

# Joyful *Living*

Spring 2023



BY LONNIE MARTIN

Feature story  
**WOMEN IN  
BUSINESS**

Page 8



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# Creating *HOME* at Home



BY ROBIN LITTAU



**H**ome is the heartbeat of belonging. It's our primary nest of refuge in this big giant world, intended to be the root system where we are known, heard, seen, valued, accepted, taught, encouraged, celebrated, strengthened, comforted, and loved most. Enduring homes are built with laborious creative intention, from their foundational blueprints to decorative design. Our homes are the masterpieces of our lives and the greatest reflections of our hearts.

If homes contain such significance, why are we all standing in the center of a massive cultural family crisis? I believe

no one wants to fail, that we all long to succeed at the core of our souls! Due to various factors, we simply haven't been given effective tools to create and maintain the peace, comfort, connection, and belonging that we desperately want to experience. Often, we are trying to escape what needs to be confronted, ignoring what's broken, replacing our relentless determination with auto pilot responses because we don't know "how." Intentionally pursuing new patterns will create lasting change. Simple shifts will absolutely create the lasting legacies we long to experience now. It's worth the work!



I can relate to feeling parental impossibilities, especially as a divorced single mom of 4. Some seasons have felt like an endless ocean of repeat problems, surviving over the dream of thriving. But...that's not where I chose to remain. I decided to take the fuel of heartache with gripping determination and apply myself to learning how to create a home that we never needed to escape from. The one place on earth we'd know we are really loved as we are. Here are a few keys for transformation:

**1. Use the right tool: LOVE**

The love tool builds love. Love must feel like love to be love. Both parent and child confirm its love when it feels safe, kind, patient, considerate, respectful, protective, equipping and honoring. Love is a powerful tool for real change! Change starts with us parents who go first by role modeling it. I double dare us all to bravely ask every person in our homes: What's it like to live with me? What can I improve?

**2. Replicate the: HEALTHY COMMUNICATION KEY!**

Healthy communication is a main ingredient to the dish of family success! Training our tongues, hearts, and brains to prioritize love above hurt is the engine of change. Most conflict can be eradicated if we learn to speak lovingly to ourselves and others. We parents can direct family communication through the helpful filter of "I feel, I need statements," paired with compassionate active listening (repeating back what you hear). We need a resolve to communicate with an unwavering commitment to build life into those we love with our words.

**3. Effective Leadership= BUILD YOUR TEAM!**

Share responsibility! Our kids' responsibility portions should increase with their capacity levels. If they can take it out, they can put it back. If they can do something themselves, let them. Wrap every good choice with gratitude and praise! Clarifying and implementing clear expectations decreases conflict significantly! Good leaders share the massive workload to succeed! Many hands make work light.

**4. Everyone is: VALUABLE!**

Everyone in our family is precious and gets to be heard with kind consideration. Family collaboration is the way to build flourishing confidence! A simple effective tool is weekly family meetings. Intentionally honoring everyone's perspective

is an excellent crisis intervention tool to quickly calm/prevent chaos. It increases validation, listening skills, respect, patience, and value for each family member. Our family meetings are simple, about 10-15 min., everyone shares something about their week. We discuss any needs, plans, problems, or questions. Practicing this turns problematic mountains into molehills.

**5. Invest into: FUN!!**

Prioritize and schedule it! Have weekly family nights! Spend 1:1 time with each kiddo during the week to strengthen positive connection! Let yourself be playful again like a kid! Joy heals our brains. The cost is small compared to the cost of disconnection. Let's try not to overly correct negative behaviors, rather affirm what our kids are doing RIGHT! Know your kids love languages, which can be gift giving, quality time, physical touch, words of affirmation, and acts of service.

Keep in mind you're laying the foundations to a lasting legacy, teaching your kids how they will one day parent your grandkids, who will parent your great grandkids! Our greatest life gift is having opportunity to create a Home of love for our family! Today we BUILD! JL

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# Is Your Dating Relationship STRESSING You Out?



Salomé Roat is the author of *Becoming the One: One with God, One in Marriage*. She and her husband, Leon, live in California.

BY SALOMÉ ROAT

**I**s your relationship stressing you out? Is your significant other stepping on your last nerve—and maybe you don't even know why? All of us go through emotional situations with our partner, and understanding what

we're feeling in those times is a skill we have to learn. Knowing what we're feeling doesn't come naturally. Nor does our ability to express those feelings. That's one reason we can find ourselves dealing with stress or getting angry or

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afraid in our relationship.

"I can't believe you said that. That was so hurtful."

"What are you talking about? That wasn't hurtful. You're taking things the wrong way—again."

Contrary to what some people think, stress does not have to be a part of who you are and what you're doing. You don't have to stay in this situation, where you're dating someone you love but feel stressed out—and probably exhausted.

Instead, you can take certain steps and watch your relationship become better.

### Here are a few things you can do to relieve the stress in your relationship.

When Leon and I first got married, we had several communication hoops to jump through. Some of them, thank God, were resolved right away because both of us were willing to be humble and grant the other person forgiveness, as well as the benefit of the doubt.

But other communication issues were harder to deal with. We kept getting frustrated during certain conversations because it felt like the other person just didn't understand.

When we didn't or couldn't express our feelings well—and sense that the other person understood what we were trying to say—sometimes we started "acting out" in unkind ways.

