels uncomfortable, we assume that's just part of the process.

But your body isn't something to override; it's something to listen to and understand.

## Let's Talk About the Things We Don't Say Out Loud

If you've ever leaked urine during a workout after having a baby, I want you to understand that is not something to ignore or just "what happens now" or something you have to push through. It's information and your body telling you: "I'm not fully healed yet."

And that's okay, because this time is actually an opportunity. Because when you listen to that signal and respond with intention instead of intensity, you create space for healing to happen.



## Reconnection Isn't About Doing More

One of the biggest mindset shifts I encourage is that reconnecting with your body often requires you to do less, not more. That can feel frustrating at first, especially if you're used to measuring progress by how hard something feels. But healing doesn't always look like exhaustion. In fact, it rarely does.

Sometimes it looks like:

- Lifting lighter weights
- Slowing down your movements
- Focusing on breath instead of reps
- Choosing exercises that feel supportive instead of punishing

And yes...sometimes it looks like stepping back. Not forever, but long enough to rebuild a stronger foundation.

# 5 Ways to Start Reconnecting With Your Body

1

## Start with your breath

Your breath is your body's anchor. Before you worry about workouts, reps, or routines, take a few minutes each day to breathe with intention. Inhale deeply, expand through your ribs, and exhale fully. This is where awareness begins.

2

## Pay attention to "whispers," not just pain

Your body rarely jumps straight to pain. It gives subtle cues first.

Tightness, heaviness, instability, fatigue... Start noticing these early signals and even keep a body journal if you can. These cues matter!

3

## Redefine what "hard" means

A workout doesn't have to leave you exhausted to be effective. If something feels controlled, connected, and supportive, that's the work.

That's where strength is built.

4

## Give yourself permission to modify

You are allowed to adjust movements, take breaks, or choose a different path entirely. That's not quitting or not working hard enough.

It's responding intelligently to your body.

5

## Stop comparing your timeline

Especially in postpartum seasons, healing is not linear, and it's not identical from one person to the next. Your body has its own pace. Respect and honor that pace.

# The Goal Isn't to Get Your Body Back

Your body isn't something you lost. It's something that has changed, adapted, carried, supported, and shown up for you in ways you may not even fully realize yet. So, for where you are today, just like with any other emerging change in life, the goal isn't to go backward.

The goal is to move forward with awareness, intention, and a deeper connection than you had before.

Reconnecting with your body doesn't require a dramatic overhaul; it starts with one small shift: Instead of asking,

"How can I push through this?"  
Try asking, "What is my body trying to tell me?"

Your body isn't a problem to fix; it's a source of power to understand. When you start listening to your body, you stop working against yourself and start moving with intention.

And that's where your strength grows.



*Kelly Vida*

## About the Author

Kelly Vida is the owner of Empower Her Fitness in Batavia, where she helps women reconnect with their bodies through sustainable, strength-focused movement. Her approach centers on listening to the body rather than pushing through it, with a strong emphasis on postpartum recovery, core and pelvic floor healing, and long-term wellness.

Through her work, Kelly empowers women to rebuild strength in a way that feels supportive, informed, and deeply aligned with their everyday lives. Learn more at [empowerherfitnessbatavia.com](https://empowerherfitnessbatavia.com)



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# BEYOND WEIGHT LOSS: HOW SEMAGLUTIDE IS CHANGING THE GAME FOR ADDICTION

by Laura Lange, LCSW, CADAC, CODP I  
Restorative Behavioral Health



GLP-1 medications have been making waves for helping with weight loss and blood sugar, but now they're also catching some attention for something super interesting, such as how they might help calm those tough cravings, especially for alcohol, and maybe even things like gambling and shopping urges. If you've ever felt like your cravings just won't quit, this could be a game-changer.

## GLP-1s and Alcohol Cravings: What's the Buzz?

Simply put, GLP-1 is a hormone that talks to your brain about when you're full, but it also chats with the parts of your brain that control reward and motivation—the areas that light up when you want that glass of wine or that shopping spree. When GLP-1 meds are working, they help balance those signals, so those cravings don't feel so overwhelming. Brain scans show that these meds can calm down the "reward" centers, making alcohol or other urges less tempting.

## What About Gambling and Shopping?

Here's where it gets really interesting, but a bit more mysterious. While the strongest proof is for alcohol, early research hints that GLP-1 meds might also help with other urges like gambling or compulsive shopping. Some small studies and animal research suggest these meds could help reduce impulsive behaviors, but scientists are still gathering the full picture. So, it's a promising area to watch.

GLP-1 meds aren't officially approved to treat alcohol cravings or compulsive behaviors yet, but the research is growing fast. If you're already using these meds for weight or blood sugar, it's pretty cool to know they might also help quiet those nagging urges. Just remember, they're not a magic fix for addiction, but they could be a helpful part of the puzzle.

