

FALL 2026

ROSE.

MAGAZINE

RACHEL STEWART

On resilience, reinvention,
and the art of knowing when
to change the plan without
changing the purpose.

MEET THE TEAM



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to Mr. Mikes Sylvan Lake for
being our hosts for our Fall
2026 Photoshoot.

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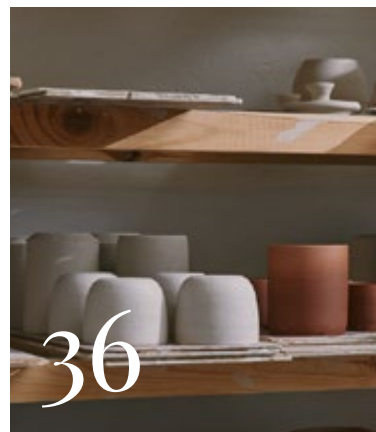
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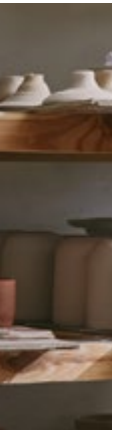
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The beauty of letting go

Fall has always been my favourite season. I don't know if it's because we don't really experience it the same way in Guatemala, where I grew up, but when I moved to Canada, I quickly fell in love with it.

There is something cathartic about watching nature let go. Trees release their leaves, the wind sweeps things away, and beneath the surface, everything begins to break down and return to the earth. Before the permafrost and snow settle in, there is a quiet process of composting, of making room. What falls doesn't simply disappear. It becomes part of the foundation for what will bloom again in spring.

It's made me appreciate that letting go isn't always an ending. Sometimes, it's the work that makes new growth possible.

This second issue of ROSE Magazine, our Fall Edition, taught me that in ways I hadn't anticipated. Things didn't unfold the way I thought they would. We had to pivot, rethink, and do some internal purging of our own. We had to make room for what was actually taking shape rather than hold on to what we originally imagined.

As I look at the incredible women whose stories fill these pages, I see that same process reflected in so many different ways.

In Rebecca Eby's "Something You Grow," we are invited to revisit the culture and experiences that shaped her upbringing and consider how the environments we grow up in become part of the foundation of who we are. Sometimes, understanding ourselves means looking back at the things we once accepted as simply the way life was.

In Kirsten Sjostrom's "Built By Curiosity," an unexpected love of building, motorcycles, and making things leads to a much bigger journey.

Following that curiosity has helped her discover new parts of herself and create space for what comes next, including new projects and possibilities she may never have imagined at the beginning.

In Chelsea Ramsey's "The Uninvited Party Guest: My Journey Through Postpartum Psychosis," we are reminded that some life-changing experiences are never ones we would have chosen. Chelsea shares her deeply personal journey through illness and recovery, bringing much-needed attention to maternal mental health and the importance of compassion, understanding, and support. Her story reminds us that even when life takes us somewhere we never expected, there can be a path toward healing.

...and then there is our cover girl, Rachel Stewart.

I will unapologetically admit that I am biased. Rachel is my dear friend and the co-founder of ROSE, and I couldn't be prouder to see her on this cover. But through the process of choosing our next cover girl, I realized something: Rachel embodies so much of what ROSE stands for. She is resilient, original, savvy, and empowered, and she brings her own distinct perspective to each of those qualities.

In this feature we share how Rachel's work in program evaluation and logic models has shaped the way she approaches problems, challenges assumptions, and figures out what comes next. She understands that when something isn't working, the answer isn't always to push harder or blame ourselves. Sometimes, we need to step back, examine what has changed, and reconsider the plan.

As we navigated our own unexpected turns while creating this edition, we found ourselves doing a little of that work, too. We had to ask ourselves what mattered most, what needed to change, and what

we wanted ROSE to become. The plan shifted, but the values behind it did not. In many ways, that experience brought Rachel's message to life for me: changing the plan doesn't mean abandoning the purpose.

That is what connects all the women in this edition. Each has experienced some kind of shift, whether an obvious turning point or a quieter moment of introspection. Each has had to let go of something, reconsider something, or close a chapter in order to make room for who she is becoming.

Sometimes that work is uncomfortable. It can mean stripping things back, clearing away expectations, or acknowledging that the path ahead looks different from the one we planned. But perhaps those moments aren't signs that we have lost our way. Perhaps they are part of the process of building a stronger foundation.

Just like Fall, we don't have to hold on to everything to honour what it gave us. We can let some things go, allow them to become part of the ground beneath us, and trust that new growth can come from there.

I hope you enjoy this edition as much as we have loved bringing it to life. Thank you for being here, for reading these women's stories, and for being part of the ROSE community. Your presence means more to us than you know.

With love,



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FINDING LOGIC IN THE ILLOGICAL

Rachel Stewart on resilience, reinvention, and
the art of knowing when to change the plan.

By Ruby Cole-Ellis

The smartest person in the room is not always the one doing the most talking. Sometimes, she is the one listening, connecting the dots, and asking the question nobody else thought to ask.

Rachel Stewart has always been that person to me.

I remember meeting her nearly 15 years ago. We were both graduate students at the University of Calgary, assigned to work the same shift at the Students' Union convenience store. We bonded almost immediately over good conversation, our shared interests, and the realization that our minds seemed to work in remarkably similar ways.

I remember coming home that day and telling my now-husband, Matt, that I had met one of the nicest, smartest people I had ever known. What I didn't know was that I had just met my future best friend, confidante, and eventually, business partner.