When you don't know how to express yourself, stress can become a significant factor.

"Are you angry? Why are you angry?"

"I'm not angry."

"Yes, you are."

"No, I'm not. Stop nagging me. I don't like nagging."

"I'm not nagging you! See? You're mad!"

### If you aren't sure what you're feeling, take the time to figure it out.

The world doesn't enjoy waiting, and we are subtly taught not to wait for certain things. But good communication in a dating relationship requires waiting and thoughtfulness.

What is the root cause of your feelings of stress? Are you afraid or worried about something? Do you have a need that isn't being met?

### Every relationship needs communication tools.

#### So when you discover a "hole" in your communication, go find the tools you need.

Over time Leon and I learned we needed to find the right communication tools to help us express our emotions and listen well to one another.

Both of us became better at active listening. We listened on purpose and showed the other person that we really were paying attention. We offered verbal cues and engaged in the conversation, purposefully drawing them out. This kind of listening honors the person and who they are.

Humility is another excellent communication tool. It allows you to hear what your

partner is trying to say instead of getting defensive because they happen to use the wrong word or tone.

Remember, one of the most important things you can do in your relationship is listen to the other person's heart. Whatever it takes, learn to listen.

If you can learn these simple steps and how to apply them in your relationship, you will alleviate a good deal of stress, and your heart will be happier with the person you have chosen. JL

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BY LONNIE MARTIN

# WOMAN *In Business*

What a privilege and honor it is to be a business owner in a partnership. I currently am co-owner of The Railroad Park Resort in Dunsmuir Ca. Three short years ago, my husband and I took the leap, sold everything we had, bought a 42' destination trailer and a resort! I have learned so much in the time that I have been here. In addition to the never-ending list of acronyms such as POS, ROA,

PNL, NOI and so on, I have learned the more valuable lessons of how to apply experience and knowledge from previous endeavors to cultivate a desirable and profitable business model.

Culture, Consistency and Care are the three C's I focus on daily to ensure our business is running smoothly and our staff can succeed and grow in each role they are in. Many years ago, in my early 20's, I worked for Remi Vista as a Support Counselor. My supervisor at the time set the tone for the model I would use in all future business environments. He made it known with absolute certainty that he held an open-door policy for his staff. He was available to coach us in our role and give us constructive feedback or a listening ear whenever we needed this. He was the first person to present leadership as an upside-down ladder. Those at the top serve best from the bottom. We are the standard from which our culture grows, rather than lives up to. We are the springboard for success and not the bar.

I guess for me, being a "woman in business" is less about being powerful, progressive, and liberated and more about the opportunity to influence, inspire and empower the next generation of young entrepreneur's i.e., our staff.

Owning a business comes from cash investment, operating a business comes from care, and growing a business comes from culture and consistency. I am in no way a professional on the topic, but I am an excellent student and take my business cues from those around

me. Strategic plans, board meetings and finance committees are important, and at the same time, so is research. I am always watching, looking, listening, and asking how others are leading their pack and growing their business. Everyone from my high school friends that now own multi-million-dollar companies, to the owner of the local gas station who is consistently working the register alongside her staff. Every person has a strategy and secrets to success to share.

I do not have a degree in business; however, I do have a master's in psychology. One thing is for certain; A major or minor in psychology is never



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wasted in the workplace. My life has taken me on a wildly unexpected path from decades in management in senior living, to parallel decades in leadership for non-profit foster family agencies, to the medical field, to the hospitality industry. It has been higher education at its finest.

The trick of the trade for me, a woman in business, is to always hire for your personal weaknesses. Partner with people that are stronger

Those at the top serve best from the bottom.

than you in certain areas. I don't need to be the best at everything. I only need to build the best team, consult with the stronger partners, and continue to lead from the front by example, lead from behind through encouragement, lead from the side by partnership and always be willing to learn from those who's businesses have succeeded mine and grab the hand through mentorship of those coming behind. JL

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BY SARAH WIND

**W**hen was the last time you welcomed guests into your dwelling? Can you remember how long it's been since you were invited to someone's home?

If it's been a while since you've hosted or been hosted, that's not unusual. The art of hospitality seems to be rare these days.

Perhaps it's because we're too busy. Or maybe it's inconvenient and takes too much effort to invite, prepare, host, and then clean up. Perhaps we're out of practice.

There's lots of reasons to host people in our homes instead of meeting in a public place. For one, it's more intimate and fosters a sense of friendship and belonging. When we invite someone it's like opening the door to our heart. If we treat them like an honored guest, they'll leave feeling like a very important person. And if we all do this for each other, the love we give and receive will likely go around our communities in a domino effect as lives are touched.



Hospitality is more than simply offering a space to gather and food. It's more than amazing décor and soothing background music. It's loving our guests by extending kindness to them.

To help us understand how to become better hosts, let's think about examples when we were hosted well.

For me, I've felt cared about when hosts did things to prepare their home to treat me like an honored guest. That included cleaning and tidying beforehand, putting hand towels in the bathroom, arranging fresh flowers in vases, lighting candles, and setting out their good dishes and napkins. One friend even washed and dried her throw blankets so they were clean, fluffy, and warmed.

I've also appreciated when hosts have asked what foods I dislike or am allergic to. Conversely, my heart has been touched when they've gone out of their way to serve food they know I enjoy (like cheese), even when they don't eat it.

