

October 2026

HEAD²TOE

MAGAZINE & ENTERTAINMENT

FRIENDS FOR A SEASON, SISTERS FOR A LIFETIME

What friendship truly means and knowing the difference between lifelong friends and seasonal

HEALTHY HABITS HEALTHIER FUTURES

Why Diet and Exercise Matter in the Black Community

DISCOVER EFFECTIVE WAYS TO MANAGE PAIN BEYOND MEDICATION

For busy adults balancing work, family, and daily responsibilities, especially chronic pain sufferers,

BEYOND THE RUNWAY

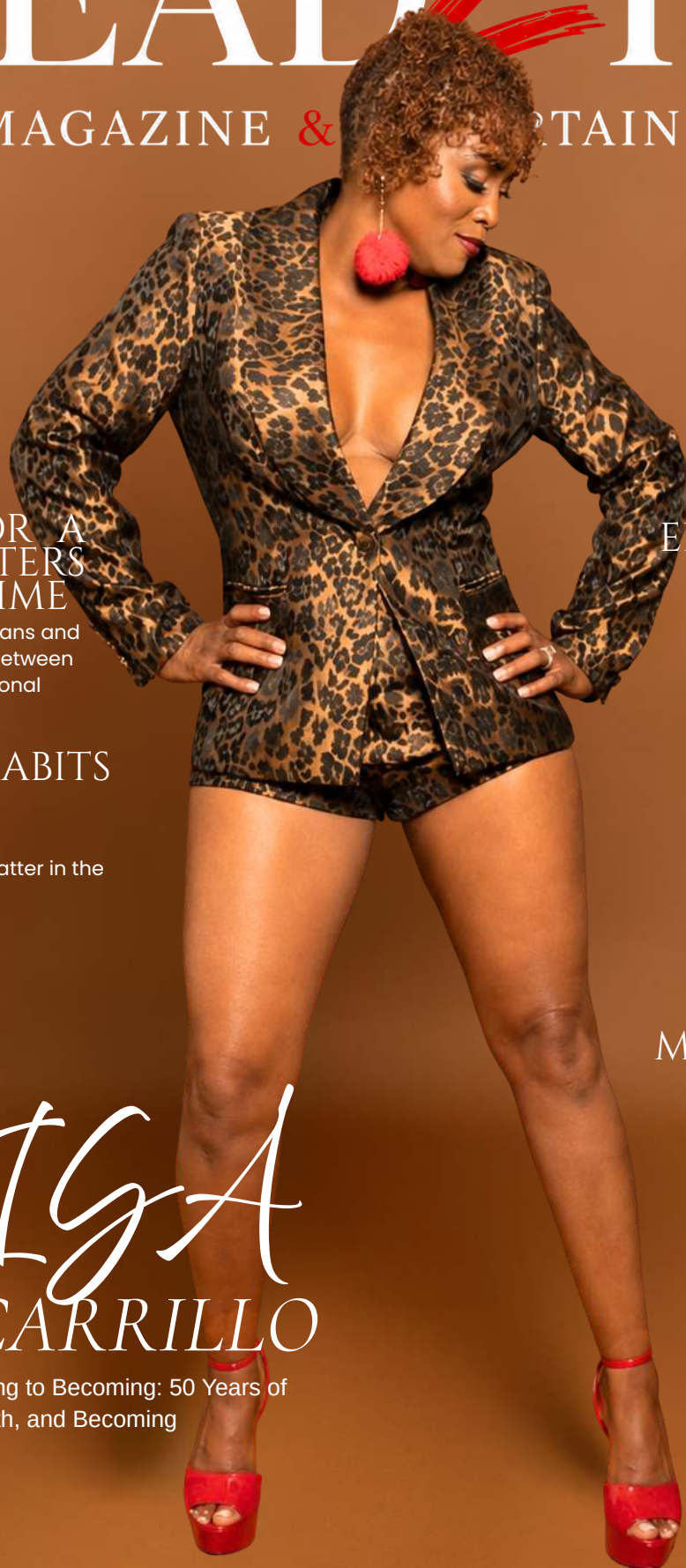
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info@head2toemag.com



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HEAD2TOE
MAGAZINE & ENTERTAINMENT

Editor's Note

With Head2Toe Magazine & Entertainment evolving into a broader lifestyle and culture platform, our mission remains rooted in connection, creativity, and community. We are expanding beyond traditional media to spotlight the people, places, businesses, experiences, and conversations shaping our communities and culture. From lifestyle, travel, and entertainment to entrepreneurship, arts, and influential voices, we aim to create content that informs, inspires, and brings people together. Through both digital storytelling and real-world experiences, Head2ToeMag.com continues to grow as a platform where culture, creativity, and meaningful engagement meet.

Keisa Stewart-Rucker
Editor-in-Chief



In this issue

October is a month of reflection, transformation and new beginnings a reminder that every chapter of our lives contributes to the people we are becoming. This month, we are honored to feature Elisa Carrillo as she celebrates 50 years of grace, resilience, healing and growth. From becoming a mother at 16 and welcoming her second daughter at 21 to building a career as a hairstylist, salon owner, nurse and personal trainer, Elisa's journey reflects the strength required to keep moving forward when life does not unfold according to plan. Through faith, therapy, fitness and the support of those who love her, she has learned to confront her past without allowing it to define her future. At Head2Toe Magazine and Entertainment, we believe every story has the power to encourage someone else. This issue celebrates healing, personal growth, healthy living and the courage to keep pursuing your purpose through every season of life. As you read, I hope Elisa's story reminds you that you are not limited by what happened to you, your mistakes or the chapters that did not go as planned. You can survive. You can heal. You can grow. And no matter your age or where you are in your journey, you can continue becoming.

Elisa CARRILLO

From Surviving to Becoming: 50 Years of Grace, Growth, and Becoming

To be blessed to see 50 years of life is something I don't take lightly. Fifty years of life, lessons, love, loss, motherhood, mistakes, healing, growth, laughter, tears, setbacks, comebacks, and becoming.

When I look back over my life, I don't just see what happened to me; I see how far I've come. I see a little girl who experienced something no child should ever have to experience. I see a young mother trying to figure out life. I see a young woman who made mistakes, stumbled, self-sabotaged, and didn't always make the best decisions. I see a woman who worked hard to provide for her daughters and chased her dreams. More than anything, I see a woman who kept becoming.

The Little Girl

I was seven years old when I was molested by someone within my own family. At that age, I didn't have the words to explain what had happened to me. I was afraid to tell an adult because I couldn't fully explain it myself. I didn't understand how something like that would affect me for years to come, but I knew something within me had changed.

I started acting out and became very defensive. I fought. I cursed. I did things that a normal kid my age without that kind of dysfunction, probably wouldn't think of doing. I was filled with emotions I couldn't explain. People saw the behavior, but they didn't see the pain behind it.

By the time I was around 11 or 12, I had already been introduced to marijuana and started smoking. I was a mischievous little girl, but underneath the behavior was a little girl who was hurting and carrying things she didn't understand. I didn't have the maturity or the words to process what had happened to me, so much of my pain came out through my behavior.



As I got older, I remained optimistic and continued to trust people. I kept an open mind and believed in people. What I did carry with me was that defensiveness. I was quick to fight and struggled to control my emotions. I also found myself seeking love and validation in places that weren't always healthy, especially through men.