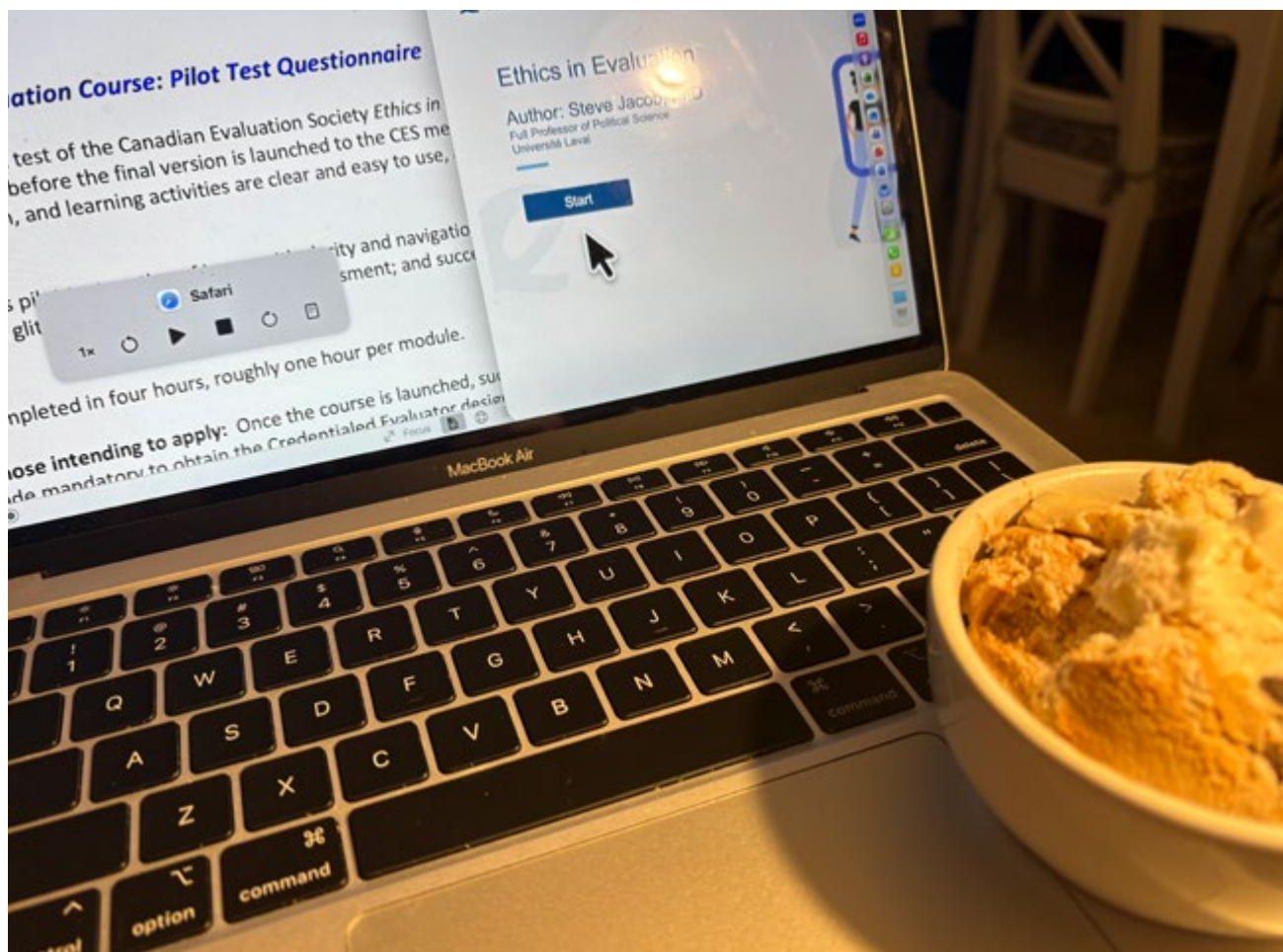
If you know me, you know I tend to be the firecracker in the room. I'm the one who wants to jump in, figure it out as I go, and build the plane while we're flying it. Rachel brings a grounding kind of calm. Where I see possibilities and want to move, she pauses to examine the pieces. Where I might leap before looking, she asks what we're leaping toward.

Our differences have become one of my favourite things about us.

Over the years, we graduated, pursued our respective careers, collaborated on projects, and even worked together at another magazine, where I was editor-in-chief and Rachel was assistant editor. When that chapter ended, I felt we had only begun to discover how well we could work together but also a sense of "unfinished business".

When I eventually pitched Rachel the idea of starting ROSE Magazine, I told her I would understand if she wasn't ready. But I also knew I didn't want to pursue it without her. I wanted her mind, her perspective, and her ability to take a sprawling idea and help us figure out what it would take to bring it to life.

Today, as I write about Rachel for the cover of our Fall 2026 issue, I find myself returning to that first impression. The qualities I admired in her then have only deepened. Beneath her thoughtful, analytical approach is a woman willing to grow, take risks, and reinvent herself. She simply has a particularly good way of figuring out what comes next.



The accidental evaluator

Rachel's academic journey offers a glimpse into the curiosity that has always defined her. She completed a double major in German and History as an undergraduate, largely because she wanted to study abroad in Germany. She later earned a master's degree in Religious Studies from University of Calgary.

Program evaluation wasn't necessarily the career she had mapped out for herself. Like so many interesting careers, it found her through an unexpected door.

While working at the University of Calgary's Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, Rachel became involved in research and professional development initiatives. She began asking questions that would become central to her work: What does success look like? How do we know whether something is worthwhile? And what evidence would help us make better decisions?

If research assistants were taking time away

from other responsibilities to attend professional development sessions, for example, she wanted to understand what those sessions accomplished. That meant considering the needs of students and supervisors, designing activities, and gathering evidence to determine whether the work was useful.

She discovered that she loved the process. "It was a good blend of my interests in research and learning," she explained to me. "I could do a rigorous investigation with a cool group of people and see how the findings helped the team learn and make decisions in real time."

She began teaching herself the discipline, pursued professional development through the Canadian Evaluation Society, and eventually completed a Graduate Diploma in Evaluation through the University of Victoria in 2024. Today, her work brings together evaluation, research, facilitation, and project management. She helps teams understand what their initiatives are achieving, where assumptions may be falling short, and how evidence can inform their next decisions.

So, what exactly is program evaluation?

In simple terms, it is a structured way of understanding whether something is working, for whom, under what circumstances, and why. It moves us beyond asking whether we completed a task to considering whether that task made the difference we intended.

