

Inspiring women

MEET

KATIE IRK

MORE THAN JUST
MISS AMERICA | *PG. 06*

FINDING YOUR VOICE

TIPS FOR COMMANDING
A ROOM | *PG. 22*

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

HOW TO FOCUS ON WHAT'S
HAPPENING IN THE HERE
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 **Franciscan**
HEALTH

DON'T QUIT
YOUR DAY JOB...

YET!

CARVING OUT
TIME FOR CREATIVE
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Letter *from* Franciscan

Hello!

Welcome to the first issue of *Inspiring Women!* Franciscan Health is thrilled to bring you this magazine as an integral part of our Inspiring Women campaign. Online or in print, it's filled with interactive content curated just for you: editorials, infographics, interviews, recipes and devotionals all telling it like it is girlfriend-to-girlfriend style. From health screenings and life hacks to encouraging moments and "Hey, what's for dinner?" inspiration, we envision this community as a place to learn from and lean on one another.

Women are fueled by limitless strength and courage. This challenging season of life amps that sentiment to new heights. Trying to figure out how to stay more in the moment? Be sure to check out our editorial "Living in the Present" for a few tips on quieting the noise and being right here, right now.

We live in unique times, and for some, that means the epiphany that it may be time to trade in a paycheck for the pursuit of a passion. "Don't Quit Your Day Job—Yet!" speaks to those ready to reshuffle their career deck or make their daydream a daily reality. Among other stories and pieces, you'll find weekday breakfast recipes and simple fixes for meal time that are perfect for this season of growth.

We're so happy you're here with us! Get ready to be inspired.



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IT'S NOT EASY TO LOVE OTHERS.

A Deeper Love

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:37 - 39 (NIV)

There's a reason Jesus frames these as commandments one and two in a list of ten. If we aren't deeply rooted in our love for God first, how could we possibly move on to love anyone else with a fraction of the unconditional love He showers upon us? Believe in the love God has for you. Ground yourself in that truth and let it shape you into a person who loves others.

The Bible doesn't say:

"Love your neighbor because they're exactly like you."

"Love your neighbor when you feel like it."

We're absolutely undeserving of God's love, yet we know the lengths He went to prove He cares deeply for us. He sent His only son to take on our pain, sins and regrets. Talk about sacrificing something of great cost. When you can confidently stand firm in God's love for you, spread it around to others. It won't always come easily. Jesus didn't request this with a "pretty please." Loving our neighbors near and far, regardless of our differences, is what we're commanded to do.

Hello, my name is...

Navigating our identities in an ever-shifting world

Have you ever paused and considered the power of a name, what it means or what yours represents? That question may seem odd since many of us in this Inspiring Women community are just getting acquainted. Yet if this is a place to be real and authentic, is there a better way to begin than with something so fundamental to who we are?

Katie Trk



My name is Katie. Not Katherine as many would assume—just Katie. To those of you I'm meeting for the first time, I'm honored and thrilled to get to know you. Some may know me as Miss Indiana 2008, Miss America 2009 or the lady at the supermarket who holds up the line with her overflowing cart of groceries but always a reasonable amount of toilet paper—thanks 2020! Yep, that's me. I'm a wife, mom, career woman, book nerd, lover of Jesus and thirty-something-year-old who is in deep pursuit of figuring out this crazy thing called life.

Now, let me introduce you to what Inspiring Women is all about—real and honest conversations between friends tackling all topics mind, body and spirit. I'm so happy you're along for this ride. I know we'll share some laughs, tears and lessons along the way. I want you to know the topics we tackle are things I've either walked through or am trying to figure out myself. Some of you may be in the midst of a battle or rejoicing on the other side. We're all in this together. It's going to be an amazing journey.

Let's start this initial conversation with full transparency: The reason this editorial asks if you've ever considered what a name means is because it's centered on my personal, life-long struggle with identity and quest to figure out who I am. It has not been a simple revelation but a daring expedition full of adventure with high peaks, low valleys and a lot of getting lost along the way. I have a feeling I'm not alone, am I?

Growing up, I was "Mr. and Mrs. Stams' daughter." My identity was entwined with my mom and dad's. I grew up in the close-knit community of Seymour, Indiana, where both of my parents are educators. Almost everyone in my hometown had one—or both of them—as teachers. Everyone "knew" me because they knew my parents.

“Some of you may be in the midst of a battle or rejoicing on the other side. We're all in this together.

It's going to be an amazing journey.”

On the night of January 24, 2009, at the age of 22, I became Miss America, and my parents became "Katie's mom and dad." And in an ironic twist, I was no longer known as Katie or Mr. and Mrs. Stams' daughter. I was Miss America. Unlike all the identifiers I had previously been called, this was not a name that was chosen for me but rather one I was chosen for. This new name was entrusted to me and wasn't solely mine. "Miss America" was shaped by the gracious and exemplary women who answered to it before me. This moniker continues evolving with each young woman after me. It took awhile for me to realize that something deep and very personal happened the moment I was renamed. Inside, I began clinging to Katie: the dairy-farming girl from the Midwest who had vivid dreams to pursue both the possible and impossible. Outside, I set out to be the Miss America everyone expected me to be. She was tasked with seeking and embodying perfection while forfeiting the humanness of Katie.