## About the Author

Laura Lange, LCSW, CADC, CODP I,  
EMDR Trained

Navigating the world of therapy can be overwhelming, but Licensed Clinical Social Worker Laura Lange is here to make it easier. As a therapist, Laura blends professionalism with compassion to create a safe and supportive space for her clients.

She works with adolescents and adults on issues like anxiety, trauma, OCD, depression, and more, including couples seeking premarital counseling. Trained in EMDR, Laura collaborates with medical providers and families to ensure comprehensive care.

Learn more about Laura and her practice, Restorative Behavioral Health at [restorativebh.com](http://restorativebh.com)



*Laura Lange*



RESTORATIVE  
· behavioral health ·



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# HOMEMADE GREEN JUICE

By Katie McCall

Striving for wellness on a daily basis can be difficult, but one step I'm sure not to skip is my homemade green juice. And contrary to popular belief, all that's needed is a high-powered blender and some cheesecloth to get the job done. No fancy juicer required!

If you're looking for a straightforward (and tasty) way to support digestion, reduce inflammation, improve gut health, boost immune function, increase energy, and get your daily dose of vitamins A, C, and K – look no further..

– *Katie*

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- High-powered blender or Vitamix
- Cheesecloth
- Large liquid measuring cup or bowl
- Storage jar/bottle with lid

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 Grannysmith apple
- 1/3 English cucumber
- 6 stalks of celery
- 1 large handful of fresh spinach
- 1 handful of fresh, flat-leaf (Italian) parsley
- 1-inch chunk of fresh ginger, peeled
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 cup coconut water (or water if a less-sweet flavor is desired)



# METHOD

Wash and chop the apple, cucumber, celery, spinach and parsley. Add to the blender. Next, peel the ginger, chop it into smaller pieces and add to the blender. Lastly, add the juice of 1 lemon and coconut water. Blend everything at high speed (level 6-7 on a Vitamix) for a minute or two, or until blended thoroughly and no chunks remain.

Place the cheesecloth over a bowl or mouth of liquid measuring cup. Twist and squeeze the cloth (ensuring no pulp/juice escapes out of the top), and continue squeezing and pressing, allowing all of the juice to catch in the bowl or measuring cup. Continue to squeeze hard until all of the liquid has been extracted, leaving semi-dry pulp behind in the cheesecloth. See note below for ways to repurpose the leftover pulp.



Enjoy at room temp or over ice if drinking immediately. If storing, transfer the green juice into a large mason jar or bottle with a tight-fitting lid and refrigerate for up to 2 days. For maximum health benefits, consume immediately or within 24 hours.

Leftover pulp can be used in smoothies, muffins, banana bread or thrown in the garden!

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## 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.



GIFTS

# SOOTHE



Ooooooh, girl. This Calm & Soothe soak wraps your skin in hemp honey + oatmeal goodness while a dreamy blend of botanicals and mineral-rich salts melts a stressful day right off your body.

It's exactly what your nervous system has been asking for...

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URBAN APOTHECARY



# BAG



Crushing big time over this round straw-braided circle bag from The Pep Line. It's perfect for farmer's market mornings, beach days, patio brunches, or a sunset wine night with friends.

Lightweight, natural, and finished with the sweetest silk tie, it's equal parts practical and just a little bit extra in the best way.

Round Straw Braided Circle Bag

THE PEP LINE





The MDW Market has an online shop full of giftable items!