At 16, I became a mother while I was still in high school. The father of my daughters was the same man I would eventually marry and later divorce. Becoming a mother changed my perspective on life. I knew I had someone beyond myself to love, protect, and provide for. I knew I had a greater purpose.

I was determined to graduate high school and learn a trade so I could provide for my daughter. Even then, I knew I wanted to become a nurse and do hair. Since college didn't feel like an immediate option for me, I took the fastest path I could see. I went to college and became a medical assistant. I worked as a medical assistant while attending beauty school to become a cosmetologist. I was building a life for myself and my daughter, even though I was still a young woman trying to figure life out. I eventually began working as a cosmetologist, and at 21, I became pregnant with my second daughter, also with the same man who would later become my husband.

That pregnancy was another turning point for me. I began to grow up a little more. I was still struggling to control my emotions because of the trauma I had experienced, but I was moving in the right direction. I was learning that being a mother meant more than simply providing for my children. It meant becoming the kind of woman I wanted them to see and know. I tried to protect my daughters in the ways that I wasn't protected.



Some people looked at me and probably wondered what would become of that little girl. I'm certain some of the people who watched me grow up, including family, are in disbelief and filled with joy when they see the woman I am today. They saw the girl who fought, struggled, and always seemed to be in defense mode.

They may not have been able to see beyond the behavior. No one knew the whole story. They didn't know what that little girl was carrying. The truth is some of what I carried followed me into my younger adult years. There were relationships where I didn't always show up as the woman I know myself to be today. I made mistakes. I stumbled. I self-sabotaged. I was still learning how to understand myself, control my emotions, and recognize my worth. I'm far from perfect, but I've learned that I no longer have to carry the shame of what was done to me.

What happened to me was never my fault, and it was never something I should have had to carry. I can acknowledge the mistakes I made and take accountability for my choices while also understanding that I was a young woman still trying to heal, grow, and find my way.

The Dreams That Stayed With Me

Even as a little girl, I knew two things I wanted to do when I grew up. I wanted to do hair, and I wanted to become a nurse. Life didn't exactly go according to the plan I had in my head. I became a mother at 16, at an age when I was still figuring out who I was and what I wanted my life to look like. Becoming a mother forced me to grow up in ways I never expected, while I was still learning how to navigate life myself. My path wasn't traditional. I had daughters to raise, responsibilities to carry, and dreams I refused to give up on. I owned a salon for a while before eventually selling it and continuing as an independent hairstylist. At the same time, I was going to nursing school full-time and working another job.

There were times when I was working three jobs, all while making sure my daughters had everything they needed and most of what they wanted. By then, I was no longer married to their father, so I was balancing motherhood, running a business, going to school, working, and everything else life brought my way. It wasn't easy, but I kept going.

Looking back now, I understand that it simply wasn't my time yet. It was God's perfect timing. I believe He knew there would come a time when I could give nursing the focus and commitment it deserved.

That time came when my baby girl went off to college. My daughters were grown and gone, and I finally had the opportunity to focus more intentionally on myself and on the dream I had carried since childhood. That was my time to lock in.

And I did it. I became a Registered Nurse.

Not because the road was easy or because everything lined up perfectly, but because I refused to give up on my dream.

Still Becoming

After becoming a Registered Nurse, another chapter of my life began.

Exercise has always been a part of my life. I enjoyed working out and taking care of myself, and eventually I decided to become a personal trainer. At first, it was something I did for myself, but I soon realized I wanted to help other women. Women who have been through things, who have struggled, and who may not always feel strong.

That's how EMC Fitness was born—Every Move Counts. EMC also happens to be my initials, but the meaning behind it is what matters most to me. Every move counts. Every step, every

setback, every decision, and every choice to keep going.

I wanted women to know that movement can be medicine. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish. You can have wounds and still have purpose. You can fall and still get back up. You can start over. You can become.

My Greatest Support

During my baby girl's senior year of high school, a special man entered my life who is now my husband.

Sebastian has been one of my greatest supports throughout this journey. His love, patience, encouragement, and presence have meant more to me than I can put into words. Having someone who sees me beyond my wounds and supports the woman I'm continuing to become has been meaningful to me.



The 50-Year-Old Me

I have sat across from that seven-year-old little girl—the little girl who was molested on more than one occasion, who was afraid, angry, acted out, became very defensive, fought, cursed, and struggled to control her emotions.

When I look at the seven-year-old me, I look at her with compassion. I smile. Then I say, “I’m sorry you had to go through that. I know it wasn’t easy, but it is a part of your story. You no longer have to walk in shame because you were never to blame. God brought you through it. Look at you now, girl. You are stronger. You are wiser. You are loved. You are appreciated. You are valued. Don’t ever dim your light for anyone.”

I now fully understand that every version of me was part of the journey, the seven-year-old girl, the 16-year-old mother, the 21-year-old mother, and the young woman trying to figure out life. All of them are me.

I don’t pretend to have everything figured out. I’m still relearning. I’m still healing. I’m still growing. I’m still becoming. And that’s okay.

Fifty isn’t about finally arriving. It’s about finally understanding the journey.

When I look over my life and see how far I’ve come, I can proudly say that I’m grateful for the woman I am today. Every test has been an opportunity for me to give my testimony. I know my latter will be greater.

Thank You God, for my life.

Welcome to Chapter 50. ❤️



DISCOVER EFFECTIVE WAYS TO MANAGE PAIN BEYOND MEDICATION

For busy adults balancing work, family, and daily responsibilities, especially chronic pain sufferers, pain can turn ordinary tasks into constant negotiations. The tension is real: medication may help, yet side effects, diminishing relief, or the fear of depending on pills can create new pain management challenges. That's where alternative pain management comes in, offering non-pharmaceutical therapies and practical pain relief strategies that support the body and mind in different ways. With the right expectations, these options can help people feel more in control of their comfort.

Understanding Alternative Pain Management

Alternative treatments are non-drug ways to reduce pain or improve how you live with it. Complementary therapies are options you use alongside medical care, supporting a holistic approach that considers stress, sleep, movement, and mood. Conventional medicine can be essential, but it does not always solve persistent pain or avoid side effects. This matters because pain is rarely just a sore spot. It can shape your energy, focus, and patience with the people you love. Approaches like meditation and mindfulness techniques can help you build skills for calmer reactions and steadier routines. Think of pain care like a toolkit, not a single wrench. Medication may handle spikes, while habits that reduce the intensity of chronic pain can make everyday tasks less draining over time. That foundation makes hands-on therapies and rehab choices easier to evaluate after an accident.

Rebuild Movement with Chiropractic Care After an Injury

When pain is tied to how your joints, muscles, and spine are moving, hands-on care can be a practical next step. Seeing a chiropractor may help ease musculoskeletal pain and restore mobility through spinal manipulation, soft tissue adjustment, and guided post-injury rehabilitation. This approach is often used when stiffness, soreness, or limited range of motion lingers after an injury, especially following a car accident. If you've been in a crash, look for a provider experienced with accident-related issues like whiplash, herniated disks, and spinal cord and soft tissue injuries, and consider resources on post-accident chiropractic care to understand what that focus can include. Treatment length can vary widely, from just a few sessions to longer-term care, depending on how severe the injury is and how your body responds.