Beyond those things, I've felt seen when hosts have offered me a cup of tea or hot chocolate, an extra pair of socks to ward off the chill of a cold floor, a small gift, or an encouraging word. Additionally, it delights me when hosts are inquisitive and ask questions to learn new things about me, or simply make sure I'm not forgotten in a discussion.

In summary, the heart of hospitality means considering our guests' needs and

wants, asking good questions and listening, and serving them with joy and kindness so they feel honored and loved.

The next time you're about to suggest grabbing coffee with someone, invite them over to your place instead. Happy hosting! **JL**

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# Building *RESILIENCE* in Your *Children*



BY EMILY SCOTT, PHD

Emily Scott, PhD, is a wife, stay at home mom of three, and part time parenting consultant and blogger who has written and spoken on various parenting topics including child development, ACEs, and tips on raising responsible kids. She has lived in the Redding area her whole life, and together with her husband help parents navigate the difficult aspects of parenting at Renewed Hope Parenting. Her website is [emily@renewedhope-parenting.com](mailto:emily@renewedhope-parenting.com)

Emily Scott, PhD, is a wife, stay at home mom of three, and part time parenting consultant and blogger who has written and spoken on various parenting topics including child development, ACEs, and tips on raising responsible kids. She has lived in the Redding area her whole life, and together with her husband help parents navigate the difficult aspects of parenting at Renewed Hope Parenting. Her website is [emily@renewedhope-parenting.com](mailto:emily@renewedhope-parenting.com)

**H**elping our children deal with the stress of life and the hardships of growing up is an important responsibility we have. When our children have practice managing stress and have a strong sense of resilience, they are better equipped to handle the difficulties life with throw at them as adults. *Building resilience in them does not mean trying to toughen them up. It means working with them through struggles and being a source of loving, unconditional support.*

Here are a few ideas on how to help build resilience in our children:

## 1. **Be healthy yourself:**

We are able to overcome our past hurts and not pass those along to our children. Our past pain does not define us. Seeking medical and therapeutic help will help us overcome our past hurt. Taking care of ourselves and managing stress are important factors in our adult health. When we are healthy and less stressed, we are better and more patient parents. But even when we do our best to be the parent we want, we will still have times when we fail. Give yourself grace and learn from the experience.



**2. Allow appropriate learning experiences and stress:**

Allowing our children to fail is hard. But allowing them small, affordable failures in life will set them up for success as an adult. Children need to have practice in making decisions to form the understanding that how good their life is depends on how wise their choices are. The key here is that you are there to support them throughout the process.

**3. Provide limits:**

Although they may not seem like it, kids need limits. They need the security and to know they are cared for. Parents need to provide limits, and meet their child with loving empathy and logical, affordable consequences.

**4. Teach and model empathy:**

Children are not as capable as healthy adults to handle the release of stress hormones and their ability to manage these hormones will determine how emotionally reactive they become. Children who have difficulty managing stress or are in a constant state of stress are more likely to show the physical symptoms of stress and illness. A child looks to their parent or loved one for cues on how to handle life, so it is important for us to model loving empathy. Parents can easily become frustrated with their children, and this is the best chance for us to model how to effectively and appropriately handle stress and frustration.

**5. Help them cope:**

Children are very vulnerable to traumatic stress, abuse, and life hardships. When adults are able to reframe how we view a stressful situation, we are able to handle our reaction to stress hormones and overcome it. Children, however, are too young to do this. They see stressful and scary situations as life and death. We cannot prevent some of life's inevitable stressors, but we can walk with our child through them. As much as we may want to, we shouldn't walk between them and the world, but instead walk next to them. Showing our children how to deal with sadness and grief and standing by their side when things are hard can show them the world isn't as scary as it may seem. They will feel loved and cared for.

**6. Communicate with them:**

Life gets full it can be hard to spend the time we need just talking with our kids. But taking that extra time to love on them and have conversations helps them to feel safe and loved.

**7. Compassion:**

When we meet our children with anger or frustration we create a relationship of hurt. If our child thinks their problems or confessions will be met with anger, I doubt they will want to share much with us. Showing them love, compassion, and empathy sets their minds up to listen and share.

**8. Show them unconditional love:**

Our love for our children should not be based on their choices or achievements. Love them through failures. Love them through sad choices. Love them through heartache. Love them through temper tantrums and meltdowns. Love them through bad grades. Many of these things are temporary. Your relationship with them is eternal. **JL**



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BY DR. CAROL WERTZ

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**Dear Dr. Carol,**

**Last time you talked about the high rate of depression and anxiety among our young people. Do you have some ideas for what we parents can be doing at home to help them?**

*L.S.*

I love this question. It shows an awareness that what we do at home really CAN make a difference. While we may send our children to school, the fact is that parents are the first and possibly the most influential teachers in their children's lives.

Much of what children deal with is related to identity. "Who am I, am I important, do I matter, what do others think of me, where am I going, how do I fit in", etc.? As a parent, it's very important that you help your children see their positive character qualities and how those particular attributes will help them in their lives. Qualities such as kindness, helpfulness, determination, or even being friendly, calm or

cheerful are virtues to be recognized and valued.

Deliberately point these out and let your child know how these qualities can be used to influence others.