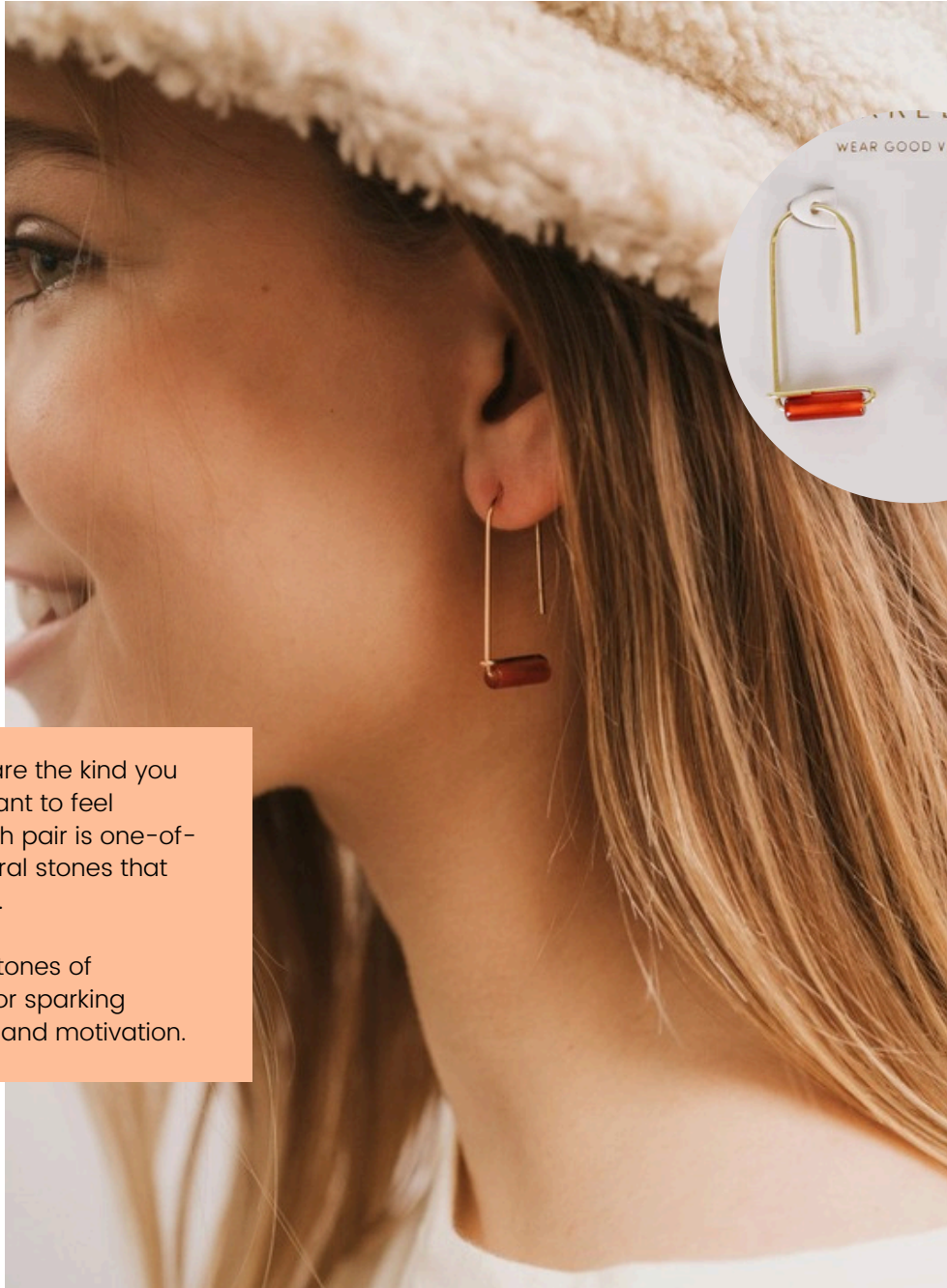
The best part is each purchase helps support in our community through our sister non-profit organization, MDW Cares.

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[mdwshop.com](http://mdwshop.com)



# EARRINGS



These elegant drops are the kind you reach for when you want to feel instantly together. Each pair is one-of-a-kind, thanks to natural stones that carry their own magic.

The warm, energizing tones of carnelian are known for sparking creativity, confidence, and motivation.

Carnelian Agate Earrings

MDW MARKET



# TEA TIME

This beginner-friendly guide to tasseomancy turns a simple cup of tea into something a little more magical, helping you interpret the symbols left behind in the leaves. We recently tried it with friends, and it was such a fun, laughter-filled way to connect.



Tea Leaf Reading Book

MDW MARKET



# BOOST

We love a good strategy sesh in the shower. These affirmation cards focus on strength, confidence, and resilience. The set includes 20 unique quotes that are waterproof and reusable,