A workshop delivered or a report published is an output: something we produce or do. An outcome is the change that follows, such as new knowledge, improved skills, different behaviours, or stronger relationships. Impact is the broader, longer-term difference we hope to contribute to. Rachel's work helps people connect those dots while recognizing that change rarely follows a perfectly straight line. People, resources, competing priorities, and unexpected circumstances all influence results. It requires technical skill, but also empathy, patience, and a willingness to question what you think you already know. That is where Rachel's personality and profession meet.

THE EVALUATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Outputs represent the actions we take or the products we create. Outcomes refer to the subsequent changes that occur. Impact signifies the broader, long-lasting difference we aim to make. A framework for understanding life.

One of Rachel's most useful tools is a logic model. The name might sound like something you'd find in a boardroom beneath a spreadsheet and a very serious cup of coffee. In practice, the idea is surprisingly accessible. A logic model maps the relationship between the resources we have, the activities we undertake, and the results we hope to achieve. It makes the assumptions connecting each step visible.

In other words: if we do this, what do we expect to happen next? What makes us believe one thing will lead to another? "A logic model has two halves: your planned work and your intended results," Rachel explained. "You read it as a chain of if/then statements."





ROSE, in theory and in practice

When Rachel and I began building ROSE with our co-founder and creative director, Luci Morales, we brought different strengths to the table and shared a vision for a magazine celebrating millennial women, their stories, their businesses, and the many ways they define success. We also had the optimism of people who believed that if we worked hard enough, we could make all the pieces fit.

Our first issue taught us that building a publication is considerably more complicated than imagining one. We learned about timelines, partnerships, responsibilities, communication, and the sheer amount of work required to turn a creative vision into something readers could experience.

Our first issue was, in many ways, a pilot. By the time we began developing Issue 2, the question had changed. We already knew we could produce a magazine. Now we needed to understand what kind of magazine we wanted ROSE to become and what meaningful success would look like beyond releasing another issue.

Imagine wanting to launch a business, change careers, or develop a new habit. Having a goal is a start, but you also need to consider your resources, the steps you plan to take, and what might prevent you from moving forward.

A logic model can reveal that the goal itself isn't the problem. Perhaps the timeline is unrealistic, the resources are insufficient, or an assumption behind the plan simply isn't true. "Any goal is a chain of hypotheses, and when something isn't working, you can use a logic model to look for the link that broke," Rachel told me.

Having spent years building businesses and coaching entrepreneurs, I know how easy it is to become so focused on reaching a destination that we forget to ask whether the road we chose still makes sense. Rachel has helped me appreciate the value of stepping back to examine what is happening between the vision and the result. Evaluation isn't about criticizing ourselves for getting something wrong. It's about learning from what the experience is telling us.

Rachel helped us think about the difference between producing something and creating a lasting difference through it. She also helped us recognize that our original division of responsibilities didn't necessarily reflect how our team worked best.

I had naturally assumed a leading role, as I often had in other ventures. But our strengths and circumstances were evolving. Rachel's ability to coordinate information, manage projects, and keep the bigger picture in view made her a natural fit to take on more leadership. I could hold the vision without being at the forefront of every decision. Luci could focus on creative direction, design, and our digital presence. Rachel could help bring our moving parts together.

That shift required all three of us to reconsider some of our assumptions about how we thought things should work. It is one of the less glamorous sides of entrepreneurship: sometimes the most important growth happens when you realize that the way you started is not the way you need to continue.

A THEORY OF CHANGE

A logic model helps explain how an initiative is expected to work. A theory of change takes a wider view, exploring why the work matters and how it might contribute to a larger, long-term difference.

For ROSE, publishing an issue is an output. Our bigger ambition is to create meaningful opportunities for storytelling, knowledge-sharing, connection, and visibility for women.

When the plan changes

There is a particular vulnerability in evaluating something you love.

With ROSE, Rachel isn't examining a project from a distance. She is evaluating something she helped create and cares deeply about. The work is personal, and the stakes feel different.

She understands that evidence and creativity need not compete. "I never want to shrink ROSE to something driven by metrics only," she told me, "but I can't imagine our creative process without information." Not everything meaningful can be counted, and not everything that can be counted is necessarily meaningful. Knowing the difference matters.

As we worked on this Fall issue, our original cover feature had to be reconsidered when the person we had planned to feature stepped away. It was unexpected and meant making decisions about a project already well underway. We could have focused solely on getting the issue finished and preserving as much of the original plan as possible. Instead, we paused and considered what we had learned about the kind of publication we wanted to build. We wanted the people whose stories we shared to feel respected and safe throughout the process.

Rachel and I approached the situation from our own perspectives but arrived at the same conclusion: the plan needed to change. The activity had changed, but the values behind it had not. That is the heart of thoughtful evaluation. A plan is a starting point informed by what we know at the time, not a promise that circumstances will remain the same.

Sometimes, new information asks us to do something different. Sometimes, the most responsible choice is to let go of the outcome we originally imagined. It was during this process that the idea of Rachel as our cover girl began to feel less like a solution to an unexpected problem and more like an opportunity I had been overlooking.

I had watched Rachel grow more confident in her professional voice, step into leadership, and become more comfortable trusting her own strengths. She embodies the values we set out to celebrate with ROSE: Resilient, Original, Savvy, and Empowered. Rachel Stewart is a ROSE girl in every sense of the word: Resilient in the face of change, Original in the way she sees the world, Savvy enough to know that evidence and instinct can work together, and Empowered not because she controls every outcome, but because she knows she can choose how to respond.

Learning to live with what cannot be fixed

Some of the most important examples of Rachel's resilience have nothing to do with her professional accomplishments.

In the fall of 2014, she was diagnosed with a degenerative eye disease. Her case is unusually severe, and she has undergone several surgeries, including a corneal transplant, in an effort to stabilize her vision. Despite treatment, her vision has continued to change. Her everyday life has changed with it. She has adapted through larger print, text-to-speech, magnification tools, and the use of an identification cane to name a few.

In a personal reflection, Rachel wrote about the things she misses: reading paper books and magazines, wandering through libraries and bookstores, and looking at people and scenery. She also described the practical adaptations that have become part of her life, including accessible technology and the generosity of friends who offer her rides.