Taking another look at that list of questions, do you notice that each one is focused on "me"? While that's natural for little ones, awareness of, and consideration for others should increase as children begin to mature. Help your children to see areas of need and to focus on how they might serve others. It's true for all of us - learning how our particular talents and attributes can contribute to society helps us see purpose beyond ourselves and is crucial to forming a healthy and realistic identity.



Thirdly, since it has been shown that anxiety and depression are linked very closely with the amount of time young people spend on social media sites, I decided to ask the director of the Center for Online Safety for advice. She is certain that much of our teens' anxiety would disappear if social media would be responsible enough to allow children to have access to appropriate content that is safe for them.

With her permission, I want to briefly share her FAMILY acronym, known as the Five Circles of Safety. "Filter" the internet, "Align" with your values, "Monitor" what your child is doing, "Interact" with your child about what interests him/her online, and "Look" at what they're doing. Please visit her site for a more detailed explanation of each of these, as well as a plethora of other resources to help you keep your kiddos safe online. <https://www.centerforonlinesafety.com/blog/5circles>

Each one of these three areas is worthy of more discussion and ideas. I'd love to hear your feedback and write more on this next time.

The "Y" (why) of all this? Because our children are precious gifts from the Lord and He desires to equip us with the wisdom we need to help them know who He has created them to be. **JL**

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# Forming **FAMILY** around our **HOMELESS NEIGHBORS**

“When I was younger, I had a doctor that told me I had something that nobody could measure— and that was heart,” says Michael Williamson, a formerly homeless Redding citizen.

Michael would need that heart to make it through one loss after another: his home (due to high rental costs), his local business, his marriage and custody of his children. He would need that heart to make it through the seven years of homelessness and subsequent alcoholism that followed.

Society’s measures of success became shockingly unattainable for Michael.

“Being out there, it’s hopeless—you feel desperation, you feel no sense of belonging, there’s never a moment of peace. It’s painful and it hurts the soul because it feels like nobody cares,” he reflects.

It was this tender heart, hidden under the tattered displays of homelessness, that we discovered dwelling in a homeless encampment. Despite his painful circumstances, the heart of a gentle and kind person was what was shining through his infectious smile. We discovered a leader of hope among those who were also navigating homelessness alongside him.



Alfred Cellador, felt called to do something about what he witnessed on the streets of Redding, and went out with Shasta Thrive’s, Paul Abbott, to befriend folks at the encampment. When he met Michael, it was an instant connection over humor and their shared service in forest fire fighting.

Over the course of their friendship, Michael began to trust the wisdom and guidance of his new friends who saw something more for his life, and agreed to begin recovery at Visions of the Cross in Redding.

It was in this process that Michael began to heal and discover his purpose. Cellador was there every step of the way, cheering him on, laughing at each other’s jokes and pointing him to Truth. Shasta Thrive was there to support the pair, as they ventured into this new territory together.

“You have to have people who listen to your pain and your hopes, dreams and goals. Without those things, you have no role to play, you have no fulfillment, and without fulfillment, what are we living for?” remarks Michael.

Michael graduated from the program and is now part of a healthy community of people who continue to cheer him on.



Jess Luoma is a wife & mom of two kids. She is passionate about remembering the poor through her writing, music, homesteading, and lifestyle of compassion, and the Communications Manager at Shasta Thrive.

BY JESS LUOMA

We discovered a leader of hope among those who were also navigating homelessness alongside him.



He is a lead advocate for Shasta Thrive and a voice for hope for those who are still experiencing homelessness and the hardships of addiction and trauma.

These four steps, though simple, are impossible without the hand-up of new friends. They are the model we use to see our friends, who are often born and raised in the area, to go from homelessness camps to recovery to transitional housing to permanent homes in the context of a new community. This is where we find hope.

Contrary to local belief, the roots of homelessness are found in the breakdown of nuclear families, often involving neglect, open drug-use in the home, and abuse. These painful experiences are often medicated by the relief found in addiction. It's not a drug problem we face, it's a pain problem— a longing for identity and meaningful relationships.

We recognize that simply passing out a meal is not enough & even prolongs their homelessness. The real need is long-term friendship like that of Alfred and Michael— an empowering relationship that builds both people. Sharing a meal begins to take on a whole different meaning.

“I've cried watching people suffer and the suffering continues. I used that heart to know the difference between what's right and wrong. If you know what's wrong and you don't try to fix it, then you're a part of the problem,” says Michael.

We invite you to be a part of the solution as we join hands with those who, like Alfred, feel a stirring in their heart, to make a difference. Our Advocates for Community Network (ACN) is a place to take part in the unity we are creating among the church and organizations who want to show that they, too, care. Take part in the ACN, shastathrive.org. JL



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# Healthy Strawberry Shortcake



BY SUSAN U. NEAL  
RN, MBA, MHS

Susan U. Neal, RN, MBA, MHS, is an author, speaker, and certified health and wellness coach whose background in nursing and health services led her to seek new ways to educate and coach

others to overcome health challenges. Check out her award-winning best-seller *7 Steps to Get Off Sugar and Carbohydrates* at [SusanUNeal.com](http://SusanUNeal.com).