Shower Affirmation Cards

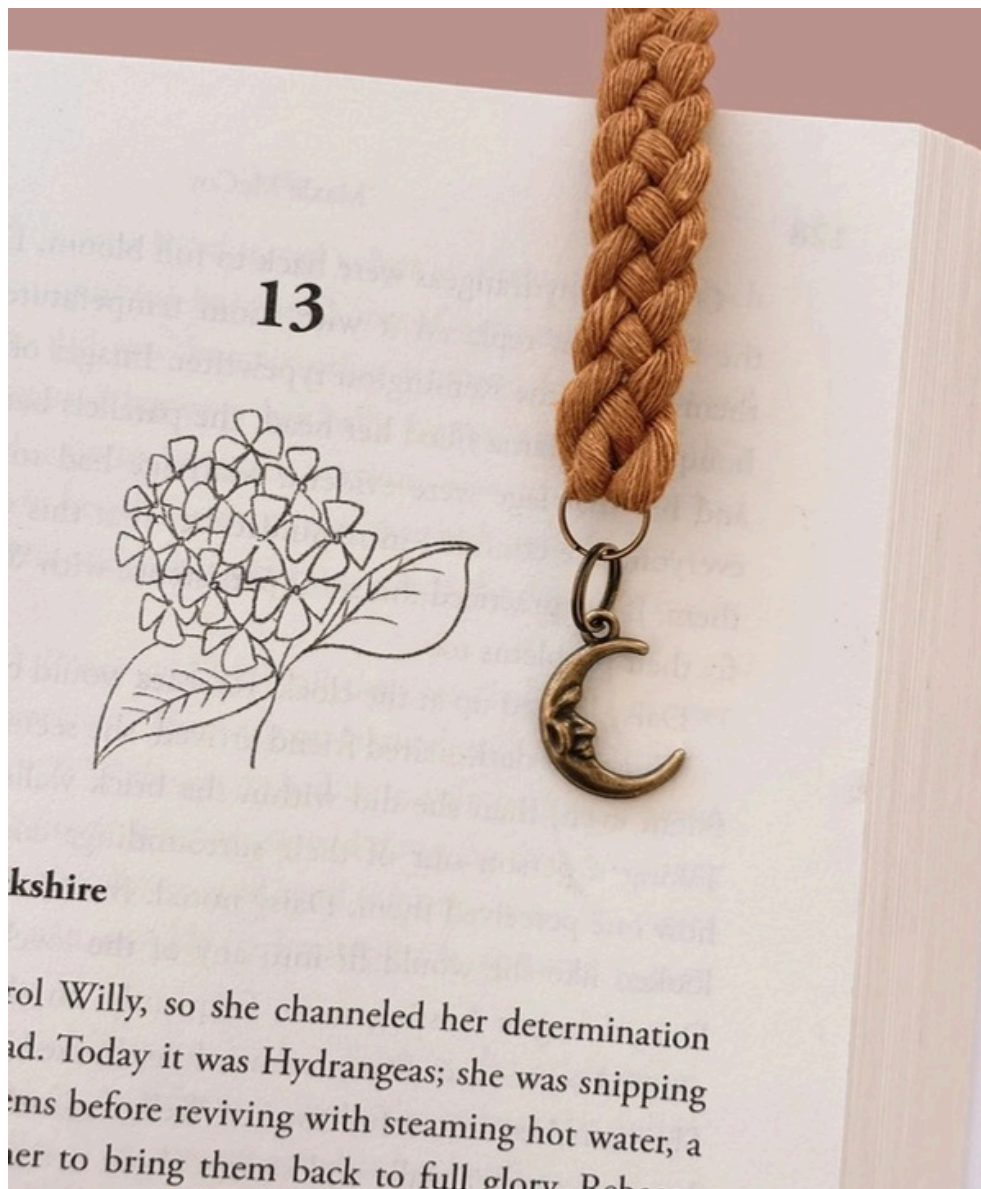
MDW MARKET



# BOOKISH

For the night readers and slow-page dreamers...

This crescent moon bookmark tucks into your story like a quiet little secret. Soft, golden, and a touch mysterious. It feels like something meant for late-night chapters, when the house is finally still, and the only thing left to do is read one more page (and then another).