Performing my talent, singing *Via Dolorosa*, during the 2009 pageant



Over the course of the next 12 months, I spoke to millions about the value of community service, raised funds for children's hospitals, advocated for ill children and honored our military servicemen and women. All of this while changing locations every 18-24 hours, traveling more than 20,000 miles every month, living out of two suitcases and washing my clothes—by hand—in my hotel bathtub. Just when I adapted to this new “routine,” another immediate shift happened: I came home. The crown now graced someone else's head, and I was handed a plane ticket to return to Indiana and thrust into yet another new role. Touching down in the Hoosier state, I found myself literally and figuratively without a place to call home. The name I had embodied for the past year was now entrusted to someone else. No longer Miss America, not just Katie anymore, I wondered who I was and where I belonged.



Me with Charlotte, Wrigley and Rose

So much has happened in the 13 years since I came back to Indiana. I got married, started a family and carved out professional and personal lives I'm proud of. Yet I remain caught in this tension of identity. Am I Katie, Miss America 2009? Should people call me Mrs. Irk? Charlotte, Wrigley and Rose's mom? Am I more than a director of marketing and communications? An author? Business owner? I go by and identify with many names. Each is genuine and true. However, this leads me to an important epiphany: Why is it so easy for us to wrap our internal identity into our external identification? In other words, why do we believe who we are stems from what we do?

It's simple...because the world wants us to. When I tell people I'm a mom, they instinctively and subconsciously put me in the "mom box," a tidy little place where the other moms they know live. Inside this box, moms are categorized and labeled with a certain standard of thoughts, habits, characteristics and personality traits. Before getting to truly know me, people have already made several assumptions about me because certainties make us feel safe. Some of these assumptions probably include always being exhausted, addicted to coffee and obsessed with the notion of hours-long, kids-free trips to Target. Here's the thing: These may be true (and for me, they are), but it's far from an accurate description of who I am. It all comes down to this very real awakening: If we shape our identity around how the world wants to view us, we will never truly know who we are.

Your identity goes far beyond what you do, what you have done or any title you've held. No action or name can carry the weight of your value.

It's time to set yourself free. It doesn't matter how the world views me because I don't belong to the world. Spoiler alert: neither do you. We belong to the Creator. If only we could see ourselves through His lens, we would grasp that we were created on purpose for a purpose. We would embrace that we are not just the sum of our successes and failures. We would believe that what we do could never determine our worthiness.

“
*If we shape our
identity around how the
world wants to view us,
we will never truly
know who we are.*”



What does it all come down to, friends? Validation. Seeking approval from others is a false sense of security that will never satisfy our souls nor provide unconditional acceptance and love. Is it wonderful to hear gratitude and praise? Absolutely! Yet I want you to keep this truth in mind: No matter how we stretch or pull ourselves into what we perceive the world wants us to be, we will never fit in or belong. We were never meant to.

We learn and internalize the urgency to fit a shape, mold or idea because the world tells us that's what we should do. It wants us to play the popularity game because being "liked" means we're special. This can all manifest into yearning to be relevant, constantly needing to prove ourselves and infinitely pursuing affirmation from others that aren't God.

Seeking to prove our worthiness is a slippery slope. It can become a false idol when our efforts are to persuade others of our "specialness." We cannot control how others perceive us and never will. Imagine the influence and impact we could have in our corners of the world when we no longer give energy to what drains us of confidence and self-clarity. Can you feel the freedom in that? What an example we could set for our daughters, sons and sisters when they see us seeking to know God above all else and finding our identity in Him.

Allow me to bring this full circle. Earlier, I spoke about our name being fundamental to who we are. Jeremiah 1:5 (NIV) reads, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Isaiah 43:1 (NIV) states, "...Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine." God knows us. He has always known us. He claims us as His own and has given us His name. He knows our deepest hurts and greatest triumphs and welcomes us to come to Him just as we are: the way He created us to be. God thinks we are so special that He sent His only Son to die for us so we could spend eternity with Him. These truths should remove the desire to be relevant to the world, yet I know it's not easy, I really do. Think of it this way: The world knows your name but calls you out by your faults.

The Lord knows your faults and still calls out to you by name. He calls me Katie, blessed daughter, faithful servant and His chosen one.

This is me. This is you too.

Knowing yourself—embracing yourself—rather than seeking others' definitions or permissions sets you free! The Lord has released the shackles. I am letting go of the woman others expect me to be and am leaning into who God says I am. I want to challenge you to think not only of who you are but whose you are. Choose that as your true identity. Singer Matthew West has written lyrics that sum it up better than I ever could. In Matthew's song, "Hello, My Name Is," he belts out confirmation that each one of us is called Child of the One True King. Could we ever hope for a better name than that?



THE STRENGTH OF OUR SCARS

*the marks that identify
our courage*

Perhaps it's from that one time you tried your best Evel Knievel impression on a bicycle. Maybe something unintended by you or caused by something beyond your control created it. Scars are part of our life stories. Internal or external reminders of where we've been, what we've endured and how we became who we are today.

Everyone has scars. No one is immune. The older we become, the more we have. Some are outwardly visible to the world. Others stay hidden. Whether they're physical, emotional or spiritual, sometimes we're not ready to share the evidence of pain with anyone. The healing process from scars is different for everyone. For some, healing is a process that takes time, energy and, in some cases, forgiveness.

WHAT IS A SCAR?