Practical Pain-Relief Options You Can Start This Month



If you're rebuilding movement after an injury, it helps to test pain-relief options in a simple, trackable way, so you can support the same goals as chiropractic rehab: less pain, better mobility, and steadier daily function.

Try a short acupuncture “trial block”:

Book 3–6 sessions over 3–4 weeks and pick one measurable goal (like “sit 30 minutes with less pain” or “sleep through the night”). Keep the rest of your routine steady so you can actually tell what's helping. Acupuncture benefits often show up as reduced muscle guarding and less “wired” pain sensitivity, which can make your rehab exercises feel more doable.

Use massage therapy techniques between appointments: Ask your massage therapist to focus on two areas that limit your movement most (for example: upper traps/neck after whiplash, or glutes/hip flexors after low-back strain). Between visits, do 5 minutes of self-massage 3–4 days per week: slow pressure with your fingertips or a ball against a wall, then stop at “good discomfort,” not sharp pain. A 2021 review found low-grade evidence that acupuncture and massage may improve chronic pain, so think of this as a practical experiment, not a miracle fix.

Practice mindfulness meditation for pain with a timer, not willpower: Start with 7 minutes a day for 2 weeks. Sit comfortably, breathe normally, and label what you notice: “tight,” “warm,” “throbbing,” then return to the breath, your job is noticing, not forcing pain away. Research on mindfulness for chronic low-back pain showed improved pain outcomes, and many people find it pairs well with hands-on care because it reduces the stress response that keeps muscles braced.

Use “rehab-friendly” yoga for flexibility and pain reduction: Choose gentle styles and keep sessions short: 10–15 minutes, 3 times per week. Prioritize positions that support spinal alignment and hip mobility, think supported child’s pose, cat-cow, low lunge with hands on blocks, and legs-up-the-wall. Use a “2-point rule”: back off if your pain jumps more than 2 points during or after, since soreness that derails your chiropractic exercises usually slows progress.

Run a 14-day anti-inflammatory diet swap challenge: Don’t overhaul everything, swap in 2–3 changes you can repeat. Examples: add fatty fish 2 times per week, build one daily “color plate” with leafy greens/berries, and replace sugary snacks with nuts or yogurt. Track morning stiffness, energy, and swelling; many people notice diet changes show up as better recovery after walks or rehab sessions.

Pain Relief Beyond Medication: Common Questions

Q: What alternative pain therapies are generally safe to try first?

A: Start with low-risk options like gentle movement, mindfulness, heat or cold, and guided stretching. If you try hands-on care such as massage or acupuncture, choose a licensed provider and share your injury history and meds. Stop and reassess if you notice sharp, spreading, or worsening pain.

Q: How do I know if a method is actually working for my pain?

A: Pick one measurable goal such as walking longer, sleeping better, or needing fewer rest breaks. Track it for 2 weeks while keeping the rest of your routine steady, then decide based on your notes, not a single good or bad day.

Q: Can natural supplements like turmeric really help, or is it hype?

A: Some people do get meaningful relief, especially with inflammatory joint pain. A report describing 1500 mg of curcumin linked it to a 30% reduction in arthritis-related pain, but supplements can interact with medications. Bring the exact brand and dose to your clinician or pharmacist before starting.

Q: When does it make sense to combine treatments instead of doing one at a time?

A: Combine when the pieces have different jobs, such as manual therapy for muscle tension plus exercise for strength plus stress skills for flare control. Add only one new element every 1 to 2 weeks so you can tell what helps, then keep the smallest effective mix.

Q: When should I stop self-care and seek medical help right away?

A: Get urgent evaluation for new weakness, numbness in the groin area, loss of bowel or bladder control, fever, unexplained weight loss, or pain after a major fall or crash. Also reach out if pain keeps worsening over 1 to 2 weeks despite gentler activity.

Build a Practical Integrative Plan for Long-Term Pain Relief

Pain can feel like a constant negotiation, wanting real relief without piling on side effects or dead ends. An integrative pain management approach focuses on combining trusted, non-medication options with medical guidance, complementing traditional care instead of replacing it. Over time, that steady, personalized mix can support improving quality of life and a sense of control through empowerment through alternatives. Small, consistent choices create the most reliable pain relief over time.

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Black History

IDA B. WELLS

THE WOMAN WHO USED THE TRUTH TO FIGHT INJUSTICE



Long before modern investigative journalism and the civil rights movement, Ida B. Wells risked her freedom—and her life—to expose racial violence, challenge segregation and demand justice for Black Americans.

Ida B. Wells refused to remain silent in a country that often depended on silence to protect injustice. As a journalist, educator, activist and suffragist, she used facts to confront racial violence and challenge the lies used to justify it. Her work helped establish investigative journalism as a powerful instrument for social change and laid important groundwork for the civil rights movements that followed.

Born Into Slavery, Raised to Fight for Freedom

Ida Bell Wells was born into slavery on July 16, 1862, in Holly Springs, Mississippi, during the Civil War. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued the following year, and Wells grew up during Reconstruction—a period when formerly enslaved people sought education, political participation and economic independence.

Her parents, James and Elizabeth Wells, believed strongly in education and civic responsibility. Her father was active in Republican politics and helped establish what is now Rust College, one of the nation's oldest historically Black colleges.



When a yellow fever epidemic claimed the lives of her parents and one of her siblings in 1878, Wells was still a teenager. Rather than allow her surviving brothers and sisters to be separated, she took responsibility for supporting the family. She became a teacher, presenting herself as older than she was so she could qualify for the position.

Those early experiences shaped Wells into a determined and independent young woman. She understood that freedom required more than the end of slavery. It also required education, economic opportunity, political power and protection under the law.

Challenging Segregation

In 1884, Wells purchased a first-class train ticket while traveling in Tennessee. A conductor ordered her to leave the ladies' car and move to a segregated smoking car. She refused.

Wells was forcibly removed from the train, but she did not simply accept the humiliation. She sued the railroad company and initially won her case. Although the Tennessee Supreme Court later reversed the ruling, her willingness to challenge segregation came decades before Rosa Parks refused to surrender her bus seat in Montgomery.

The experience helped move Wells toward journalism. Writing under the name "Iola," she began contributing articles to Black newspapers.

Exposing the Truth About Lynching

The defining moment of Wells's journalism came in 1892, when three Black businessmen—Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell and Henry Stewart—were lynched in Memphis. Moss was one of Wells's close friends.

The men operated the People's Grocery, a successful Black-owned business that competed with a nearby white-owned store. After a confrontation, the three businessmen were arrested. A white mob removed them from jail and murdered them.

Their deaths forced Wells to investigate the purpose behind lynching. The public was frequently told that white mobs were protecting communities from dangerous Black criminals. Wells examined newspaper reports, interviewed witnesses and studied individual cases. Her research showed that many victims had never been convicted of a crime. Some were targeted for becoming economically successful, asserting their rights or challenging the racial order.

Lynching was not simply uncontrolled mob violence. It was a tool of racial terror designed to frighten Black communities and prevent Black people from gaining economic and political power.