What struck me most was her honesty about the emotional side of vision loss.

She recalled an early conversation with a person who is fully blind. He compared her experience to that of someone who had lost a thumb speaking with someone who had lost a hand. The intention may have been to offer perspective, but Rachel was left feeling that her own grief was somehow not worthy of attention. She has since worked to practise self-compassion and recognize how much she has learned and adapted.

There is no neat conclusion to a story like this. No triumphant paragraph can undo the frustration of losing abilities you once took for granted, and no amount of logic can make every difficult feeling disappear.

When life changes in a way you never chose, you may find yourself grieving the future you imagined. You may need time to understand what has changed, what remains possible, and what support you need. Eventually, different questions begin to emerge. What can I do now? What tools might help? What matters most to me, and how can I continue to pursue it under different circumstances?

This isn't about pretending that a difficult situation is a gift or insisting every setback has a hidden purpose. Sometimes, something is simply hard. It is about acknowledging reality without allowing it to be the only thing that defines the future. Rachel has reminded me that resilience isn't necessarily about returning to the person you were before. Sometimes, it is about learning how to be yourself in a world that has changed.

A GENTLER QUESTION

Instead of asking, “Why can’t I do this the way I used to?” try asking, “What would help me do this now?”

A change in circumstances does not erase your abilities, ambitions, or worth. Sometimes, it simply asks you to find another way forward.

The courage to look at the evidence

Rachel doesn't confuse being analytical with having all the answers. She knows logic models simplify complex initiatives, and that real life will always contain more than a model can capture. People are unpredictable and context matters. Sometimes, the most honest answer is that we don't know yet.

That humility is important. Once we develop a theory about something, it can be easy to notice only the evidence that supports what we already believe. Rachel looks for information that challenges her assumptions, listens to different perspectives, and considers whether the evidence points in the same direction across multiple sources. She brings the same discipline to storytelling. When interviewing a contributor, she doesn't want to arrive with the story already written in her mind. She wants to understand the person, hear what they are actually saying, and leave room for unexpected insights.

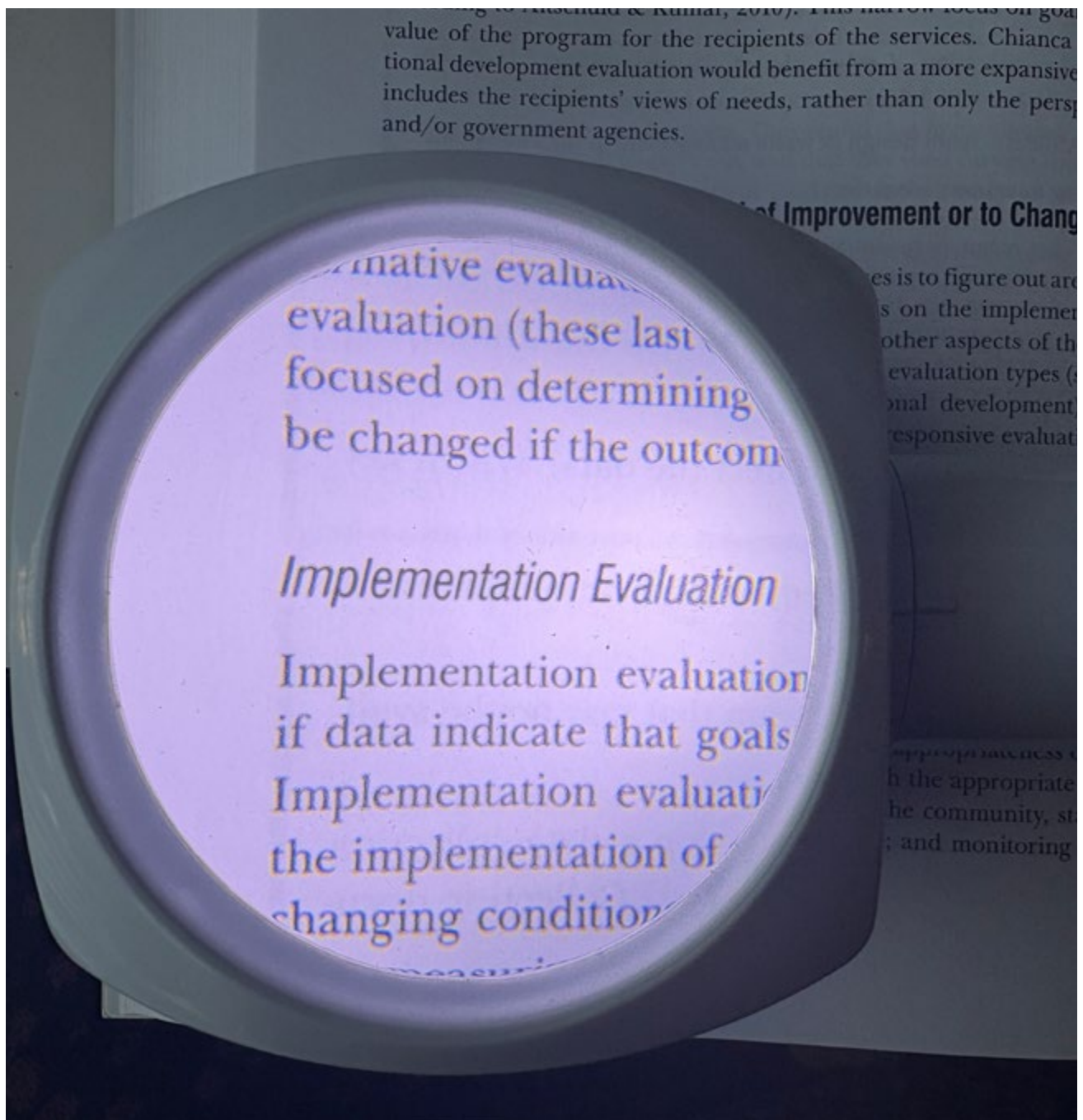
I love this about her because it offers a lesson well beyond evaluation. When a plan doesn't work, our first instinct may be to blame ourselves. We might decide we failed, weren't disciplined enough, or simply aren't capable of achieving what we wanted. Rachel has admitted that when something goes wrong in her personal life, her first reaction can be to feel she has let someone down.