Crescent Moon Charm Bookmark

MDW MARKET

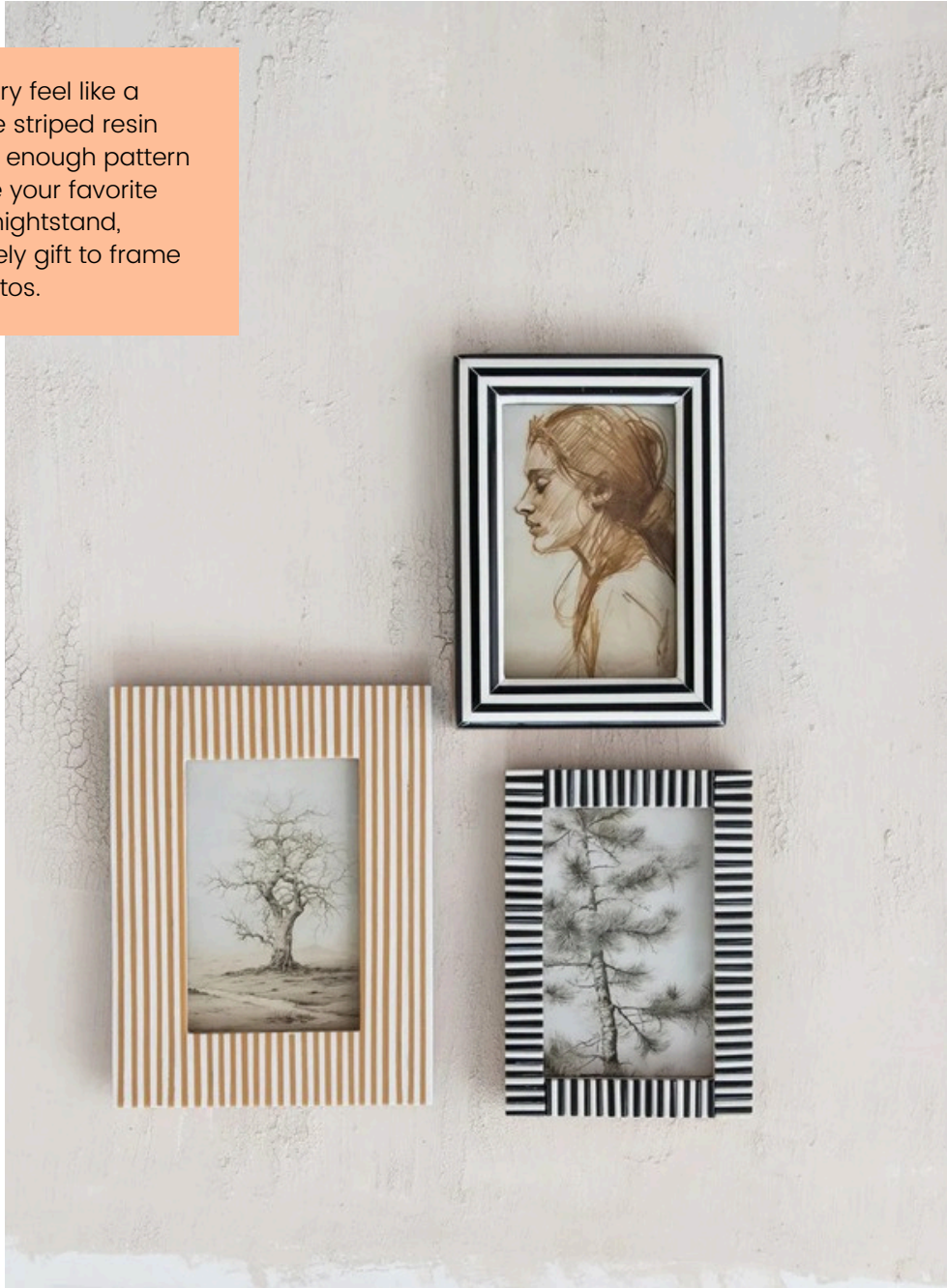




HOME

# FRAMES

Make a simple memory feel like a piece of art with these striped resin frames. They add just enough pattern and texture to elevate your favorite photos. Perfect for a nightstand, layered shelf, or a lovely gift to frame your latest family photos.



Caramel Striped Resin Photo Frame

THE PEP LINE



# LUPINES

These are the kind of blooms that don't quietly blend in; they stand tall and make a statement. With their layered spikes of saturated color, Westcountry™ lupines bring height, texture, and a little bit of drama to any garden bed. Planted in full sun with well-drained soil, they come alive in late spring, creating a lush, storybook feel while inviting bees and other pollinators to linger.



Westcountry™ lupines

Heinz Brothers Greenhouse Garden Center, St. Charles



# Creating a Moment: Finding Beauty in the Everyday Corners

*by Joy Rosini*

Beauty lives in every space, whether large or small. When you begin to see a room not just for what it is, but for what it could become, something shifts. With a few small, intentional changes, even the most ordinary corner can transform into a space that feels meaningful. One that brings a sense of calm or joy the moment you walk in.

It's about learning to look at your surroundings through a softer, more thoughtful lens, allowing yourself to slow down and truly see them. Reframing small spaces as intentional ones. Elevating the everyday.

During the pandemic, I watched a lot of design shows. One designer I really loved was Allison Victoria from Windy City Rehab. She would take these run-down homes and bring them back to life. She loved adding what she called beautiful moments into her designs.

Whether it was an antique find or simply restoring something back to its old glory, I really loved the idea of making areas in the home into something extraordinary. So I thought about my modest-sized pantry. It was an area that I would walk into and didn't care for the look of it. The wire shelving always seemed to collect dust and debris, and because there were items that would get lost in the back, they would be forgotten and eventually expire. It was costing us money. And I really do not like wasting food.

The inspiration hit when I was thoughtfully looking at the space. I didn't like the open shelving either, and went on a hunt for pantry options that were pretty but also served the purpose of hiding away items. I wanted drawers for snacks for the family, as well as shelving with doors that closed. I wanted to leave the pantry door open without fear of people viewing a mess (I am a neat freak and really like order).

I found some cabinets on various sites, checking Wayfair, Overstock, and Amazon.

As you search for cabinetry, make sure to measure, measure, measure! This will ensure they will fit your space. I found some pieces that also had architectural interest, with arches and nooks that could be styled or used for additional storage. These little touches can really make a room come to life!



**HELPFUL  
TIPS**

# From Overlooked to Intentional



*before*



*after*





After removing the wire shelving, we were left with some holes because of the anchors. We spackled, but just couldn't get it to look right, as some of the holes were very large. I looked into peel-and-stick wallpaper.