Wells published her findings and encouraged Black residents to leave Memphis or withhold their money from businesses that refused to protect their rights. Her editorials angered white citizens. While she was away from the city, a mob destroyed her newspaper office and threatened to kill her if she returned.

Wells refused to stop. Unable to safely return to Memphis, she continued her work from other cities. She published influential reports, including *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* in 1892 and *A Red Record* in 1895. Her reporting brought national and international attention to racial violence in the United States. She also traveled throughout Britain, speaking to audiences and building support for the anti-lynching movement.

Fighting Racism Within the Suffrage Movement

After settling in Chicago, Wells continued working for civil rights while becoming a major advocate for women's voting rights. She understood that Black women faced discrimination because of both their race and gender.

In 1913, she helped establish the Alpha Suffrage Club, one of Illinois's first organizations dedicated to securing voting rights and political influence for Black women. That same year, Wells traveled to Washington, D.C., to participate in a national women's suffrage parade.

Organizers wanted Black women to march in a segregated section at the back. Wells refused. As the Illinois delegation passed, she stepped into the procession and marched with the white women from her state. Her actions demonstrated that a movement claiming to support equality could not remain silent about racism.

Building Institutions for the Black Community

Wells married attorney and newspaper publisher Ferdinand Barnett in 1895. She became known as Ida B. Wells-Barnett but continued her public work while raising a family—an uncommon choice for married women of her era.

She helped organize women's clubs, voter-education efforts and civil rights organizations. She was involved in the development of several national groups,



including organizations connected to the formation of the NAACP. She also fought segregation in Chicago, advocated for better schools and supported services for Black residents arriving from the South.

Wells believed protest had to be paired with institution-building. It was not enough to identify injustice; Black communities also needed organizations capable of educating voters, protecting families and developing new leaders.

A Legacy That Still Speaks

Ida B. Wells died in Chicago on March 25, 1931. She did not live to see the major civil rights victories of the 1950s and 1960s, but her work helped create the foundation upon which later activists stood.

Her approach remains relevant. Wells followed evidence, questioned official explanations and challenged narratives that treated Black victims as responsible for the violence committed against them. She demonstrated that controlling the story can become a form of power—and that truthful journalism can help a community fight back.

In 2020, nearly 90 years after her death, Wells received a posthumous Pulitzer Prize Special Citation honoring her courageous reporting on violence against African Americans during the lynching era.

Ida B. Wells did more than document history. She confronted injustice while it was happening, even when doing so placed her life in danger. She reminded America that progress does not begin when those in power decide to act. It begins when courageous people uncover the truth, speak it clearly and refuse to be silenced.



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COINTELPRO

WHEN THE FBI MADE BLACK UNITY A TARGET

DECLASSIFIED RECORDS REVEAL HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WORKED TO DISRUPT BLACK ORGANIZATIONS, DISCREDIT LEADERS AND PREVENT MOVEMENTS FROM UNITING.

For decades, stories about the FBI's surveillance of Black leaders have circulated throughout the Black community. Some sound so extreme that they can easily be dismissed as conspiracy theories.

But when it comes to COINTELPRO, much of the disturbing history isn't speculation.

It is documented in the government's own records.

During the height of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the Federal Bureau of Investigation operated a secret counterintelligence program that targeted political organizations and activists across the United States. Known as COINTELPRO the Counterintelligence Program it began in 1956 against the Communist Party and was later expanded to other organizations. The FBI acknowledges that the program eventually included the Ku Klux Klan, the Black Panther Party and other groups.

But the government's treatment of Black political organizations and civil rights leaders remains one of the most troubling chapters of that history.

We should not have to embellish Black history to make it powerful.

Because although that particular quotation appears to be falsely attributed to Hoover, declassified FBI documents reveal that preventing certain forms of Black political unity was, in fact, an explicit objective of COINTELPRO.

And those records speak for themselves.

Prevent the Coalition

In March 1968, the FBI established long-range goals for its counterintelligence operations against what the Bureau then classified as "Black Nationalist-Hate Groups."

One objective was explicit: "Prevent the coalition of militant black nationalist groups."

Another was to prevent the emergence of a so-called "messiah" capable of unifying and energizing the movement. Government records later reviewed by congressional investigators show that



The Viral Quote That Isn't Quite the Story

A graphic that has circulated for years claims longtime FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was once asked to name the greatest threat to America and responded:

"Negro unity."

There is a problem. Researchers have been unable to establish that Hoover actually said those exact words. A fact-check examining the claim found no reliable record of the quotation and historians interviewed could not authenticate it. That distinction matters.



the FBI considered several prominent Black leaders within this framework. Among them was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. According to the National Archives' account of the congressional investigation into King's assassination, the March 1968 FBI memorandum warned that King could become a serious contender for such a unifying role if he moved away from nonviolence and toward Black nationalism.

Think about what that reveals. The concern wasn't simply whether an individual had committed a crime. The Bureau was considering the potential power created when organizations, communities and influential leaders could come together.

Martin Luther King Jr. Was Targeted Too

COINTELPRO is often associated with the Black Panther Party, but government surveillance and efforts against Black leadership extended much further.

Dr. King was subjected to extensive FBI surveillance and a campaign designed to damage his reputation.

The National Archives documents that King had been designated for efforts to discredit him as early as 1963. Congressional investigators later found that the FBI disseminated derogatory information about King to government officials and attempted to use media contacts to damage his public standing.

This is particularly significant because King wasn't advocating armed revolution.

He became the international face of nonviolent protest.

Yet the FBI still viewed his influence, organizing ability and growing national prominence with suspicion.

That history complicates the idea that government intervention was simply about stopping violence.

The Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party became another major target. Hoover publicly described the Panthers in 1969 as the greatest threat among Black extremist groups to the nation's internal security. That statement unlike the viral "Negro unity" quote is documented in contemporary reporting. The Panthers were controversial, openly carried firearms in some contexts and embraced revolutionary politics. But that isn't their entire history. The organization also developed community programs addressing needs that government institutions frequently failed to meet.

Among the most famous was its Free Breakfast for Children Program, which provided meals to children before school. The program's popularity concerned the FBI because community-service initiatives could increase public support for the Panthers. Historical accounts describe Hoover viewing the breakfast program itself as a significant threat to efforts to undermine the organization.

That part of the story deserves attention.

Feeding children isn't inherently revolutionary.

But building institutions that made communities see an organization as useful, trustworthy and capable of solving problems created political influence and influence creates power.

COINTELPRO Went Beyond Surveillance

The FBI itself now acknowledges that some COINTELPRO tactics went too far. Agents infiltrated organizations, attempted to create discord among members and sought to discredit groups even when there was little or no evidence of illegal activity.

Congressional investigations during the 1970s exposed broader abuses within U.S. intelligence agencies. The Senate's Church Committee scrutinized COINTELPRO, FBI surveillance and the Bureau's investigation of King, ultimately helping expose activities that had previously remained hidden from the American public. That history changes how we should understand the era.

The Civil Rights Movement wasn't occurring only in the streets. There was another struggle taking place behind closed doors through surveillance, intelligence gathering, informants, propaganda and attempts to influence public perception.