The challenge is learning to recognize that reaction without accepting it as the final verdict. “What changed?” is often a more useful question than “What's wrong with me?”

The answers won't always be comfortable, but they can help us move forward. Once we stop treating every unexpected result as a judgment of our worth, we create space to learn from it.

Your life is not a spreadsheet

I would never want anyone to conclude that the secret to a meaningful life is turning every decision into an exercise in analysis. There is a place for instinct, emotion, spontaneity, and simply experiencing things without immediately trying to explain them. Rachel's work isn't about making every part of life predictable. It is about



understanding enough to make a thoughtful decision about what comes next.

That can begin with a few simple questions: What am I hoping will change? What am I doing to make that possible? What assumptions am I making? How will I know when I need to adjust my approach?

Then pause and look at what is actually happening.

Perhaps the goal still matters, but the strategy needs work... perhaps your definition of success has changed... or perhaps you are making progress in ways you never thought to measure.

Confidence, self-awareness, the ability to set boundaries, and the willingness to ask for help may never appear in a neat set of statistics. Reflection can be its own kind of evidence. Look back at an earlier version of yourself. What feels easier now? What would you not have attempted a year ago?

If you haven't made the progress you hoped for, that is information, too. You can decide what to do with it without turning it into a reason to be unkind to yourself. The key is to remain curious.



A different kind of success

When I think about the girl I met during a university convenience-store all those years ago, I smile at how little I understood about the friendship and life that would grow from that ordinary day. I knew Rachel was smart and kind. I couldn't have known how many different versions of ourselves we would meet along the way, or how much we would learn from building something together.

ROSE Magazine is still young. We are refining our vision, strengthening our processes, and learning how to grow without losing the values that inspired us to begin. Much of that work happens behind the scenes. It isn't always glamorous, but it gives us something stronger to build upon.

I see Rachel bringing that same thoughtful commitment to the work ahead. Leadership, as she demonstrates it, isn't about having the loudest voice or making every decision yourself. It is about helping people understand where they are going, what they need to get there, and how to make the best use of their strengths.

I am proud of her not simply because she is my best friend or exceptionally good at what she does, but because I have watched her become increasingly comfortable taking up space in her own way. For someone who spends so much time helping others articulate their visions, sharing her own story is a meaningful step.

Perhaps that is the beauty of evaluation.

It gives us permission to revisit the plan without abandoning the dream. It helps us recognize when a strategy needs to change or when we have been measuring the wrong thing all along.

We can hold our plans loosely and our values tightly. We can be proud of our progress without pretending the journey was perfect. And we can learn to see change not only as a disruption to the life we imagined, but as an invitation to understand the life we are actually living. You don't have to have everything figured out to move forward. You simply have to be willing to look honestly at where you are, stay curious about what you are learning, and make the next decision with care.

After all these years, I am still learning from the way Rachel's mind works. I am still grateful for the calm she brings to my firecracker tendencies. I am still convinced that some of the best things in life begin when we leave a little room for the unexpected.



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Built By Curiosity

Inside one woman's journey as a machinist apprentice, chopper builder, and artist in a male-dominated trade

By Kirsten Sjostrom

I've built a much more interesting life by following the things that make me curious. That curiosity has led me to machine shops, underneath old motorcycles, behind the bars of the chopper I built, and into a career I never would have pictured for myself years ago. None of it began as an attempt to be different or prove women can do traditionally masculine things. I just kept finding things I wanted to learn, make and understand- and gave myself permission to pursue them.

Somewhere along the way, I stopped seeing the different parts of myself as things that needed to make sense together. I can spend my day machining steel to thousandths of an inch and come home excited to paint, draw or think of a ridiculous concept for my motorcycles. I can be feminine, and work a dirty job. I can be inexperienced and still be capable. I can be tough without becoming hardened. These things don't have to cancel each other out.

Many people are unfamiliar with machining, and when they ask me what exactly a machinist does, I like to say that I sculpt with metal. Using lathes and mills, I take ugly, raw and rusty metal and turn it into something beautiful, shiny, and with purpose. Working with thousandths of an inch (that's 0.001") leaves very little room for error, and mistakes can be expensive. There's pressure in chasing the perfect cut or the perfect pass- but an enormous amount of satisfaction when you get it right. That's what drew me to the trade in the first place.



Growing up, my sense of curiosity, and my passion for art and creation was fostered at a very young age. Some of my fondest memories from childhood are in my grandpa's shop. He set up an "invention station" in the corner of the shop where my sister and I could create whatever monstrosities we desired. We bent metal, played with gears, tools, bolts and nails, and tinkered with old equipment. Art has always been a part of my soul as well. I had an impossible amount of supplies for a six year old. This continued into high school, and I went to a visual arts school in Calgary. The joy of quieting the world and creating whatever I wanted was unbeatable, and machining gives me that same feeling .

In hindsight, machining seemed like the obvious path; however, I spent years avoiding it. I wanted to fit in with the status quo. I wanted to relate to my friends and their jobs. In my twenties, I had little confidence in myself, and I think I was trying to choose a life I could fit into rather than asking what actually fit me. I tried other careers for a while, but I craved something tangible- the feeling of

working with my hands and watching something take shape in front of me. After a year of soul-searching, my mom (who is a machinist-millwright) finally asked the rather obvious question: why not try machining? I obsessively watched videos of men ripping metal on the lathe and I was hooked. The intensity, the concentration, and even the danger. Curiosity Won.

For all the years I spent avoiding machining, it felt strangely natural. Learning how to run a lathe, how to use precision measuring tools, then making my first part was a high I will never forget. I was learning something difficult and slowly becoming competent. Loving the work, however, didn't mean I felt like I belonged immediately. Being an apprentice means getting comfortable with not knowing. Being the only woman in the room can make that uncertainty feel considerably more visible. I felt a constant pressure to work harder, learn faster and prove that I deserved to be there. Eventually I realized that the biggest battle wasn't always convincing other people that I belonged there. Sometimes it was convincing myself.