If we turn to the dictionary for meaning, a scar is defined as:

1. A mark left by a healed wound, sore or burn
2. A lasting after-effect of trouble, especially a lasting psychological injury resulting from suffering or trauma
3. Any blemish remaining as a trace of injury

OUT IN THE OPEN

Showing or sharing your scars with others is a personal decision. Not everyone is able or willing to reveal parts of themselves to the world. TV personality and author Padma Lakshmi has been candid about how she embraces the seven-inch scar on her forearm. When she was 14, Lakshmi



*there is new life that can arise
from difficult journeys*

was in a car accident. “I love it because it makes me a person who has an interesting past, and it reminds me I can survive any pain,” she shared with Allure magazine in a 2009 article.

As humans, we tend to hide embarrassing things about ourselves from certain people at certain times. This is a normal way to cope with things you don’t want to relive, discuss or reveal. It crosses all types of scars: physical or emotional. But it’s also okay to not pretend that everything in life is fine and dandy. Pretending to be happy creates a façade that doesn’t bring healing. Instead, it makes more work for you on your road to a better life.

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

Not every scar is visible to the human eye. Invisible scars are in no way diminished or less painful. Aggression, bullying, as well as physical and sexual abuse can leave a wake of trauma. The vivid imagery of experiences replaying in a victim’s mind can create ripple effects: paranoia, anxiety, depression, PTSD or even C-PTSD (complex post-traumatic stress disorder).

For Susan (her name has been changed to respect her request for privacy), part of her healing from childhood trauma came from becoming an advocate in adulthood. “Anytime I have the opportunity to speak at schools, churches, mom groups, conferences and other places about peer-on-peer aggression, it gives meaning to what I endured,” Susan shares. “This is all part of my healing journey: to make others aware of what is happening to tweens and teens today when it comes to bullying, cyber bullying and abuse in every form. My personal directive is to take action now not only on behalf of my younger self but also in hopes of saving just one person before it’s too late. I will not allow my pain and trauma to be for nothing.”

SIGNS OF COURAGE

Fighters, warriors and survivors—we never know how brave we are until all we’re left with is courage. That same determination to battle what rises up can leave some feeling imperfect or no longer whole or who we once were.

Scars can root deeply in our psyche. No matter what you battled or the giant you faced, the first place to find courage is within yourself. No one should pressure you to feel one way or another. It’s up to you to be comfortable in your own skin and leave behind how others perceive you.

SIGNS OF A GOOD STORY

When noticed, some scars can spark conversations with, “I’ve got to tell you how that happened. It’s a doozy!” So, why are some people more confident in talking about their scars than others?

Some have come to the place of acceptance and understanding that they’ve beaten the odds. They’re ready to embrace being an overcomer. Bent but not broken, they now realize the heartbreak of their scar will not define them. Their self-worth is not determined by a mark, a moment in time or something they can’t control. It’s not an easy place to arrive at, but the healing that comes from hard work and stamina leads us to love ourselves—no matter what.

SIGNS OF NEEDING HELP

Scars can make us feel self-conscious. The circumstances surrounding how wounds came into existence can be hard to rectify. Therapy, whether private or in a group setting, can provide information, support and skills to help you improve the quality of your mental health and accept what you’ve been through.

The symptoms are real: depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, struggles with body image, chronic pain, as well as grief and loss of what once was. Meeting with a professional counselor who’s specifically trained to help in your struggle is imperative. Some people prefer meeting privately while others feel a sense of safety and camaraderie meeting in a small group. It’s a sign of strength, never weakness, to seek help.

SIGNS OF STRENGTH

There’s new life that can arise from difficult journeys. When we deal with painful moments, it fuels us to move forward. It may take an afternoon with a trusted friend or years of therapy until you’re ready to reveal your scars. Finding the catalyst towards your healing journey is the first step.

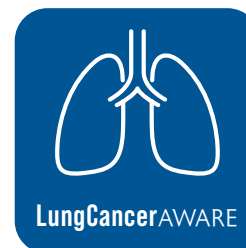
Every single part of you, from your head to your toes, deserves to be loved, accepted and appreciated. The sting of painful memories may resurface from time-to-time, but when you’re equipped with the emotional tools and confidence to move through difficult moments, it’s easier to accept that your scars are part of your life but not the end of your story.



WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?



In just minutes, Franciscan Health can help you assess risk factors for common, sometimes preventable conditions. Your confidential analysis includes a **FREE REPORT** you can print and discuss with your primary care physician.*



TEXT ANSWERS to 26464 OR VISIT FranciscanHealth.org/Answers



*Your information will not be shared with third parties. Assessments are not diagnostic and not meant to replace regular doctor visits.

BE THE PERFECT IMPROMPTU HOSTESS IN 10 MINUTES!

MAKE UNEXPECTED GATHERINGS MEMORABLE IN MINUTES

Let's embrace reality for just a moment. For the majority of us, our daily lives are far from the picture-perfect Pinterest parties. You want to be ready for unexpected holiday guests or be able to throw a last-minute virtual hangout, but how do you make that happen without panicking? Instantly be the hostess with the most-ess in minutes with these easy tips.