Why Black Unity Mattered

This is where the viral Hoover quote gets something conceptually right even though the quotation itself isn't supported by reliable evidence. Unity creates power. One organization can be isolated. One leader can be discredited. One business can be economically pressured. But networks of organizations, churches, businesses, activists, professionals and ordinary citizens working together are much harder to marginalize. That was evident throughout the Civil Rights Movement. Churches provided meeting spaces. Black newspapers spread information. Community organizations mobilized residents. Local businesses supported movements.

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The Lesson for Today

history should make us understand something else:

There is power in organized communities. There is power when businesses circulate dollars among one another. There is power when media organizations tell stories that otherwise might be ignored. There is power when churches, entrepreneurs, educators, artists, professionals and community organizations collaborate. There is power when people can disagree without automatically destroying one another. And there is power in knowing our history well enough to separate documented facts from viral misinformation. Perhaps that is one of the biggest lessons COINTELPRO leaves us. We don't need an unverified quote from J. Edgar Hoover to prove that Black unity once concerned powerful institutions. The FBI's own documents already tell us that.



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WHY EVERY BARBERSHOP OWNER NEEDS TO UPGRADE THEIR AIR PURIFICATION SYSTEM TODAY

Walk into any busy barbershop on a Saturday afternoon and you'll notice more than just the buzz of clippers and the smell of fresh aftershave. You'll notice the air itself. Fine hair particles drift through the space, aerosol sprays linger near the ceiling, and the faint chemical scent of dyes, bleaches, and styling products settles into every corner. For clients, this might just be part of the barbershop experience. For you as the owner, it's a health and business issue that deserves far more attention than it usually gets.

Barbershops are unique environments. Unlike a typical office or retail store, they generate a constant stream of airborne particles, chemical fumes, and fine dust throughout the entire business day. Without a proper air purification system in place, that air quality problem doesn't just disappear when the shop closes. It builds up over time, affecting your staff's long-term health, your clients' comfort, and even the way your shop smells and feels the moment someone walks through the door.

This article breaks down exactly why upgrading your air purification system should be a top priority this year, what to look for in a modern hvac air purification system, and how the right indoor air purification system can transform both the atmosphere and the reputation of your barbershop.



The Hidden Air Quality Crisis Inside Barbershops

Most barbershop owners focus their attention on the visible mess: hair on the floor, dust on the shelves, or smudges on the mirrors. But the real problem is often invisible. Every haircut releases microscopic hair fragments into the air. Every application of hairspray, gel, or dry shampoo sends a fine chemical mist floating through the room. Add clipper lubricant fumes, disinfectant sprays, and the occasional whiff of hair dye or bleach, and you have a cocktail of airborne contaminants that most standard ventilation systems were never designed to handle.

Studies on indoor air quality in salons and barbershops consistently point to elevated levels of volatile organic compounds, commonly known as VOCs, along with fine particulate matter that can settle deep into the lungs. Barbers and stylists who work in these environments for years often report respiratory irritation, headaches, and chronic sinus issues. Clients may not stay long enough to notice a dramatic effect, but repeated exposure over months of

regular visits can still contribute to minor discomfort, allergic reactions, or simply an unpleasant, stuffy feeling that makes them less likely to return.

This is exactly where a dedicated air purification system earns its value. Rather than relying solely on opening a door or running a ceiling fan, a proper purification setup actively captures and neutralizes these contaminants before they accumulate. It doesn't just move air around the room; it changes the actual composition of what everyone is breathing.

Why Standard Ventilation Isn't Enough Anymore

Many barbershops still operate with whatever basic ventilation came installed when the building was constructed, sometimes decades ago. A simple exhaust fan or a standard air conditioning unit might circulate air, but circulation is not the same as purification. These older systems typically lack the filtration strength needed to trap fine particles, chemical vapors, or airborne pathogens.

This gap becomes especially clear when you compare a basic setup to a modern hvac air purification system. These systems are

integrated directly into your existing heating and cooling infrastructure, meaning purified air is delivered through the same vents that already heat and cool your shop. Instead of adding a separate appliance to manage, an hvac air purification system upgrades the air quality of your entire space using the ductwork you already have. This is particularly efficient for barbershops with multiple chairs and stations, since every corner of the shop benefits from filtered, refreshed air rather than just the area immediately around a single unit.

It's also worth mentioning that ductwork itself can become a hidden source of poor air quality. Dust, hair particles, and product residue settle inside vents and ducts over time, and if that buildup isn't addressed, even the best purification system will struggle to perform at its full potential. This is one of the reasons professional services like [duct cleaning](#) have become increasingly popular among commercial property owners who want their purification systems to actually reach peak efficiency rather than working against clogged, dirty ductwork.

Upgrading isn't just about adding new technology. It's about making sure the technology you already rely on, your heating and cooling system, is clean, efficient, and ready to support a real air purification system rather than fighting against years of accumulated debris.

The Business Case: How Clean Air Impacts Your Bottom Line

It's easy to think of air quality as a "nice to have" rather than a business priority, but the numbers tell a different story. Client experience is everything in the barbershop industry, and air quality plays a bigger role in that experience than most owners realize.

Think about the last time you walked into a space that smelled stale, chemical-heavy, or simply "off." Did you want to linger? Did it make the experience feel premium, or did it make you want to get in and out as quickly as possible? Clients notice these things, even if they can't always articulate exactly why a space feels uncomfortable. A shop with a genuinely fresh, clean atmosphere signals professionalism and care, the same way a spotless countertop or a well-organized station does.

An upgraded indoor air purification system also directly supports staff wellness and retention. Barbers who spend eight or more hours a day breathing in product fumes and fine particulate matter are at higher risk for burnout, chronic respiratory discomfort, and reduced job satisfaction. Investing in clean air is investing in the people who keep your business running. Lower absenteeism, higher morale, and a more comfortable working environment all trace back to something as fundamental as the quality of the air your team breathes every single shift.

There's also a competitive advantage to consider. As more consumers become aware of indoor air quality issues, particularly after the increased public attention on ventilation and airborne particles in recent years, shops that can genuinely promote a clean, purified environment stand out. Simple signage or a mention on your website about your upgraded air purification system can become a subtle but meaningful differentiator when a potential client is choosing between your shop and the one down the street.

What to Look For in a Modern Air Purification System

Not all systems are created equal, and barbershop owners should approach this upgrade with a clear understanding of what actually matters. Here are the key factors to prioritize when evaluating options:

HEPA-grade or medical-grade filtration. The finer the filtration, the more effective the system will be at capturing hair particles, dust, and airborne product residue. Look for systems that specifically list their filtration efficiency rather than vague marketing claims.

VOC and odor neutralization. Since barbershops deal with chemical sprays, dyes, and cleaning products daily, a purification system that includes activated carbon filtration or similar technology for neutralizing volatile organic compounds is essential, not optional.

UV-C or germicidal components. Many modern indoor air purification systems now include ultraviolet light technology that helps neutralize bacteria and viruses circulating through the air, which is particularly valuable in a high-traffic personal care setting.

Compatibility with existing HVAC infrastructure. As mentioned earlier, an hvac air purification system that integrates with your current heating and cooling setup tends to be more efficient and less disruptive to install than a series of standalone units scattered throughout the shop. Noise level and maintenance requirements. A purification system that hums loudly or requires constant filter changes can become more of a headache than a benefit. Choose a system that fits realistically into your daily operations.