For a long time, I thought strength meant enduring. If I was struggling, my answer was work harder, keep my head down and prove I could handle it. Eventually, I had to ask myself whether staying somewhere that was eroding my confidence was actually making me stronger—or whether I was afraid that leaving would mean I failed. I was at a crossroads: Do I stay in a familiar shop where I feel stifled, under-utilized and like I wasn't reaching my full potential? Or do I find a new shop, one that could be 10 times better or 10 times worse? I chose the latter.

In a new shop, I began to see the difference between an environment that challenges you and one that makes you doubt yourself. I was still an apprentice. I still made mistakes, asked questions and had lots to learn. But I was learning in a place that gave me the opportunity to grow. Strength isn't measured by how much you're willing to tolerate. Sometimes it's trusting yourself enough to know you deserve better, and have the courage to move towards it.

That kind of courage came much easier when I decided to build a chopper. At work, I was learning to trust myself enough to be a beginner. In the garage, I never questioned my right to be there. In some ways it's like a grown-up invention station. The tools are better, the projects are cooler, but the impulse is the same: I have an idea, and I want to see if I can make it real. Building my chopper brought together two parts of myself I once thought lived in completely different worlds. I could fabricate parts, solve problems, then turn around and paint orchids on my tank. Design it exactly as I envisioned it, like a moving sculpture. I was able to express myself, and figure out hard stuff at the same time. It gave me the feeling I had been searching for for years.



I've started to wonder how many things we talk ourselves out of because we don't see ourselves as the kind of woman who does them. I spent years trying to find a life I could fit into, when I could have been building one that fit me. You don't need to know exactly who you are before you begin, and you certainly don't have to be fearless. I was nervous the first time I machined a part with tight tolerances, and worried I assembled something on my bike completely wrong. I asked myself, "am I really allowed to be in these spaces?" Sometimes being afraid means you're challenging yourself, trying something new, and embracing your authenticity. Follow what interests you. Ask questions. Make mistakes. Give yourself permission to change, grow and surprise yourself. Sometimes curiosity is enough to start. Let it win.



Kirsten Sjostrom is a machinist apprentice, hobby artist and chopper builder based in Edmonton, Alberta. She has a love for making things, learning difficult skills, and finding ways to bring her technical and creative worlds together. Outside of the machine shop she can usually be found cuddling her dog Bean, painting or riding her chopper. You can follow her projects and adventures on Instagram at @_Curse.ten_



Something You Grow

After her ADHD and autism diagnosis, one military brat found the missing piece in the culture she was raised in.

By: Rebecca Eby

When we think of culture, most people think of it as where someone comes from, how they dress, the foods they eat, the way they talk and interact with people, celebrations, and so on. Unless you are in science, then it might mean you are growing it. Which really, when you think about it, you grow into the societal culture you are raised in.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines culture as:

- A. the beliefs, customs, arts, etc. of a particular social group, place, or time
- B. a particular society that has its own characteristic features of everyday existence (as pastimes or a way of life)
- C. the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization
- D. the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.

I have started thinking more on culture as I reflect on my ASD/ADHD diagnosis I received last year. My dad was already in the military when I was born, and I was 18 when I set out on my own. Being raised in a family with one parent in the military shaped me much more than I had realized: how I connect with people, what I perceive as normal social patterns, travel, my values, and so on. While some of my experiences could be better understood now due to my diagnosis, there were still a number which left me puzzled so it got me to thinking...

What if the military has its own culture?

- By these definitions, it checks every box.
- It has its own language in acronyms, speech patterns and emphasis
 - » CFL: Corporal For Life), not Canadian Football League
 - » PQM: Permanent Married Quarters. Yep, have to be married to get one, otherwise it's the barracks for you (well, that's how it used to be)
 - » MP: Military Police... or Military Policeman... or Muster Point... or Military Parade...context matters
- The shared experiences, social interactions and way of everyday life are unique
- There are common goals, rules and values.

As I thought about this, I realized this was the missing piece. There wasn't really a "click" but once I had the idea, my brain quietly worked away in the background on the things that "didn't fit" with my diagnosis, and one day it just made sense (welcome to my brain)In June of this year I was in Sherwood Park where I met with someone I had only worked with remotely and we got to talking. He is an immigrant and sure enough, we connected on the struggles we have both had integrating into Canadian culture, and still sometimes experience.

I ran this idea past a high school friend of mine who is also a military brat (we are best friends to this day). She said it totally made sense and gave me an example from middle school.

It was the first school she had been to with both military and civvy kids, and when she asked someone what rank their parent was, all she got was a blank stare. The concept of a "rank" was apparently so foreign that she had to explain it. When I mentioned that the military has its own culture, it put that interaction into perspective for her (and given how long ago this happened, it obviously stuck in her mind as odd).

I remember when I was working in Fort McMurray, I tried to get involved with some volunteering opportunities: Habitat for Humanity, Scouts, miscellaneous events. I found that groups of friends often volunteered together, so when a meeting was planned or a venue changed, the group was notified but I was often left in the dark. My opinion didn't mean as much. Needless to say, after a year of struggling I chose to forgo volunteering.

This is also where a co-worker said they were "going back home" and when I asked where home was I got strange looks. Apparently her Newfie accent was supposed to tell me! Looking back this was the first time I really felt the difference between military and civvy culture.

Let's look at what that means for me as a military brat.



Moving Is Standard, and Not That Special

Moving is probably one of the most accurate stereotypes people have about military families. Here is my journey:

- Edson, Alberta: where I was born
- Chilliwack, BC: where my brother was born
- Alsask, Alberta/Saskatchewan border: Kindergarten and Grade 1
- Lahr, Germany: Grades 2-5
- Edmonton, Alberta: Grades 6-9
- Petawawa, Ontario: Grades 10-13 (OAC was still a thing then)

Edson is now a booming oil town compared to when I was born. Alsask is basically a ghost town as the military and rail left. Greisbach in Edmonton is now an upscale civilian community with man-made lakes and paths.