1 Be Ready

Clutter has a way of collecting. Rather than frantically shoving unopened mail and receipts into drawers or hiding last week's takeout, take a few moments each day to maintain your home. Keep common living areas and Zoom call backgrounds free from the pileup. Beginning with a mess-free zone means it'll take mere moments to quickly wipe counter tops and place your coffee cup in the dishwasher.

2 Easy-to-Serve Snacks

You don't have to whip up the perfect cutting board spread featuring the finest—and most expensive—ingredients. Grapes, apple slices, nuts, crackers and cheese cubes are easy and economical items to have on hand. If you love having dessert ready for guests, keep a pound cake in the freezer. For an extra layer of precaution, opt for prepackaged snacks that everyone can feel safe grabbing.

3 Spin It, DJ!

Digital music means party tunes are just a click away. Create a few playlists on your device ahead of time to help set the mood. From jazzy and sultry to retro and rock, you'll be ready to turn it up or keep it low in the background. If you don't have any playlists ready to roll, many audio streaming services curate lists for you.

4 Mood Lighting

Candles set a mood, yet their scents can be a little much. Consider investing in flameless candles. These battery powered beauties are a safe and subtle touch when creating a place for guests to relax or finding the perfect video call lighting. Flameless candles are also a good way to provide some glow without your house smelling like beachy, apple spice, coconut latte.

5 Say, "Yes!"

It can be hard to accept when someone offers to bring party fare. Giving the go ahead doesn't mean you're asking too much of them. You're delegating, and that's awesome! When you have no specific menu needs, request fresh flowers which always brighten a room or board games that can provide endless laughs.

6 Just Chill

Relax, have fun and live in the moment. Take a deep breath and remember that gathering with friends isn't about perfection. It's about making memories with those you hold dear!



cut out and take with you!

Shopping List

cheeses

- gouda
- jarlsberg
- aged cheddar
- herbed goat cheese
- brie

meats

- pepperoni
- prosciutto
- salami

bread and crackers

- french bread, sliced
- water crackers
- bagel chips
- artisanal crackers
- breadsticks
- pretzel crisps

nuts

- almonds
- cashews
- pistachios

fruits and veggies

- roasted red peppers
- cornichon pickles
- olives
- carrots
- cherry tomatoes
- celery
- red seedless grapes
- apples, thinly sliced
- bing cherries
- berries
- dried fruit

oils and spreads

- extra virgin olive oil
- balsamic glaze
- spicy dijon mustard
- honey
- jams or jellies

Crowd-Pleasing Cheese Board

Prep: 5-10 MIN. | Serves: 2-10

A charcuterie board—a super-fancy name for cheese tray—is all the rage at restaurants right now, and it's oh-so-easy to recreate at home. Whether it's Girls' Night Out or a quiet night inside, this varietal appetizer is only limited by your imagination. Keep a few staples on hand, and you'll be ready to assemble this platter in a snap!

FROM YOUR KITCHEN

- Large cutting board
- Containers for sauces and spreads
- Cheese knives
- Napkins
- Small plates

Some things get *better* with *age*

Health Benefits of Red Wine

A rich taste and touch of class aren't red wine's only benefits. In moderation, vino has shown to reduce stress and anxiety while giving connoisseurs a better night's sleep.

Explore more health benefits of wine below.

- 1 Provides countless antioxidants
- 2 Increases bone density
- 3 Boosts the immune system
- 4 Reduces risk of stroke and heart disease
- 5 Improves cognitive function
- 6 Promotes longevity
- 7 Provides hours of better sleep
- 8 Reduces risk of Type 2 diabetes and cancer

Recommended Amount
(1 glass = 5 oz.)



1 - 1.5 glasses a day



1 - 2 glasses a day

FINDING YOUR Voice

In professional settings or male-dominated fields, it is often difficult for women to have their voices heard. No matter how loud or clear or informed that voice is, it may be drowned out by dismissive tones, louder opinions and even self-doubt. Making your presence known and your message heard can be an uphill battle, but it's an important skill to learn in order to gain respect in your career.

Commanding a room is not about exerting power. It's about placing yourself in a position where you're seen on an equal playing field as your peers. Rather than focusing on double standards or changing your voice to fit a particular mold, you should recognize your voice as your strongest asset. Everyone is born with a strong, compelling voice, but if you find your voice being lost in a sea of dissenting opinions, here are a few ways to find your footing and get your point across.



The most important thing to remember when you're looking to find your voice is to be sure of yourself.

You are capable of incredible things.

If you believe in that and apply it to everything you do, others will be sure to follow suit.

5 Tips for Commanding a Room

1. Be Confident

Or at the very least, feign confidence. Approaching any situation with confidence convinces the audience of your abilities and helps them feel secure with you in the lead. While it's always important to be yourself, if you're not an inherently confident person, by all means, fake it until you make it. No one will be the wiser.

2. Be Assertive

Oftentimes, assertive women are mistakenly viewed as aggressive. Stop worrying about being liked by everyone and instead focus on being heard. Push past fears and resist the urge to be submissive. At the end of the day, standing up for yourself and your opinions will earn you the respect of your peers.

3. Be Honest

There are few things more vulnerable and more powerful than speaking your truth. Nothing you say or do will please everyone, so you might as well be authentic to yourself. Listen to your inner voice, and let it guide you. At the end of the day, you don't have to answer to anyone but yourself.