Wallpaper is really having a moment, and adds a bit of whimsy to your space. We have also used it for other projects. I narrowed it down to a light and airy lemon wallpaper or a java-inspired antique coffee wallpaper. We decided to go with the lemons because my kitchen has been done in a lemon motif, and since the pantry/laundry room (it's a combined space) is right off the kitchen, I thought it would overall be a more cohesive design to incorporate the lemon wallpaper.

I am so glad we did because it created a bright, cheery air to the room. I also asked a couple of friends, and they all said to go with the lemon wallpaper.

The cabinets were installed after the wallpaper went up, and in the space between them, I tucked in a serving cart we already owned. I love giving existing pieces new life, and this one became our espresso bar and dog treat station.

Above it, we added a shelf that fit perfectly between the cabinets, where I lined up bamboo cereal containers filled with our family's favorites. So many of these ideas come from simply noticing what other designers are doing and letting inspiration land. Once I saw those containers, I knew I had to find a way to make them part of our space.

After the remodel, I started "shopping" my own home. Espresso cups I brought back from Italy, along with locally made pottery that reminded me of our trip, found a new home on the shelf above the coffee bar.



In the pantry's arched shelving, I pulled out glass jars that had been tucked away and gave them a moment to shine, filled with flours I use for baking. On another shelf, I placed a beautiful candle gifted by a friend, likely discovered at one of our local artisan markets, alongside sunflower canisters that once lived in our old coffee setup.



Look for peel-and-stick wallpaper that is able to be repositioned. We learned that the hard way, And measure. I can't say this enough. This will ensure you have sufficient material for your project.



Paired with the bright yellow of fresh lemons, they bring a warm pop of color and tie everything together. It's a simple shift, but a meaningful one, seeing what you already own with fresh eyes and letting it live somewhere new.

What was once a space that didn't quite serve us is now a small, beautiful moment in our home. One that makes me smile every time I pass by. And the best part? This entire refresh came in under \$500, with even more opportunities to save by sourcing pieces from flea markets. No matter the budget, adding intentional beauty to your everyday spaces doesn't just change how they look, it changes how they feel to live in.



## About the Author

Joy Rosini is an amazing artist and lifelong learner whose creativity shows up in everything she does, from vibrant paintings to beautifully baked treats. Married to the love of her life and proud mama to two incredible kids, Joy brings warmth, curiosity, and care to every corner of her life. She's also a passionate traveler who finds inspiration in new places and cultures.

Joy was one of the very first women to attend MDW's Coffee Chats and quickly became a beloved part of our community. Her authenticity, generosity, and willingness to both give and grow make her a true light in our circle. Whether she's sharing hard-earned wisdom or simply showing up with an open heart, Joy reminds us all what it looks like to serve and support one another.

You can find Joy on Insta at [@joyfulsourdoughlady](https://www.instagram.com/joyfulsourdoughlady), where she is always creating epic meals, fresh bread, and gorgeous artwork.



## Notes on Product Sourcing

We care deeply about supporting local makers and small businesses, and it's something we return to whenever we can. But real life doesn't always fit neatly into that ideal. The items featured in this article were sourced from Amazon, a practical choice that allowed Joy to stay within budget and bring the space together in a way that worked for her everyday life. It's not about perfection or getting it "right" every time; it's about creating a home with what's accessible to you in this season.



# RELATIONSHIPS

A person wearing a tan, button-down shirt is shown from the chest up. They are holding a white smartphone in their left hand and a small, spiral-bound notebook in their right hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional.

# The Sandwich Generation

by Kelsey Boyer, CVA  
Communications Manager  
TriCity Family Services

## Mom in the Middle

You're scheduling a pediatric check-up while fielding a call from your mom's memory care facility. You're helping with homework one minute and navigating your dad's doctor appointment the next. You're the steady presence everyone depends on, often without thanks, without pause, and without much time for yourself.

This role is what's referred to as the "sandwich generation," and it has the most impact on moms.

# What Is the Sandwich Generation?

The “sandwich generation” refers to adults raising children while also supporting aging parents. According to Mental Health America, nearly 1 in 3 caregivers (29%) are living this reality. They’re in the middle, pulled in two directions, needed in multiple places, and trying to meet everyone’s needs at once.

This role isn’t just about busy schedules. It’s about emotional energy, constant coordination, and care that doesn’t really clock out.

## It’s Becoming More Widespread

People are living longer, often with more complex needs. Many adults are having children later, which creates more overlap between parenting and caregiving.

Financial pressures, from housing to healthcare, are making families more interdependent. That’s why more women are finding themselves “in the middle” for longer stretches of time.