Thinking of the fact I lived in these places and they are so fundamentally different now compared to when I lived there is a shock. No one living in these places will have anywhere near the experiences I did.

Almost everyone who learns I grew up in a military family asks where I lived. They then latch onto Germany, since even for the military, that is a little unique. I respond with my usual list:

- Grade 3 school skiing trip to Switzerland
- Grade 5 school trip to Trier to see Roman ruins
- Monthly field trips to small hamlets near Lahr
- School was large and fenced in, all english
- Girl Guides we did a trip to Our Chalet in Switzerland
- Parents took us to Holland, Austria and Spain on affordable vacations
- Went to Europa Park and Neuschwanstein Castle every year

I finish it off with “No, I don’t speak German”.

Then I have to make sure they understand that almost all of this was coordinated through the military. Knowing we were far away from Canada and everything it has to offer, including our extended families, the military ensured there were some benefits to being posted overseas.

The military also provided the movers. They would pack, and if desired, even unpack for you. We typically had them do the packing because if something was damaged in transport, it was on them to replace or financially compensate us. They were good at their jobs, as far as I was concerned.

Then I find out that most people don’t move much, and when they do, they rent a U-Haul and do all the packing themselves (which I have now done a couple times). Travelling means a trip to a neighbouring province, the USA, or an all-inclusive resort in Mexico. The idea of living in one place my whole life, with little to no desire to see the world, is very curious to me and I can’t seem to wrap my head around it. I imagine my life feels just as curious to them.

Home Is Where You Sleep

I always had a room wherever we lived, but while it was mine it wasn't "mine." I couldn't paint the walls, I had to limit the number of holes I put in them, and furniture felt like it had to be movable or collapsible. I had things, but they generally had to fit into a certain number of boxes. Every time we moved, we purged as well, so there was very little accumulation of toys, clothes, and so on. I will say, though, that what we kept was usually unique and had a lot of value to us. We rented military apartments/housing (PMQs). It wasn't free, but it was cheaper than renting in the civilian market. If we didn't like the floors, oh well, we covered them with throw rugs or strategically placed furniture. If the basement leaked, you made sure nothing was on the floor that could be damaged and hoped a neighbour had a pump. If the windows were drafty, you put up plastic and thick curtains.

All of this was normal to me and the kids I grew up with. Anything else was completely foreign. Intentionally or not, I always call wherever I am sleeping "home," because that is where my things are that day. Until I was 30, I travelled with my baby blanket, and where it was, was labelled as "home." It is more travelled than many people! I don't "go home" for Christmas; I visit my parents. I get some odd looks, but to say anything else feels wrong.

I recognize that this may be familiar to people who rent their whole lives or who struggle financially. It is something my history has in common with theirs, and many people don't realize it can be part of growing up as a military brat.

Make Friends and Say Goodbye

In Alsask, I was one of three students in my class, and we shared a classroom with another grade of eight students. Fast forward to Germany, where my class had about 25 and my grade had 150. At the start of Grade 3, they spelled my name wrong and when I couldn't find it on the list, I started crying because I thought I wasn't allowed in. My high school graduating class had only 18 of us.

I was fortunate that when we moved and I had to change schools, it was usually during the summer. I can only remember one time I started late, when I was a week late to the beginning of high school (which, by the way, was torn down just after our 10 year reunion).

Something all of us kids had in common was if there was someone new, you were their friend until they figured out who they wanted to hang out with. When I got to high school, the coach convinced me to join basketball and volleyball because I am tall, despite my protests that I was bad at sports (still am). He learned quickly, but those girls were my first social group in high school. Then I found people I had more in common with and there were no hurt feelings when I moved on. We had all been there and knew, even if unconsciously, how hard it could be.

It was the same thing on the other side when someone was leaving. You said bye, it was fun, have a great life. I have a total of two childhood friends, which is perfectly normal for a military brat. They do not live near me and are in different provinces but we talk and visit every couple of years or so.

My parents had the same experience with the other parents, although, being older, they held on to a few more of their friends. The welcome was the same though. Neighbours always came over to help, babysit, fix things, or just socialize. The first time I played Dungeons & Dragons was with my parents and neighbours when I was in high school, and I still play today with friends.

We took care of each other when a parent or spouse was on tour somewhere away from home. This was simply the way of life. Yes, we missed them, but in most cases, we knew they would return and our day-to-day life wouldn't change that much.

This also meant that we didn't have to work to make friends, we were just accepted. But we also didn't form attachments as easily, because we knew the relationship could be short lived. Transitioning into civilian life is a struggle for many of us, because we don't always know or understand why our neighbours are not welcoming, or why a group may not include us in social activities, or why that date didn't lead to another one.

And in the End, What Does this Mean?

There are so many more stories I could share that show how growing up in a military community shaped me: holidays, going on or off base, shopping at the CANEX, waitressing at the officers' halls, helping pack food for troops in the field... I took all these things for granted (and even resented some of them), but I have come to realize they are unique experiences which all stem to one thing. While I mostly grew up in Canada, I grew up in a different culture.

Not all us military brats are the same. Many join the military themselves because that is familiar. Some marry into it or stay near the base. Some completely remove themselves from any military association.

For myself, I've had to alter my expectations around responsibility, accountability, and social norms. I am still going to say hi to my neighbours, bring them baking regularly, and welcome new people at work, but I no longer expect it in return.

Many of the friendships I have made are with people who, while not from a military background, have moved, travelled, have similar work ethics, or have lived near military bases. I have travelled alone internationally for weeks at a time, confident I can do it on my own.

I've learned in these experiences that the first thing I notice about a person is not how they are dressed or their accent, it is how tall they are in relation to me; I have always towered over people so I am self-conscious of how close I am to not make people feel crowded.



One of the biggest changes this has made in my day to day is when I am not invited to something, I try not to take it personally. The people I interact with have friends they grew up with, their own groups, stories, and shared lives. Even if I were invited, I would most likely feel out of place. I do express this more often now to my closer friends so they understand what I am feeling.