## SHORTCAKE

1 1/2 cup of almond flour  
2/3 cup gluten-free oat flour  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
2 tablespoons maple syrup  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1/2 cup coconut oil, solid  
1/3 cup canned coconut milk  
One egg

## STRAWBERRIES

2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced  
1 tablespoon coconut sugar (optional)  
Zest of 1 lemon

## WHIPPED COCONUT CREAM

1 can of coconut cream, refrigerated  
1 tablespoon maple syrup  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract



In a large mixing bowl combine the first five ingredients. Add the coconut oil and use a pastry cutter to combine with the dry ingredients until only small chunks of coconut oil remain.

In a separate bowl whisk the coconut milk and egg. Add it to the dry ingredients and combine. Refrigerator dough for one hour until chilled.

Preheat the oven to 400°. Roll out the dough with a rolling pin to flatten. Cut dough into squares the size of cookies. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 20 to 25 minutes.

Combine the sliced strawberries with the coconut sugar, vanilla, and lemon zest.

Drain the liquid from the can of coconut cream. Place the coconut cream into a bowl and blend with a mixer that has a whisk attachment. Whisk until smooth and fluffy about 30 seconds or so. Add the maple syrup and vanilla and blend.

After the shortbread has cooled, top with whipped cream and strawberries. Yum!

You can find more healthy living ideas at [SusanUNeal.com](http://SusanUNeal.com). JL





BY HERMELINDA SIMON

# WE ALL NEED SOMEONE TO LEAN ON

**E**ver try to do something that you thought you couldn't do? This time last year some of my best friends and I thought it would be a good idea to do the YMCA stair climb in one of the tallest buildings in Los Angeles. Sounds easy enough, right? Wrong!

We wouldn't be climbing just 10 flights of stairs but 75 flights of stairs!

As my friends were asking me if I wanted to sign up to do the stair climb, I thought, "There is no way that I can do that! I get tired just going up my one flight of stairs!" They encouraged me to do it and said that we would do it together and that we would be raising money for a good cause.

The more I thought about it the more I thought I need to do this. Not only to help the kids at YMCA but to push myself and do something with and for somebody else.

The day had finally come for the stair climb. I am not going to lie - I was really nervous. I had images of myself fainting, throwing up or not being able to finish. We started to walk up the first flight of stairs, then the second flight, third, fourth and so on. The five of us girls were encouraging each other every step of the way. When one would get tired we would take a break, drink some water and continue to move. Volunteers were encouraging us on every flight of stairs and strangers began to encourage each other too.

Have you ever tried to do life alone? If you have then you know that it can be pretty boring. There was no way that I would have finished the stair climb if my friends weren't there encouraging me. They encouraged me when I wanted to give up. They gave me the motivation to keep going. They never left me for a second and we were able to celebrate because we finished something together!

Sometimes life can feel like going up 75 flights of stairs. You may feel like you're not going to make it and you want to give up. Make sure to surround yourself with people who will encourage you, challenge you and be there with



you until you cross the finish line.

God clearly says in the Bible that we need each other. We were not meant to do life alone! We need each other.

I am so happy that God has blessed me with friends who are not only there for me in the good times but they are also there for me when life gets hard.

They encourage me to not give up, to keep going and they push me to be who God has created me to be! As the familiar song says, "We all need somebody to lean on."

Thank you to Tanya, Kim, Andrea and Val! Thank you for pushing me and helping me accomplish something that I thought I could never do. Your encouragement

helped me to cross the finish line and for that I am so thankful! Love you girls!! JL



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# Tips for *Transforming* Your “Midlife Crisis” Into an Enriching Experience

BY IVY CRAWFORD



Photo Credit: Pexels.com

Ivy Crawford is a graphic designer and artist. After several years with a major marketing firm, she recently started her own graphic design business. She is enjoying getting to work more closely with her clients, building relationships with other creatives, and learning the ins and outs and ups and downs of running her own business. She started Creative Home Biz to share all the business advice she is finding helpful along the way.

**T**he term “midlife crisis” has a lot of negative connotations. However, entering middle age doesn’t have to be cause for a crisis. Instead, consider taking this opportunity to reshape your life in a way that makes you happier and healthier. There are many practical steps you can take to enhance positivity and find inspiration as you enter middle age. The below guide provides some ideas to help you make the most of middle age.

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## Revamp your home to make it a space you love

If you find that you aren’t loving your home in middle age, it’s definitely time to make a change. Future Proof notes that many people prefer calmer environments as they get older, for example, so you may want to switch from an urban to a suburban location. Additionally, there are smaller steps you can take at home to make your place cozier, like adding throw blankets and investing in a comfy couch.

## Seize control of your physical well-being

You will likely notice that your body changes as you get older. For example, you may lose muscle mass more easily and gain fat more quickly. This is a good time to take control of your health by eating nutritiously and incorporating a regular exercise routine into your day-to-day life. The key to success is to pick a type of exercise you truly enjoy. There are many fun ways to move more in midlife, from water aerobics to boxing.



### Give your mental health the attention it deserves

Mental health is also a major concern for people in midlife. First, learn to recognize signs that you're experiencing a "midlife crisis," such as feelings of sadness, a lack of confidence, and boredom. Then, make a plan to tackle these feelings. You may want to try practices like meditation to combat stress, for example, and talk to a mental health professional about issues like anxiety and depression.