Coverage area. Make sure the system you choose is properly sized for your shop's square footage and ceiling height. Undersized systems will struggle to keep up, especially during busy hours with multiple chairs in use simultaneously.

Taking the time to evaluate these factors upfront saves you from the common mistake of installing an underpowered or mismatched system that looks good on paper but fails to deliver real results in a working barbershop environment.

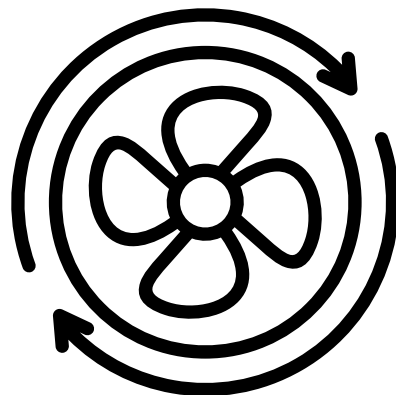
Making the Upgrade a Priority, Not an Afterthought

It's tempting to push air quality improvements down the priority list, especially when there are more visible aspects of the business competing for your attention and budget. But unlike a new chair or a fresh coat of paint, the benefits of a proper air purification system are ongoing and compounding. Every day your shop operates without adequate purification is another day of accumulated particles, chemical exposure, and missed opportunity to differentiate your business.

The good news is that this upgrade doesn't have to happen overnight or drain your entire budget at once. Many barbershop owners start by having their existing ductwork professionally inspected and cleaned, which immediately improves the performance of whatever ventilation is already in place. From there, adding a dedicated hvac air purification system or a standalone indoor air purification system for high-traffic areas can be phased in as your budget allows. The key is starting the process now rather than waiting for a complaint from a client or a health issue among your staff to force the decision.

Clear the Air, Elevate Your Business

A barbershop's reputation is built on more than just skilled cuts and a great atmosphere. It's built on the full sensory experience a client has from the moment they walk in, and that includes the air they breathe while sitting in your chair. Upgrading to a modern air purification system isn't just a health precaution; it's a smart, forward-thinking investment in your staff's wellbeing, your clients' comfort, and the long-term reputation of your business.



HAIRSTYLIST OF THE MONTH

DEANGELO Y. GLENN

OCTOBER 2026



Atlanta, GA

DeAngelo is a professionally trained licensed hairstylist

@iamdeangeloyglenn

Vagaro.com/dglennsalon

Deangeloyglenn.com

BARBER OF THE MONTH

FRED MOORE

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Shelby Charter Township, MI
Fred is a licensed hair artist/barber
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Gotmoorestyle.square.site
Gotmoorestyle@gmail.com
586-298-2389

MAKEUP ARTIST OF THE MONTH

DONALDO TAYLOR

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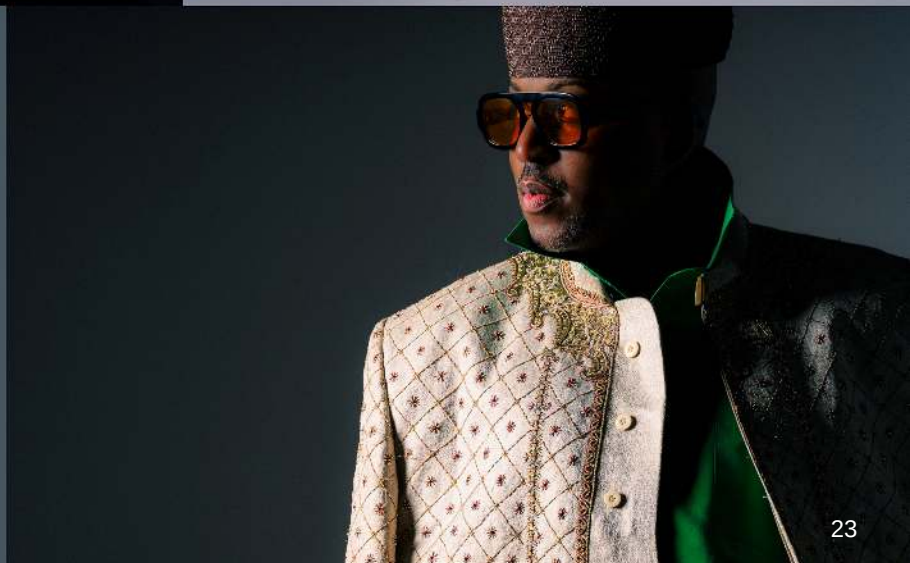


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Friends for a Season, Sisters for a Lifetime



Some people enter our lives for a particular moment. They teach us something, support us through a difficult season, or help shape the person we are becoming. Then there are the rare friendships that withstand time, distance, change, disappointment, growth, marriage, motherhood, and everything life brings.

Lisa is that kind of friend for me.

Our friendship began during our ninth-grade year at C.F. Vigor High School in Prichard, Alabama. At the time, we could not have known that a teenage friendship would grow into a lifelong bond or that decades later, I would have the privilege of celebrating her 50th birthday.

On the surface, Lisa and I came from very different backgrounds. I was raised in a two-parent household with a mother who was strict and deeply involved in how I was being raised. Lisa was raised by a single mother whose parenting style was different from what I experienced at home. Our family structures, rules, and everyday environments were not the same.

But friendship has a way of revealing what appearances cannot. Although our circumstances were different, we both carried childhood trauma. We each had experiences that shaped how we saw ourselves, how we trusted people, and how we responded to the world around us. We may not have understood everything we were carrying as ninth-grade girls, but we found connection in one another.

Sometimes the people who understand us best are not those whose lives look exactly like ours. They are the people who recognize something familiar beneath the differences.

Every Friendship Is Not Meant to Last Forever
As we move through life, we learn that not every friendship is meant to remain with us permanently. Some friends are assigned to a particular season. They may be present during our school years, our early adulthood, a career transition, a difficult relationship, or a period of personal discovery. A seasonal friendship is not necessarily a failed friendship. Its purpose may simply have been completed. Those relationships can still be meaningful. They may teach us how to establish boundaries, recognize our value, communicate more honestly, or let go with grace. We can appreciate what someone contributed to our lives without forcing a connection that no longer fits who either person has become. The challenge is learning the difference between a friendship that has naturally completed its season and one that simply needs care, communication, or forgiveness.





Lifelong Friendship Requires Growth

Long-lasting friendships do not survive because both people remain exactly the same. They survive because both people make room for one another to change.

The girls Lisa and I were in ninth grade are not the women we are today. Life has brought responsibilities, relationships, family, careers, victories, disappointments, losses, healing, and lessons. We have each evolved.

A true friend does not demand that you remain the person you were when the friendship began. She learns the woman you are becoming.

That does not mean lifelong friends agree about everything or never hurt one another. It means the relationship is valuable enough for both people to communicate, apologize, forgive, and move forward. Pride cannot be more important than the friendship.

Friendship Must Have Room for Honesty

Real friendship is more than celebrating birthdays, taking pictures, and enjoying good times together. A true friend can tell you the truth without intentionally tearing you down. She can support your dreams while holding you accountable. She can recognize when you need encouragement and when you need someone to remind you of who you are.

Honesty is one of the ways we protect meaningful friendships. But truth must be delivered with love. There is a difference between correcting someone because you care and criticizing someone because you want to control them.