*Kelsey and four generations of her family.*

**\$43.5 M**

CAREGIVERS  
PROVIDED  
UNPAID  
CARE

**\$470 B**

TOTAL  
AMOUNT FOR  
CARE IF PAID

## The Emotional Toll of Being “In the Middle”

Being everything to everyone carries weight. There’s the loss of time that used to belong to you. There’s the mental load: keeping track of appointments, medications, school schedules, and shifting needs. There’s the emotional pull: loving two generations while feeling stretched between them.

There’s also the financial toll. According to AARP, in 2015 approximately 43.5 million caregivers provided unpaid care to an adult or child totalling what would be \$470 billion if paid.

## Understanding Aging Parents And Ourselves

Caring for an aging parent means watching changes in independence, identity, and routine. It's holding space for grief. It's adjusting to a relationship that is shifting in real time. And it brings up a bigger question we don't always stop to ask: What do we actually believe about aging?

## A New Perspective: The Longevity Mindset

Research shows that our beliefs about aging shape how we experience it. Positive views are linked to longer life, better mental health, and stronger resilience, while negative assumptions can lead to isolation, decline, and disconnection.

A "longevity mindset" offers a different lens, one that sees aging as a stage of growth, meaning, and continued connection.

For caregivers, that shift matters: how we talk about aging, how we support independence, and how we picture our own future all influence the experience, not just for our parents, but for ourselves too.

### *Tips from a Therapist:*



Guidance from TCFS Therapist, Danielle Snyder: "The best way to respect our aging loved one is by asking them what they want.

Have conversations with them before health issues increase about what they want for themselves in the later stages of life. If you are unable to ask them what they want, reflect on what your loved one's interests are and how to integrate that into their lives in creative ways.

Try playing music from when they were a teenager or having time to be outside in nature."

## Supporting Kids While Holding It All Together

Your children are always looking to you. Not just for rides or routines, but for emotional cues. They notice how you respond to stress, how you handle change, and how you care for others without losing yourself. Really, you're not just caring for two generations; you're shaping how both understand resilience, relationships, and mental health.



## *Tips from a Therapist:*

“Try this: when you are on the way to soccer practice or picking kids up from school, engage your children in conversation about their days and ask questions to help them learn emotional intelligence. This can look like:

- What was the most exciting part of your day?
- Why do you think that made you sad?

Enrolling your children in counseling services can also help to educate your kids about emotional and mental health.”

### Burnt(out) in the Middle

What about YOU: the part of the sandwich that rarely gets attention? Caregivers often experience burnout, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. There can be moments of resentment, grief, or overwhelm: feelings that don't always get named, but are incredibly common. Support isn't a luxury, it's part of what makes “sandwiching” sustainable.



## *Tips from a Therapist:*

“Having family meetings with your siblings, aunts, uncles, and other individuals caring for your children or elderly parent can help lighten the expectations on you. These are opportunities to voice your needs and boundaries about what can reasonably be done by your support system. When you have been neglecting yourself for too long, or you don't have a robust support system it is okay to get help from systems.

This could mean moving your parent to a care facility or enrolling them in adult day programs for individuals with dementia. Using these resources is not a failure on your part, it is an act of love. Love towards your parent. Love towards yourself. We can not pour from an empty cup.”

### You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone

At TriCity Family Services, we support individuals and families at every stage of life - because mental health doesn't have an age limit. Whether you're caring for a parent, raising a child, or trying to take care of yourself somewhere in the middle, support can make it all feel more manageable and more meaningful.

You can connect with our intake coordinator to explore options like therapy, support groups, or educational workshops by calling 630-232-1070 or visiting [tricityfamilyservices.org](http://tricityfamilyservices.org)

## Small Shifts That Can Make a Difference

There's no perfect way to balance all of this but a few small shifts can help ease some tension:

- Ask for help and be specific about what would actually lighten the load
- Share responsibility where you can, even in small ways
- Let go of the idea that you have to do it all perfectly
- Protect small pockets of time for yourself, even if they're brief
- Talk about what you're carrying out loud with someone you trust
- Try reframing: even with the strain, many caregivers describe a deep sense of meaning, connection, and purpose in showing up for the people they love

# An Invitation to Reflect & Learn More

If this feels familiar, you're not alone, and there's more to explore.

On May 27, 2026, TriCity Family Services will host Room for Growth: Mental Health Has No Age Limit, featuring Dr. Regina Koepf's keynote on "The Longevity Mindset: How What We Believe About Aging Shapes How We Age."

This lunch-and-learn is an opportunity to step back, reflect, and rethink what aging and caregiving can look like.

Tickets are \$50 and include lunch at Eagle Brook Country Club in Geneva. Full details and registration can be found at: <https://R4G2026.givesmart.com>



## About the Author:



by Kelsey Boyer, CVA  
Communications Manager  
TriCity Family Services

Kelsey Boyer, CVA has been the Communications Manager at TriCity Family Services for three years. She grew up in northern Utah where she graduated from Weber State University with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology/Anthropology. She has worked with several non-profit organizations (some large, some small) and has a strong passion for community-based work. Kelsey earned her Certification in Volunteer Administration in 2021 and enjoys working with community members who share her passion of using creativity in pursuit of social justice.