### Revisit your current career path

If you're looking to find a more fulfilling job, one of the best places to start is by focusing on your resume. A well-crafted resume can open a world of possibilities and be the key to unlocking just the right fit for your skills and ambition. When done right, it can make all the difference between having potential employers interested in learning more about you and slipping through the cracks.

### Start a business

If you aren't satisfied with your job, you might want to start your own business. Founding a limited liability company, LLC, offers tax perks and streamlined paperwork. Check your state's LLC rules before proceeding and learn how to start an LLC in California. A business formation service can help take care of the paperwork.

### Find a new hobby and learn something new

Learning new skills is valuable at any age. Midlife is a great time to indulge in new hobbies and nurture new interests. Possibilities range from creative pastimes like painting to making music. If you find something you love, you might continue it for the rest of your life. A hobby can also be a fun way to meet new people. For example, if you pick up an instrument, you might play in a band or orchestra. Another option is to start a garden—visit *Home Garden Hero* for expert tips and advice.

### Give more attention to your social life

As people get older, they tend to have more to do, from caring for kids to juggling careers. This can make it easy to let friends fall by the wayside. Midlife is a great time to reconnect with old classmates and colleagues and reinvigorate your social life. Research suggests that friends are especially important as people get older, helping to minimize the risk of isolation and loneliness. Investing in your friendships now will pay off later.

### Consider relocating

Relocating during a midlife crisis can be an incredibly liberating experience. Moving to a new place gives you the opportunity for a fresh start and the chance to break away from routines and environments that no longer suit or motivate you. Taking on the challenge of adapting yourself to a new culture and lifestyle could also boost your self-confidence, help you build resilience and further develop your self-awareness. If you need to sell your home, consider local real estate conditions, make necessary repairs, and improve your curb appeal.

The concept of a midlife "crisis" is pretty outdated. You don't have to hit a wall at this point in your life. In fact, it can be a wonderful time to try new things, from starting a company to reinvigorating old friendships to selling your home and relocating. Get inspired by the above ideas.

Visit *Joyful Living Magazine* for unique and inspiring articles that bring hope and positivity. **JL**

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# HOW TO TRULY *love* YOURSELF



BY LIZ FLAHERTY

Liz lives in South Carolina with her husband Andy. They've been married since 2005, and have spent the majority of their marriage ministering to and mentoring people in areas of sexual wholeness and identity. She wrote a book on the subjects, *The God of My Parents*. Further information can be found on her website [www.lizgflaherty.com](http://www.lizgflaherty.com).

**M**any would define “self-love” or “loving yourself” as following your truest values. In our culture, people are continually asking themselves, *am I experiencing all that my values have to offer me?* In this line of thinking, building an ideal or perfect self-image is my focus when I am truly “loving myself” well.



The heart is the epicenter of all that is able to experience God. Self-love centers around finding our truest identity in serving others then self-confidence in your own abilities and gifting, roles in family life and titles have nothing to do with self-love. And if the pursuit of values, which are tied to achieving, are not involved with the true definition of self-love, then loving yourself as you love your neighbor takes on new meaning.

Love is not a position of greatness over another. Loving your neighbor as yourself is an equal opportunity. We come to the table as both dependents on one provider. This means that to the measure I put energy into seeking my own self-love, this is the measure in which I am required to love others.

Some of the people I know do not esteem themselves very highly. It's not like they walk around carrying around false humility. These people simply concern themselves with the welfare of others as much as their own.

"True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." C.S. Lewis

I regularly help people in the areas of hopelessness, depression, sexual brokenness, drug abuse, relational issues, etc. One common belief that I see hold others back from true freedom is the notion that "I must get better for myself, which is a belief so prominent in our culture. Ultimately, this belief produces patterns of self-absorption that only perpetuate these issues. Freedom is a love relationship that cannot start with me.

This leads to my final point, which is that many people continue in areas of defeat because they are afraid of sacrificial love. They are afraid of pain and being without the familiar. They are afraid of losing the comfort and protection of self-centeredness. Who will take care of me if I stop

The greatest thing about self-love is that this love is given away – so no one loses.

focusing on my pain or needs? I totally get that, especially when you truly have experienced a lot of trauma in your life. However, the way out of misery is not found in yourself. It will require you to lay down your life for another.

The greatest thing about self-love is that this love is given away – so no one loses. No one goes without. No

one is abandoned. Self-sacrificial love is embodied in a healthy centered community that prefers each other over themselves and watches to see opportunities where we can support and call out the Godly image each of us carry. JL

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**ED TOOLEY**

Edward Tooley has had numerous articles published about education, adolescence, parenting, creation, and Christian Living. His work has also been featured in the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series.

Edward's first book for children, *Rounding Third and Headed for Home*, is written in rhyme and is based on a true story of perseverance.

**A**s I was leaving church, a friend asked me what I thought of the lesson. I quickly went into a lengthy diatribe about the lesson's numerous shortcomings. A good thing that it was lunch time because I had worked quite an



When we meet people with a positive outlook they fill our souls the same way meat satisfies our hunger and appetite.

appetite after all my intense belly aching. Henry paused for moment before making a statement that has stayed with me for a lifetime. Henry said that if I wanted to live a fuller and healthier life, it would be better to **keep the meat and leave the bones**.