A lasting friend knows the difference.

Showing Up May Look Different Over Time

When we are young, friendship often means spending nearly every day together. As adults, showing up can look very different. Marriage, motherhood, careers, health challenges, and personal responsibilities can change how frequently friends speak or see one another.

A mature friendship does not always measure love by constant contact. Sometimes showing up means answering the phone during a difficult moment, remembering an important date, offering an honest prayer, celebrating an accomplishment, or simply letting your friend know, "I am still here."

Lifelong friendships understand that distance and busy schedules do not automatically mean disconnection. The bond remains because the love and history are still present.



Protecting the Friendships That Matter

Strong friendships require intention. They must be nurtured just like any other meaningful relationship.

To help a friendship last:

- Communicate instead of assuming.
- Address hurt before resentment grows.
- Apologize without always trying to defend yourself.
- Allow your friend to grow and change.
- Celebrate her without comparing her journey to yours.
- Respect boundaries, marriages, families, and responsibilities.
- Keep private conversations private.
- Make time for one another, even when life becomes busy.
- Be present during difficult seasons not only during celebrations.
- Remember why the friendship mattered in the first place.

Most importantly, friendship requires mutual effort. One person should not have to carry the entire relationship.

A Friendship Worth Celebrating

As Lisa celebrates her 50th birthday on October 1, I am not only celebrating the number of years she has lived. I am celebrating the years we have shared. I am celebrating the ninth-grade girls who found friendship despite their different backgrounds. I am celebrating the women who continued growing, learning, healing, and navigating life. I am celebrating every conversation, every memory, every disagreement we overcame, every laugh, and every moment when our friendship reminded us that we were not alone. Some people enter our lives for a season, and we should be grateful for what those relationships teach us. But every once in a while, we are blessed with someone whose presence becomes part of our life story.

Lisa, you are more than my best friend. You are a piece of my history, a witness to my growth, and a sister I was fortunate enough to choose.

Happy 50th birthday to my friend for a lifetime.

With love, Keisa

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PERMISSION TO EVOLVE: BECOMING REQUIRES YOU TO OUTGROW WHAT ONCE FIT

There are seasons when the life you once prayed for no longer feels like the life you are supposed to remain in.

And that can be confusing. Because nothing may necessarily be wrong. You may simply feel different. What once satisfied you doesn't anymore. What once felt comfortable begins to feel restrictive. What once felt like home begins to feel like somewhere you have already been.

And sometimes, instead of honoring what we feel, we criticize ourselves for it. Why can't I just be satisfied? Why do I always feel like something needs to change? Why can't I just stay where I am and be content? But what if the desire for change isn't always a sign of discontentment? What if sometimes it is evidence of becoming?

YOU ARE ALLOWED TO OUTGROW WHAT ONCE FIT

Growth changes you. Healing changes you. Experience changes you. And when you change, it is only natural that some of the things surrounding you may no longer fit the same way. That doesn't make the old season bad. It doesn't mean you made the wrong decision when you chose it. And it certainly doesn't mean you are ungrateful. It may simply mean that season served the version of you who needed it at the time. But you are not her anymore. One of the hardest parts of becoming is accepting that you cannot always take everything from your previous season into your next one. Sometimes growth requires release.

RESTLESSNESS CAN BE INFORMATION

We are often taught to silence restlessness. Be grateful. Be content. Stop looking for the next thing. And yes, there is tremendous value in gratitude and learning to be present.

But I also believe we have to become curious about what our discomfort may be trying to tell us. Not every restless feeling requires an immediate decision. But every persistent feeling deserves examination. Sometimes restlessness is revealing an area of your life that needs attention. Maybe you've stopped growing. Maybe you've been shrinking yourself to remain comfortable.

Maybe something you've tolerated for years no longer aligns with your values. Or maybe the woman you are becoming simply needs more room. You don't have to immediately run from where you are. But you do owe yourself the honesty to ask: What is this season trying to show me?

STOP COMPARING YOUR BECOMING

Maybe you've been shrinking yourself to remain comfortable. Maybe something you've tolerated for years no longer aligns with your values. Or maybe the woman you are becoming simply needs more room. You don't have to immediately run from where you are. But you do owe yourself the honesty to ask: What is this season trying to show me?

BECOMING WILL REQUIRE COURAGE

There is something beautiful about becoming. But we don't talk enough about how uncomfortable it can be. Because becoming often requires you to release certainty before you have clarity about what comes next. You may know something is changing without knowing exactly what the change will look like. You may feel finished with one chapter without having the title for the next. And that in-between space can feel unsettling. This is where self-trust becomes important. You don't have to force clarity. You don't have to make impulsive decisions just because you feel uncomfortable. But you also don't have to silence yourself simply because the next step hasn't completely revealed itself. Sometimes becoming asks you to remain open while the details unfold.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THE OLD VERSION OF YOU WRONG

This may be one of the greatest freedoms of growth:

You can honor who you were while still choosing who you are becoming. You don't have to hate the old job. You don't have to regret the old relationship. You don't have to criticize the old dream. You don't have to despise the old version of yourself. She got you here. Honor her. Thank her. And when necessary, release her. Because becoming isn't always about fixing something that was wrong. Sometimes it is simply acknowledging that you have grown.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO EVOLVE

Maybe you need something different now.

Different surroundings.

Different relationships.

Different opportunities.

Different boundaries.

Different dreams.

Or maybe you don't know what "different" looks like yet you just know something within you is changing.

YOUR INVITATION

If you find yourself in a season of becoming, resist the urge to rush it but also resist the urge to silence it. Listen. Pay attention to what no longer fits. Notice where you feel expanded and where you continually feel restricted.

Ask yourself what you would choose if you weren't afraid of disappointing people, starting over, or being misunderstood.