4. Be Concise

Wandering ideas and winding sentences lose your audience's attention and damage credibility. Collect your thoughts before you speak so you know exactly what to say, crafting a shorter yet more poignant statement.

5. Be Deliberate

Make each word, each breath and each pause intentional. Speak slowly and clearly to give yourself time to think and your audience time to absorb what you're saying. Your precision will not go unnoticed, your message will be received more clearly and your credibility will get a nice boost. The most important thing to remember when you're looking for your voice is to be sure of yourself. You are capable of incredible things. If you believe that and apply it to everything you do, others will follow suit.

THE POWER OF MOMS

Positively Influence Your Children

Educators.
Advocates.
Counselors.
Activists.
Influencers.

Not only do mothers wear all of these hats, but their impact is also deep and wide when it comes to shaping the thoughts, attitudes and feelings of their children. In a world where kids are bombarded with images of perfection and prestige, how can mothers provide positive and powerful messages that help shape them into well-adjusted adults?

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Setting priorities is important. How we spend time in our day gives our children a glance into how to structure their days. It's easy to fall down the rabbit hole of time-sucking activities. Who doesn't love vegging out while watching Netflix or videos of puppies riding on robot vacuums? It's good to have downtime, but even that should have limits and boundaries.

Routines teach time management. Does your preschooler want to play educational games on their tablet? Clean-up time should come first. Is your middle schooler begging to meet friends for bubble tea? Homework and a clean room are priority-one before they even ask. Make sure your children, no matter their age, respect the work hard/play hard balance in life.

Not everything in life needs to be scheduled, though. Leave some time for adventures! There's nothing like catching fireflies at dusk on a breezy July night. Visit the farmers market on a random Saturday morning, and let your child choose produce for the week. Grab a stack of books from the nightstand and make story time an anytime event. These little pop-up activities teach your children what's truly important in life—making memories with family.



LOVE YOURSELF

This is a tough one. Not everyone feels good about themselves all the time. Our kids take notice of self-talk, pointed comments about our bodies and how we feel about our looks, weight and personality. Our outward discussion of this internal dialogue can influence how children form their own self-images. Fostering positive self-talk for yourself is an important first step.

Scroll through any social media platform, and it won't take long to find images of "perfect" people. The interpreted message from their photos is that they have it all together. Here's the truth to pass on to your children: Perfection is unattainable and a lot of pressure. Many adults still struggle to come to terms with this fact, and children lack the maturity to fully comprehend it. Provide an avenue for open dialogue with your child about the images you see online and on television. Encourage them to come to you when they need a reality check.

NO PHONE ZONES

Our kids constantly observe and take note, including when we're behind the wheel. If you're a parent, chances are you spend a lot of time driving from home to school, activities, sleepovers, errands... and the list goes on. Remember who's traveling with you when you're tempted to text while driving. Not only is it dangerous to be distracted behind the wheel, but you are influencing future drivers.

When you sit down to dinner, don't invite your cell phone to join. Studies show that ditching your phone during meals leads to raising children who exhibit better behavior, more expressive language, greater language comprehension, better social graces and more well-rounded conversational skills.

The phone can wait while you drive to practice or enjoy time with your family.

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Instant gratification. Kids believe that the magic card—a debit or credit card—gives us everything, anytime we want it. Burgers. Movies. Gasoline. Cash. Little ones think it's all available at the swipe of a card.

Teaching patience can be a challenge. When we can shop online at the click of a button, how do we instill the idea of good things coming to those who wait? Delaying gratification may help. Does your daughter want a new lacrosse stick? Tell her that if she saves up a portion of the money, you'll meet her halfway. Does your son roll his eyes when you tell him a new cellphone isn't a need but a want? Create a contract that states a year's worth of excellent studies will get him the new phone.

Instilling a work ethic in your children now will help them later in life. It's important to remember that personal growth springs from hard work and patience.

weight loss

*focusing on
good habits that
keep you healthy*

Dieting. It's a love-hate relationship. You may see benefits early in the process and feel encouraged. You love the way your pants fit a little looser and the compliments keep coming. However, what you add and subtract from your diet has the potential to harm your health in the long run. If you struggle with weight gain and not feeling your best, it's time to revamp how you look at weight loss and consider moving towards wellness instead.

VS.

wellness

What Diets Do

For most, the lifespan of a diet looks like this:

- *You research everything from tried-and-true plans to fad or extreme diets.*
- *A plan gets selected and the prepping begins.*
- *Day One arrives. There are some needed adjustments, but you're all in!*
- *At some point, you begin feeling confined and restricted. In other words, hungry!*
- *Cravings sneak up on you. As much as you try to battle them, you eventually give in.*
- *The guilt-ridden self-talk begins to tear you down.*
- *Pretty soon, you ditch the diet and feel defeated.*

If that journey sounds familiar, you're not alone. According to the *Washington Post*, more than 45 million Americans diet every year, and there's no limit on how much they will spend to ditch the weight. An estimated \$33 billion is spent annually on products that promote weight loss. From prepackaged food to workout plans, that's a lot of money spent, yet nearly two-thirds of Americans remain clinically overweight or obese.

It's easy to get caught up in how a diet makes you look rather than how it makes your body feel. The goal should be to give your body what it needs to be strong, healthy and perform at peak function. With so many conflicting messages about what to eat, when to eat it and what to ban from the pantry, it's no surprise people are frustrated. When you've spent so much time and money on the diet merry-go-round, how can you adopt an attitude of wellness over weight loss?