After hearing these words, it was as if time stood still. I suddenly stopped in my tracks to process what Henry just said. I was able to quickly discern what he was actually saying. Henry was encouraging me to focus more on the positive rather than on the negative, but the way that Henry worded it seemed to accentuate this sentiment in a much more poetic and profound manner. Rather than focus on the weak aspects of the lesson, it would have been more beneficial to zero in on the more helpful content. In other words, live life where your glass is half full rather than it continually being half empty.

I think Henry had it about right concerning the benefits of having a positive outlook on life. Those who study and research this topic have made some rather startling discoveries. People that concentrate on the positive are more likely to have fewer physical and emotional problems. Their stress levels are lower and they are able to handle problems that come their way more readily. Research also indicates that positive people make better first impressions which enables them to have more friends along with greater successes in life. Studies show that people are drawn to those that have a cheery disposition which enables them to interact positively in a wide variety of situations. One benefit that brought a smile to my face stated that those who have a pleasant attitude are also more attractive. Debbie Downer can better project her beauty just by turning that frown into a smile.

This journey called life gives us the daily opportunity to encounter various types of people. When we meet people with a positive outlook they fill our souls the same way meat satisfies our hunger and appetite. Those with a cheerful disposition fills our emotional appetite and attitudes. Coming in contact with those who focus on the bones seems to take the joy and energy out of life. Their half empty glasses seem to drain the energy out of those who have fuller glasses. We have a choice each day about the attitude that we are going to share with others. Is it going to include some tasty, juicy, and yummy meat that makes people want more? Or are we going to dole out a bunch of empty, disappointing, and forgettable bones and finish it off with a glass half empty of water? I prefer the former and look forward to dining with you while chowing down on a memorable meaty meal with our glasses overflowing. **JL**



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BY KRIS VALLOTTON

# 4 Keys *for a* ***THRIVING*** Family

**M**y son Jason says, “I have often had problems bigger than me, but I have never had a problem bigger than my family.” As his father that’s one of the most powerful and encouraging things to hear, and if you don’t know Jason’s story I can promise you he’s not saying that lightly.

Today I want to continue our conversation on the blog about healthy marriages and healthy family. In case you missed it, I recently wrote about the importance of having a healthy marriage as a foundation for a healthy family. Now let’s take a look a little further into what makes a family click, whether

that be in a marriage or with your children or siblings. Here are four of my favorite keys for a thriving family:

**1) Communication—the real, honest and respectful kind.**

Let me start by saying that the goal of great communication is not agreement, but rather it is understanding one another. If the objective of the communication is to win the argument, (to be right), it is impossible to reconcile the relationship. Communication, by its very nature cannot have a loser and a winner; it can only have two winners.



One of the main goals of a healthy family is to create a safe place to listen and be heard. I don't just mean listening with your ears and then continuing with what you want to say. Not at all! I mean listening from the heart, not the head. Beyond listening, it's important to create a family culture where you share your feeling not just what you are thinking. "Don't be a fool who only wants to share your mind. Rather, listen with intentionality, ask questions to get clarity, and make sure the other person feels heard and understood. I'm also not saying that understanding means agreement! You can't base success in conflict on agreement, or you will manipulate each other into thinking the same thing! Understanding means I see you, I hear you, I empathize with you, and I want to help you.

**2) Connection—meaning you have a heart to heart bond that renders you inseparable.**

This goes back to choosing each other, every day. And in troubled times, reassure your loved one that your commitment to them is unwavering. Fostering your connection means meeting each other's needs and intentionally choosing to meet them in their passions, instead of just your own. Your connection needs to be protected. A lot of people will punish their family (even if they wouldn't call it punishment, it really is) by disconnecting when they're hurt. Think about giving someone the cold shoulder—that is a proactive way to disconnect and punish others. That's no way to help people feel safe and valued in your relationship! Remember, love covers a multitude of sins.

**3) Trust—the foundation of every relationship.**

A person's word is their bond, and we must do everything in our power to fulfill our vows. If you can't trust each other in family, you'll never feel safe or released to be fully free and vulnerable in the relationship. So how do you build trust? You choose honesty, which is truth in action. Honesty is not only the best policy but it's the only policy in family. And while we're on the subject, withholding information is deception! Particularly in a marriage, a husband and wife relationship is a full disclosure relationship. Anything less is a cracked foundation and keeping secrets about money, sex, relationships, or opinions about important subjects destroys trust.

**4) Consistency—where your repetition is your reputation.**

This applies in marriage where it's your responsibility to consistently show up in the relationship. It's always better to under-promise and over-deliver so that the people in your life know that when you say

you're going to do something, they can count on you to do it. This also applies in parenting and specifically in discipline. Discipline is not punishment. Discipline says, "I love you too much to let you continue to have that attitude." Children must be able to count on your consistent response every time. Beyond that, the husband and wife need to have a united front when dealing with their children. Parents must not paint the other spouse as the bad guy, or have mistimed mercy. **JL**

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# Just Call Me AWESOME

BY MONICA CANE

I picked up my three-year-old grandson Kayleb from his preschool yesterday. I was in “Mimi” heaven as I walked into his classroom and spotted his precious little smiling face amongst the many beautiful children running around in a hurry to put away their toys as they prepared for lunch time. As soon as he saw me, Kayleb quickly scooted around various boys and girls and once he reached me, he explained what was going on in the classroom, just in case I didn’t know.