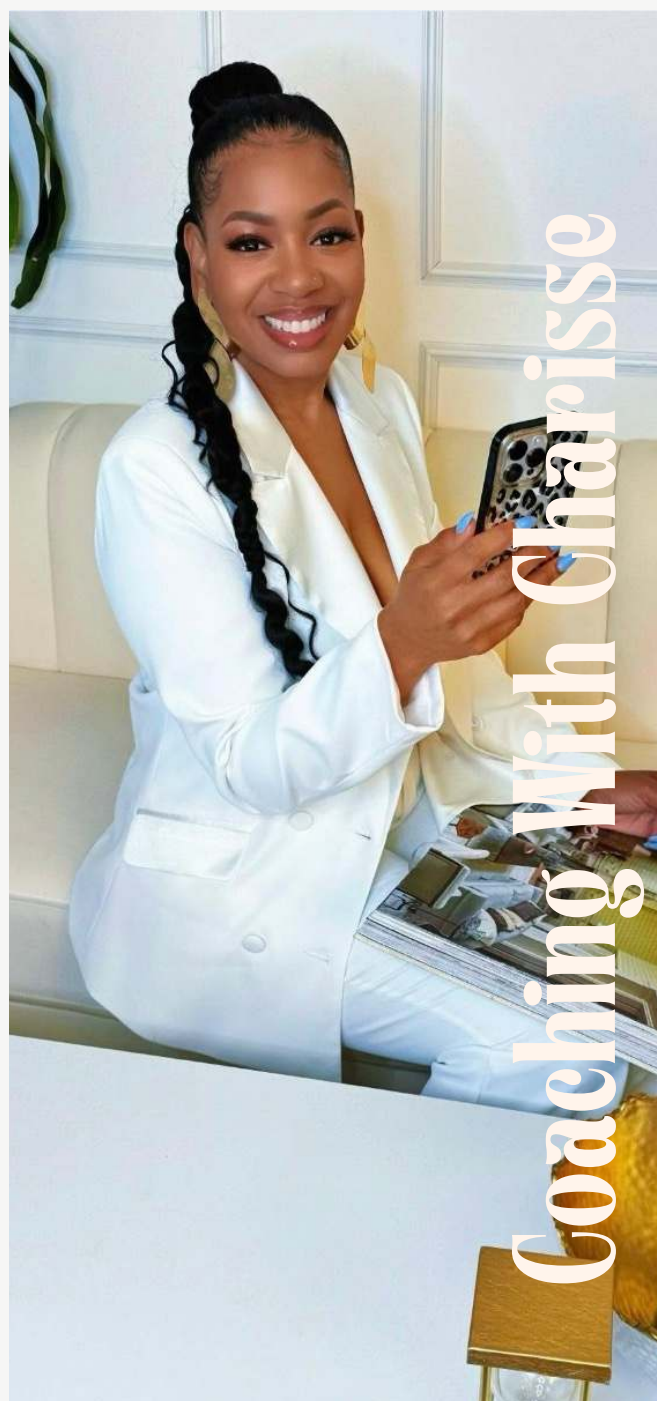
And most importantly, stop criticizing yourself for changing.

You are allowed to evolve. You are allowed to discover new parts of yourself. You are allowed to acknowledge that something which was once right for you may no longer be right for the woman you are becoming.

And if you desire support as you navigate change, reclaim your voice, trust yourself, and discover what authentic living looks like in your next season, Coaching with Charisse offers a safe and supportive space to walk through that becoming.

You don't have to know exactly who you are becoming yet.

Just give yourself permission not to remain who you have already outgrown.



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HEALTHY HABITS, HEALTHIER FUTURES WHY DIET AND EXERCISE MATTER IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY



For generations, the Black community has faced disproportionately high rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and obesity. These health challenges are not simply the result of individual choices. Genetics, chronic stress, unequal access to health care, limited grocery options, neighborhood safety and the cost of nutritious food can all affect a person's ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Still, there is something powerful we can do within our homes and communities: begin teaching our children the importance of healthy eating and regular physical activity while they are young.

The Health Crisis We Cannot Ignore

High blood pressure is often called the "silent killer" because it can damage the body without causing noticeable symptoms. Nearly 60% of non-Hispanic Black adults in the United States have high blood pressure a higher percentage than any other major racial or ethnic group. Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity also continue to affect Black families at concerning rates. Poor nutrition and insufficient physical activity are recognized risk factors for these conditions, as well as stroke, certain cancers and depression. These numbers should not be used to shame our community.



They should inspire us to make health education, preventive care and access to nutritious food greater priorities.

Healthy Habits Begin at Home

Children learn much of what they know by watching the adults around them. When they see their parents preparing balanced meals, drinking water, taking walks and making time for physical activity, those behaviors begin to feel normal.

We cannot wait until a child is diagnosed with prediabetes, becomes severely overweight or develops high blood pressure before introducing healthier habits. Prevention should begin long before illness appears.

Teaching children about nutrition does not mean placing them on restrictive diets or criticizing their bodies. It means helping them understand how food supports their growth, energy, concentration and overall health. The goal should be to raise children who have a healthy relationship with food not children who fear it.

Parents can start with simple lessons:

- Drink water regularly and limit sugary beverages.
- Add fruits or vegetables to meals and snacks.

- Learn how to read nutrition labels as a family.
- Pay attention to serving sizes without obsessing over calories.
- Choose baked, grilled or air-fried foods more often than fried foods.
- Limit heavily processed foods that are high in sodium, added sugar and unhealthy fats.
- Allow treats in moderation instead of labeling foods as entirely "good" or "bad."

Small, consistent changes are more likely to last than extreme diets that families cannot maintain.

Exercise Should Feel Like a Normal Part of Life

Exercise does not always require a gym membership, expensive equipment or participation in organized sports. Walking, dancing, riding bicycles, jumping rope, swimming, playing basketball and doing active household chores all count as movement.

Children and teenagers ages 6 through 17 should generally receive at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Adults should aim for 150 to 300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week,

along with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days per week. Families can make movement enjoyable by taking walks after dinner, planning active outings, creating dance challenges or spending time at a local park. When exercise feels like punishment, children may resist it. When it is connected to family time, fun and confidence, they are more likely to continue being active as adults.

We Must Also Address Access

Telling people to “eat better” is not enough when many neighborhoods lack affordable grocery stores, safe outdoor spaces or quality recreation programs. Some families are balancing long work hours, rising food prices and limited transportation. Others may live in communities where fast food and convenience stores are easier to reach than fresh produce.



"When we teach our children to care for their bodies early, we are not simply creating healthy habits —we are changing the health of future generations."

These barriers are real, and acknowledging them does not remove personal responsibility. It helps us understand why healthier choices must also become easier and more affordable.

Churches, schools, community organizations and local businesses can help by offering nutrition classes, community gardens, youth fitness programs, health screenings and affordable access to fresh food. We should also support policies and programs that bring grocery stores, sidewalks, parks and health resources into underserved neighborhoods.

Improving the health of the Black community requires both personal action and community investment.

Preserving Culture While Protecting Our Health

Healthy eating does not require us to abandon our cultural dishes or the foods that connect us to family and tradition. Many favorite recipes can be prepared differently without losing their meaning or flavor. Families can experiment with using less salt, seasoning food with herbs and spices, choosing leaner proteins, adding more vegetables and reducing the amount of sugar or saturated fat in certain recipes. The goal is not to erase our food traditions. It is to allow those traditions to nourish us for generations to come.

Prevention Is Part of Generational Wealth

We often discuss generational wealth in terms of property, businesses, education and financial security. But health is also an inheritance.

A family cannot fully enjoy the wealth it creates if preventable illness continually shortens lives, limits mobility or creates overwhelming medical expenses. Teaching children how to care for their bodies gives them knowledge they can carry into adulthood and eventually pass to their own children.

Healthy habits cannot prevent every diagnosis, and diet and exercise should never replace medical care or prescribed medication. However, nutritious eating, regular physical activity, preventive screenings and routine medical visits can reduce risks and help



people manage many chronic conditions.

The future health of the Black community will not change through one diet, one workout or one conversation. It will change through the habits we practice consistently, the examples we set and the resources we build around our families.

If we begin teaching our children now, we can help create a generation that does not wait until sickness arrives to take health seriously. We can raise children who understand that caring for their bodies is not about appearance it is about protecting their future.



Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 cup grilled or rotisserie chicken, chopped
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- ½ avocado, sliced
- Garlic powder, black pepper and paprika
- A squeeze of fresh lemon

Directions

Heat the rice, chicken and vegetables. Season with garlic powder, black pepper and paprika. Add the avocado and finish with fresh lemon juice.

Healthy tip: Choose low-sodium chicken and season with herbs and spices instead of extra salt.





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