Listen to Your Body

If you're hungry, eat. If you're not, don't. Stop mindlessly grabbing fistfuls of chips. Before you eat, stop and ask why you're opening the fridge. Are you hungry or is something else pushing you? Being bored and being famished are two distinctly different reasons why we snack. Emotional eating may feel better for a few moments, but turning to food when you're upset won't lead to making peace with the problem.



Eat the Good Stuff

When you're eating for wellness, a trip to the grocery store may look different. Skip the lean frozen dinners and low-sugar toaster pastries. Processed foods, no matter how healthy they claim to be, are not the same as reaching for whole foods.

Shopping for healthier options means mostly roaming the outer loop of the grocery store: fresh fruits and veggies, whole grain breads, fish and chicken and whole milk yogurt—the good stuff. If you can't pronounce the ingredients list, chances are you should pass on the product.

H₂O

Water does a lot more than just hydrate. A study published in the Oxford Academic shows that your metabolism can get a significant boost by drinking more water each day.

If you're hungry, first reach for a glass of water. Hunger could be your body's signal that it's feeling dehydrated. Doctors suggest drinking around two liters of water per day, and you can accomplish this by remembering the 8x8 rule: drink eight glasses filled with eight ounces of water every day.

Find Your Zen

If running, biking or hiking sounds like a day in the torture chamber, then they're definitely not the right fit for you. Look for activities that challenge you, get your heart pumping and leave you feeling better. If you like the camaraderie and accountability that come with getting fit with friends, check into group classes. Like the solitude of working out alone? Great!

Just get moving. It may be challenging at first, but give your body a chance to prove how strong it can be. Let it move and work for you just as it was intended.

Be Positive

You can't change what you ate for breakfast yesterday. There's no time machine to go back to when you once killed it at cycle class. Where you are right now isn't where you have to be tomorrow. Rather than punish yourself for past choices, make peace with them. Negative thoughts about who you are or where you've been derail progress. Today is a new day filled with possibilities, so focus on those!

How others look or live is not yours to control, either. What works for your bestie may not be your optimal plan of action. Find what makes you feel good, and stick with it.

Feed Your Mind, Body and Spirit

This trifecta is critical. Your mind, body and spirit work together as a team. The energy in one feeds the others. Going to early morning yoga before picking up your daily extra-sized fries and jumbo burger isn't the best way to maintain wellness.

To change your body, you have to change your mindset. There's more to wellness than just fitting into those jeans stashed in the back of your closet. Your life shouldn't revolve around hitting a magic number on the scale. What truly matters is accepting yourself for who you are while continuing to evolve and move towards the best version of yourself.

BREAKING FAST

BENEFITS OF EATING BREAKFAST



It's not called the most important meal of the day no reason. Breakfast is essential. Skipping this morning fuel session sends your body the message to hoard calories rather than burn them. What are the benefits of eating breakfast?

Check them out below!

1

Eating breakfast boosts energy levels and starts your day the right way



2

Enjoy a decreased appetite throughout the day while craving less junk food



3

Studies show that eating breakfast reduces the risks of obesity and leads to a healthier BMI



4

A healthy breakfast can enhance happier feelings all day long



5

Whether at school or work, studies show that eating breakfast keeps performance levels at their best



6

Breakfast can help prevent high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes



Overnight Oats

Busy mornings demand a quick breakfast. Got five minutes to spare before bedtime? Then this recipe was created just for you! Overnight oats are easy to prepare and will have your taste buds thanking you in the morning. Go basic, banana blueberry, chocolate peanut butter cup or put your own unique spin on this delicious and handy breakfast.

PREP: 5 minutes • COOK: 6-8 hours • SERVES: 1

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 Tb. chia seeds (optional)
- ½ cup nonfat Greek yogurt
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 Tb. sweetener, such as honey or maple syrup

DIRECTIONS

- 1 | **ADD** all ingredients into a glass jar or container and top with a secure lid.
- 2 | **GENTLY SHAKE** to combine.
- 3 | **PLACE** in the refrigerator overnight.
- 4 | **IN THE MORNING**, remove the lid. Serve cold, or warm them up in the microwave.

TIPS

- Jars can last 3 to 5 days refrigerated.
- Substitute your favorite dairy-free or nut-based milk as desired.
- Want a sweeter taste? Add your favorite fruit or a little more sweetener—or both!
- For those with wheat sensitivity or allergies, use gluten-free oatmeal.



Excusing Yourself from Group Texts

Should you **stay**, or should you **go**?

Let's be honest: We love group chats—sometimes. These joint conversations can teeter between two worlds. It's flattering to be in the circle of trust, receive Monday morning puppy memes and instantly hear if someone in the group needs a virtual hug. When it's irritating: During intense 9-to-5 hours, when alerts buzz like a beehive way past your bedtime and if someone in the group scored the perfect flats on clearance—which is awesome—yet the comment landslide arrives at a not-so-great time. What if you're utterly desperate to leave the chat just because?

It's a tricky one.

Before you permanently end the conversation, **here are a few things to consider:**

Mute the Conversation
Adjust your phone's settings to "Do Not Disturb." Turn off the ringer. Eliminate your phone's ability to vibrate when muted. Tuck your phone away. Simply ignore the pings and dings and, when you're ready, catch up and join in.