“I’m about to eat lunch Mimi” he stated in a way that let me know this was an important part of his day.

“That’s great sweetie!” I replied. Then I leaned towards him to tell him something that I thought he might consider equally important. I didn’t want the other children to hear what I was about to say, just in case it caused some-sort of preschool uproar so I whispered. “You can eat lunch here or I can take you to Go Banana’s and we can eat there.”

Go Banana’s is like the Disney Land of Lathrop with its slides and Jumpy Houses. Just the idea of it makes most kids go bananas themselves. Upon mentioning this magical place, my grandson’s eyes grew as big as saucers. He took off at lightning speed toward his cubby to grab his jacket, back-pack, gloves and library books so we could hurry up and get the heck out of his classroom. Who needs lunch anyways?

Taking my hand in his, Kayleb had us out the pre-school door, power walking through the school yard and marching down the street toward my car which was parked much too far for his super excited self. Yet the distance gave us a little time to talk.

We chatted about important preschool things like letters, numbers, colors and friends. Somewhere in the midst of the conversation I mentioned that he was very smart and that I

should call him Smart Kayleb. He liked that idea but had a better one in which he was quick to inform me.

“Oh you can call me Awesome” he announced.

I chuckled inwardly and then to confirm asked, “So I should call you, Awesome Kayleb?”

In which he responded with complete seriousness, “No, just call me... Awesome”



I couldn’t help but let out a hardy laugh. He was so sincere about wanting me to call him Awesome. Clearly, at that moment, he didn’t believe the name Kayleb accurately described who he was. No, without any doubt or conceit he believed he was 100% Awesome and felt it was appropriate for his Mimi to call him as such.

I was grinning ear to ear as we reached my car. I put my key in the lock, opened the door and said, “Okay Awesome, hop on in.” And with a very satisfied look on his face, Kayleb did just that.

We made our way to Go Banana’s and had a blast playing on the slides and goofing off together then came home and ate PB&J’s.

At the end of the day, when we gave hugs and kisses until next time, I couldn’t help but reflect on his words, “Just call me Awesome.”

What a perfect application of Proverbs 23:7 “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” In my grandson’s heart and mind he is

Awesome (naturally I agree). He chose to think it, he chose to speak it, and therefore, so is he.

I know we don’t always feel 100% Awesome every day. We may even feel 100% Un-Awesome more than we would like to admit but God has given each of us the ability to rise above our feelings and choose to think of ourselves the way He does. Despite our actions at times, we are Awesome! What a difference it will make in your life when you start thinking it, speaking it and believing it. For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. JL



# Doctor's Orders

## The Top 5 Side Effects of Exercise

**Y**our doctor feels like a broken record. That's right - he's (Could be he or she, I'm using he for brevity!) sick and tired of telling you how important exercise is to your health because YOU DON'T LISTEN.

He's sick of explaining how so many of your health problems will improve or even disappear as the result of a consistent exercise program.



He's tired of tallying your controllable risk factors which include physical inactivity and obesity.

So why does he continue to give you the same lecture?

Because he's seen exercise change lives.

He's even seen exercise save lives.

### A DOCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Dr. David Shilling MD has been a family doctor for over 30 years. In that time he's given a fair number of patients the exercise lecture...with good cause.

He's seen firsthand the healing power of exercise.

Exactly what kind of healing? Dr. Shilling shared the top 5 benefits that he's seen patients experience as a result of exercise...

**1. Feel Great:** The first thing that patients tell Dr. Shilling after starting an exercise program is how much better they feel. "People don't realize how bad they feel. They get used to feeling bad. Then when they start exercising they feel so much better."

Your energy levels boost and you feel great.

**2. Pain Be Gone:** Next patients notice a reduction in aches and pains. Chronic muscle and joint pain that they've lived with for years begins to fade. For some, joint replacement surgery is postponed. For others, arthritis pain is reduced.

Your muscles and joints feel better than ever.

**3. Goodbye Coronary Heart Disease:** While patients can't feel this healing benefit of exercise, it is the one that saves lives. Exercise removes two of the major risk factors that lead to heart disease: 1) physical inactivity and 2) obesity. Exercise also increases your good cholesterol (HDL) and lowers your blood pressure.

Your risk of heart attack or stroke is reduced.

**4. Goodbye Type 2 Diabetes:** Patients with type 2 diabetes gain substantial benefits from exercise. Exercise improves the body's use of insulin, and the related excess bodyfat loss improves insulin sensitivity. Of course patients with type 2 diabetes need to get guidelines from their doctor before starting an exercise program.

Your blood sugar levels are better controlled.

**5. Goodbye Sleep Apnea:** Patients with sleep apnea are often caught in a destructive cycle. Their weight promotes occurrences of apnea then inadequate sleep promotes bodyfat weight gain. Dr. Shilling has seen exercise break this cycle.

Your sleep becomes restful and weight loss becomes easier.

With all of these benefits it's hard to see why anyone would avoid exercise. What's your excuse?

- I know you're tired...exercise gives you energy.
- I know you're in pain...exercise alleviates your muscle and joint pain.
- I know you'd rather stay in bed...exercise makes your sleep more restful.
- I know you're pressed for time...exercise improves your efficiency and extends your life.
- I know you don't know where to start...that's where I come in. **JL**

# Let us help you start your road to recovery today!



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