Kelsey finds joy in riding her bike, playing board games, going to concerts, traveling, and spending time with her family, including an almost 4-year-old daughter, an almost 12-year-old stepson, and her drummer husband.

# Rebuilding Intimacy

## AFTER LIFE'S CHANGES

By Dennise Demitro, LCSW  
Namasa Therapy  
Geneva, Illinois

We often underestimate how much life reshapes us.

- Becoming a parent or experiencing postpartum.
- Losing someone.
- Navigating stress, burnout, or health changes.
- Moving through relationship transitions.

Even the “smaller” shifts, the ones that don’t come with casseroles or condolences, can alter how we feel in our own bodies and in our relationships. And intimacy, at its core, is deeply connected to both.



## Why intimacy can feel different.

There’s often a deeper reason intimacy feels harder to access, and it’s not a lack of care or desire. When your nervous system is overwhelmed, your emotional capacity is stretched, and your sense of self is shifting, connection can feel out of reach. Add in unspoken expectations or quiet resentment, and it makes sense that things feel different. Intimacy isn’t just physical. It’s rooted in emotional safety and the ability to feel truly connected.

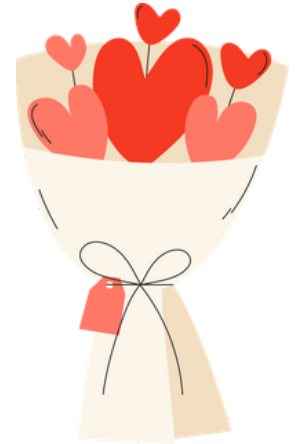
- Your nervous system may be in survival mode, not connection mode
- Emotional bandwidth is lower (you’re tired, overwhelmed, touched-out)
- Identity shifts (you’re not the same version of yourself anymore)
- Unspoken expectations or resentment can build

Intimacy = emotional safety + connection (not just physical)

# The Pressure to “Fix It”

There’s often an unspoken expectation that intimacy should “bounce back” and you should return to how things were before. But that version of you might not exist anymore. And that’s not something to fix, but something to understand.

Trying to force intimacy to look the way it once did can actually create more distance, pressure, and disconnection.



# What Helps

Reconnection doesn’t have to kick off with grand gestures. It can start small by:

- Sitting next to each other without distraction.
- Laughing at something silly.
- Holding hands.
- Being present without expectation of what comes next.

These moments rebuild emotional safety, and that’s where intimacy lives. Here are a few ways to help identify what’s changed, get reconnected with yourself, and low-pressure tips for building something new with your partner.

## Name what’s changed

You don’t have to have the “perfect words.” Try:

- “I feel different lately, and I’m trying to understand it too.”
- “I want us to feel close again, I’m just not sure how yet.”

Honesty builds more connection than pretending you’re fine.

## Reconnect with yourself

Ask yourself:

- What do I need right now?
- What feels overwhelming?
- What helps me feel grounded?

You can’t pour into intimacy if you feel disconnected from yourself.

## Start small + consistent

Think micro-moments, not grand gestures:

- 10-minute check-ins
- A hug before bed
- Sending a thoughtful text during the day

Consistency > intensity

## Let it look different

Your relationship doesn’t have to go “back” to what it was.

You’re building something new, and it can be deeper, safer, and more intentional.



# When it might be more than a phase.

Sometimes, what feels like a phase is actually your relationship asking for more support and attention. If disconnection, conflict, or discomfort has become the norm, you don't have to navigate it on your own.

Therapy can help you improve communication, process life transitions, and gently rebuild emotional and physical closeness.

## About the Author



## Dennise Demitro, LCSW Namasa Therapy Geneva, Illinois

Dennise Demitro, LCSW, believes therapy should feel like a space where you can exhale and be fully yourself. Her approach is gentle but honest, helping clients gain clarity, build resilience, and move through life's challenges with more confidence.

Dennise specializes in trauma recovery, anxiety and depression support, relationship navigation, and breaking generational patterns, creating a pace that feels safe while offering practical tools that help in real life. Using a blend of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), person-centered, and strengths-based techniques, she meets people where they are and walks alongside them as they turn struggles into something more manageable, and often, more meaningful.

*Need more support?* →

Reach out to Dennise at:

✉ [dennise@namasatherapy.com](mailto:dennise@namasatherapy.com)

📍 312 West State Street, Suite 107,  
Geneva, IL

📞 708-793-7892



# 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](http://mdwcares.com) or follow MDW on your favorite social platform @themoderndomesticwoman

Have a question or need a referral? Email us at [themoderndomesticwoman@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://mdwcares.com)

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## Donate





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