End the Conversation
If your patience has run out or your phone continues delivering YouTube clips when you've asked the senders to cease, it may be time to part ways—politely. Before you sign off, inform the recipients why. Withhold any blame and show nothing but love.

Have a Conversation
Be honest about how the frequency and timing of texts affect you. Is it anxiety-inducing while at your day job that 52 exchanges occurred and you have yet to scroll through and see what the deal is? Is your laptop tied to your smartphone, meaning alerts ping during online meetings with clients? Let the group know that you love to chat, yet during certain hours it's okay for them to have a sidebar without you.

Don't Be the Conversation
Have you considered how your text thread buddies may feel when you leave? Feeling rejected is a real consequence and can cause unintended emotional hurt. Remember, you're not having this conversation in person or even over the phone. It's in a group text where no one can hear your tone of voice, see your facial expressions or interpret body language. What you may intend as innocent may cause division and aggression in others.

Don't Overkill the Conversation
Try not to be that person who makes others question remaining in the group. Respect the hours of those who work and go to bed early. Keep one-on-one conversations on the side, not public fodder. Stay on topic. Include only those who know one another in a discussion. Otherwise, introduce everyone right away and explain why you've brought them together. Know when to participate, stay in the background and when conversations, like all things, should come to an end.





DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB... YET!

CARVING OUT TIME FOR CREATIVE SABBATICALS

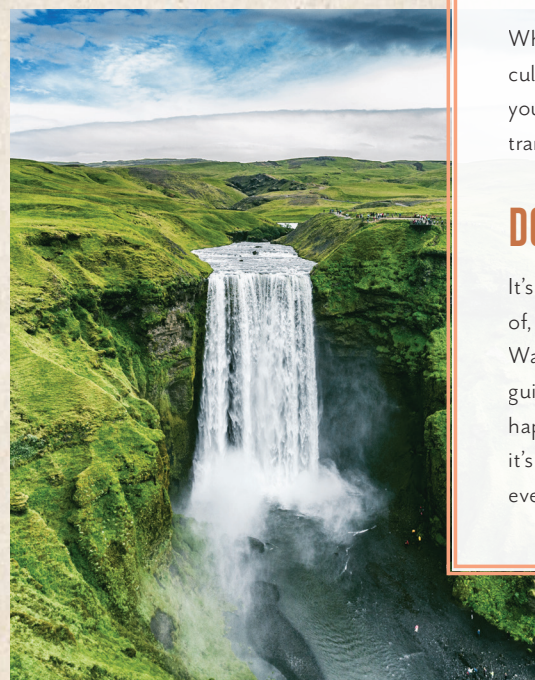
Do you find yourself daydreaming about the opportunity to write your life's story while residing in a European castle, but you're currently on the clock? Do your thoughts wander toward setting up an easel in Paris and painting the cafés, couples strolling by and the Eiffel Tower at dusk, but you have a stack of reports due by quitting time? Work pays the bills, yet creativity is what feeds our souls. What is there to do when you feel the call to live out your creative goals even though leaving your vocation isn't an option? Try these tips:

PLAN AHEAD

Whether you've been saving up to photograph the coast of Spain or culinary institutes are calling your name, create a budget now to make your dream come true. Research the cost of meals, accommodations and transportation then begin making a fiscal plan to meet your goal.

DOT YOUR I'S. CROSS YOUR T'S.

It's romantic to think about running off to a destination you've dreamed of, but have you researched it? Google the area's local and national news. Watch some documentaries and movies based there. Pick up a traveler's guide or book about the area. By doing this, one of two things will happen: You'll either multiply your excitement, or you'll quickly realize it's not the ideal destination for you. Don't be afraid to search the globe—even your own backyard—for the perfect sabbatical spot.



Skógafoss, Iceland

Table Mountain, South Africa



SHARE YOUR PLAN

Not only is it good to keep your boss in the loop on your creative journey, it may help you in more ways than you imagined. If you work at a large company with international offices, it's not unusual for employees to spend time training as part of an exchange program. This could be an opportunity to develop professionally first, then tack a week or two onto your trip to fill your creative soul. Your employer may also be open to letting you work remotely.

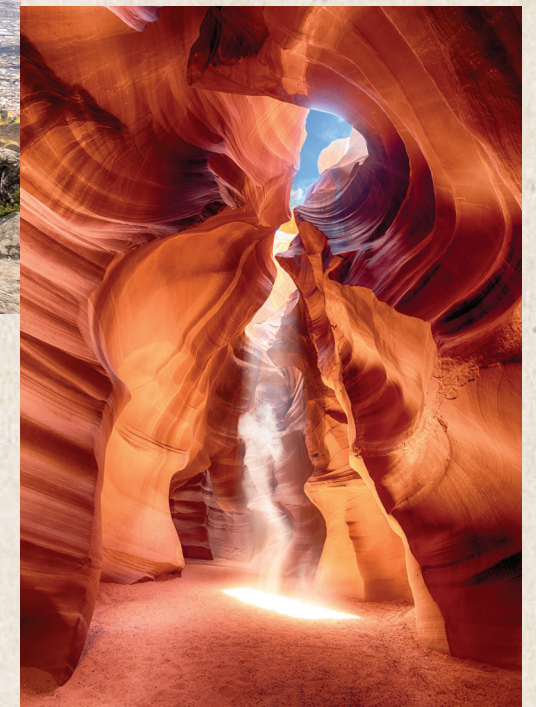
DESIGNATE ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

It's time to rally the troops. Confide in your besties about your plans. Those who love you will not only encourage you to make it happen, they can also be a great source of accountability to reach your sabbatical savings and timeline. When you want to hit the after-Christmas sales, ask to swap some sweaters with a friend instead. When you don't want to cook and pizza is an online order away, make plans for a night-in with your girlfriend who's always willing to whip something up. Be motivated to reach your goals. Don't become distracted by moments of spending that detract from your upcoming experience.

LOOK AT THE CALENDAR

Create a realistic timeline to make your creative sabbatical happen. If you're an accountant, it's likely that tax season takes spring traveling off your calendar. Research if the area you want to visit has a deeply discounted off-season. Less crowds and better deals mean you won't experience ideal weather, but if your plan isn't to hike the Grand Tetons in-season, it's a budget win in our book.

Antelope Canyon, Arizona



Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, CA

LIVING — IN THE — PRESENT

Focus on Now

If there's one thing we've learned, it's that life refuses to give us one thing:

More time.

In the moments we should be enjoying what's right in front of us, our minds can end up in a completely different location. We start running through an endless list of errands, planning tonight's dinner, worrying about grabbing the wrong items at the dry cleaner and realizing Sally never returned that best-selling book. It can be challenging to remain present even when you truly want to. Below are some suggestions for finding joy in the moment.

Focus on the Present

No matter how hard we try to shut out distractions, sometimes we just can't help it. A wandering thought can lead us down a vortex to many more. An image, song or phrase can spin us back in time. It happens. It'll continue to happen. But as soon as you realize your thoughts are spiraling away from the present, bring yourself back to the here and now. Shake it off and plug back in. Reconnect with what's in front of you.

Choose Peace and Positivity

Our minds act as wormholes. It's natural to reflect back on moments you wish you could change. However, when you constantly live in the past, you can't be present. If you let your mind wade too deeply into past associations,

emotions or thoughts, it costs you your present state of mind. It's difficult to live at peace if your mind is at war with things you can't control or change, so make peace with your past, use this time to confirm lessons learned and move on as best you can.

Finding contentment in the present means not letting negative thoughts take over. When self-doubt runs rampant, it's time for a new habit. Select a word or short phrase—something meaningful to you—that will snap your mind out of any spiral. It can be as simple as using the word "no" or "calm." Make it quick and to the point. When you say it, shift your mind away from what's leading you in the wrong direction.

Smell the Roses

We're not kidding. In a 2017 study by the University of British Columbia, evidence was found that spending time outside and immersing yourself in nature can improve wellness and lead to more positive engagement in the present. In short, getting outside gets you outside of your head.

The mental health benefits of soaking up some sun, breathing in the crisp fall air or walking over snowy paths are limitless. Not only does spending time outside connect you with your senses, but it can also increase your enjoyment of life and help you develop empathy towards others. When you hear leaves crunch under your feet or feel snowflakes brush your cheek, you're being present. Being conscious of where you are can provide a clear mind, a sense of calm and a lane of creativity in your life.

Find Fulfillment

Do you like your work? Is what you do so enjoyable and fulfilling that you can't imagine retirement? Or is your job something you begrudgingly do while praying the clock spins quickly towards quitting time? Worrying about getting your reports completed or mulling over a Saturday morning staff meeting won't move you forward. Productivity and pleasure don't come from stewing or sulking.

If a 9-to-5 isn't your end game, consider how to shift your attitude from loathing to gratitude. Whether it's an exit strategy to a new career, asking for a promotion or saving money for your dream vacation, look for ways to move toward where you want to be in life. Find joy in showing kindness to your fellow coworkers. Look out for the newbies. Make a batch of those cupcakes everyone begs you to bring in. Take pride in your work while remembering you're more than what you do.

Lose Your "Self"

That thing you're afraid to do because people may judge you should immediately go on your to-do list. If we overthink the things we want to attempt—bungee jumping, learning a language, dance lessons—we can become paralyzed with fear and feel defeated before we even try. Awareness of your "self" begins with living in the here and now and not within the soundtrack of your mind. If you stay in the present, your focus will remain right where it should be—in the moment.

Social pressures are everywhere. You can't escape them. Being mindful of what's happening right now will quiet the inner voices trying to lead you away from what you want. Yeah, you may end up on YouTube if you hula hoop in Central Park, but in the grand scheme of things, should we let fear dictate what makes us happy?

Clear the Clutter

If you've already jumped on the Marie Kondo train, tidying up your home has perhaps sparked some joy in you. There's something to be said about living within a space that's free of things you don't use or need. How much time could you save each day by simply removing the unnecessary?

Paring down, or being a minimalist, keeps you in the present. It's not about getting rid of everything around you but instead taking a long hard look at what you truly need. If you hang onto items you love and donate what you don't, it's a stepping stone toward being intentional and present in your life.

When we aren't spending time dusting off the collection of inherited trinkets we were never too keen on, we can be present in doing the things we love with the people we love. Don't feel guilty about parting with items from the past. Keep only what you need, use and love. It will make your home easier to maintain, and you'll be able to focus on what truly matters.





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