Realizing now that many of my adult experiences essentially come down to culture shock has helped me make peace with them, and finally let many of them go. My diagnosis explained a lot, but it was never going to explain everything, because some of the answers were in how I grew up. As a data and science person, I really should have seen it sooner: culture is something you grow, and I grew up in mine. I hope in reading this it puts some things in perspective or at least made for a good story.



Rebecca Eby is a Data Analyst in Calgary, AB, where she lives with her husband and two rescued cats.

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Selling Houses, Finding Home

Realtor Chelsea Zimmerman on what it means to feel at home

Interview by Rachel Stewart

Chelsea Zimmerman has spent the last five years helping people find homes. With more than 200 properties sold, she's built a successful real estate career helping people navigate some of life's biggest transitions. But it's her own experiences that have given her a deeper understanding of what home really means.

Adopted at three days old and raised in a large, music-filled family in Plamondon, Alberta, Chelsea became a mother at 19 and spent nearly two decades building a life around her two sons. Now 38, she's an empty nester, expanding her real estate career into a new market, and preparing to make a home with someone she loves. In this conversation, Chelsea reflects on the people and places that shaped her, the faith that sustained her, and what it means to discover a sense of home that doesn't depend on an address.

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

RACHEL: You've built a career helping people find homes. What does "home" mean to you personally?

CHELSEA: Oh my goodness. I think my answer today would be completely different from what it would've been even a year ago! For most of my life, home was something outside of myself. My family, my children, my relationships, or the life I was working so hard to build. But what happens when those things change? When your kids grow up and leave? When a relationship ends? When the life you imagined looks nothing like the one you're living? I've had to ask myself those questions quite a bit lately.

At 38, I'm beginning to understand that home is also about being comfortable with who I am when nobody else is around. Knowing what matters to me, what I value, and what kind of life I actually want. I haven't mastered any of that, but I'm learning!

RACHEL: What was your earliest experience of feeling at home?

CHELSEA: I was adopted when I was just three days old and grew up in Plamondon, Alberta, surrounded by an incredible amount of family, love, and music. My dad is one of nine children, and between both sides of my family, I have 34 first cousins. So you can imagine what our family gatherings looked like!

Music was a huge part of my mom's family, and interestingly enough, my biological family shared that same love. It was actually one of the reasons my birth mom chose my adoptive family. She hoped it would connect me to where I came from. My adoption was closed until I turned 18, and today I'm fortunate to have wonderful relationships with both families.

Some of my favourite childhood memories are Christmas mornings. My sister and I would wake up, open our stockings, hug our parents, and spend the rest of the day visiting family. There was food everywhere, music, dancing, laughter, and usually a whole lot of chaos! When I think about those days now, I don't remember the presents nearly as much as I remember how I felt. Loved. Safe. Like I belonged. I think I've spent a lot of my adult life trying to recreate that feeling.

RACHEL: You became a mother very young. How did that experience shape you?

CHELSEA: Oh boy! I became a mom at 19, and by 20, I had two little boys.

Sometimes I look back at pictures from those years and think, "Good Lord! I was just a baby myself!"

I grew up in a Christian family and a small French Catholic community where there were certain expectations about what life should look like. Finding myself pregnant as a teenager and out of wedlock was terrifying. I was so afraid I'd disappointed everyone. I made some decisions out of fear and found myself in a very abusive relationship. Eventually, I reached a point where I knew I couldn't stay. I had a baby depending on me, and keeping him safe mattered more than my fear of leaving. So I went home to my parents. The very people I'd been so afraid of disappointing were the ones who welcomed me with open arms. That experience taught me something about grace that I'll never forget. My parents didn't need me to have everything figured out. They loved me, supported me, and gave me somewhere safe to land.

I had an incredible village helping me raise my boys, and I don't take that for granted. Looking back, I'm amazed by how much responsibility I carried at such a young age. I was scared, absolutely, but I had two little people depending on me, and somehow we figured things out together.

RACHEL: How did you and your boys eventually end up in Red Deer?

CHELSEA: In 2010, my parents were preparing to move to Ontario, and I had a pretty big decision to make. I was a young single mom with two little boys, and I remember literally crying out to God, asking, "Where am I supposed to go?" And I felt this answer in my heart: Red Deer. I decided I needed three things before I'd move: a job, a house, and childcare. Within about two weeks, all three came together. I got a transfer through the bank I was working for, found us somewhere to live, and arranged childcare. So I packed up my boys, and off we went!

RACHEL: You've had several different careers. How did you eventually find your way into real estate?

CHELSEA: I've had quite the career journey! I've worked in banking, got my esthetics diploma, my insurance licence, and worked in social media management. I jokingly call those years my "wilderness journey" because I was constantly trying to figure out where I belonged professionally. In 2020, I was managing social media for a real estate agent who told me, "Chelsea, you need to get your real estate licence. You would absolutely crush it." Something about that conversation clicked. I got licensed in 2021 and fell in love with the business. Within a few years, I'd sold more than 200 properties.

In 2022, Garrett (my ex-husband) got licensed and joined me. We built a successful real estate business together, and I'm genuinely proud of what we accomplished with Team Zimmerman Real Estate. But what I love most about real estate isn't necessarily the houses, it's the people. I've helped first-time buyers get their keys, growing families find more space, and people navigate divorces, downsizing, and unexpected life changes... Sometimes a real estate deal represents a dream coming true. Other times, it's someone trying to figure out what comes next after life has taken a completely different direction. I know how much emotion can be attached to an address.

RACHEL: You experienced some major personal changes while building your career. What did that season teach you?



CHELSEA: In 2023, we unexpectedly lost my brother-in-law, and it was an incredibly difficult time. Loss changes your perspective. You realize how quickly life can change. During those years, we were working incredibly hard in our business, raising our teenage boys, and I was navigating some personal mental health challenges. In August 2025, my marriage came to an end.

That's not something I ever imagined would be part of my story. There were years of memories, family traditions, accomplishments, and a future I'd pictured very differently. One memory I'll always hold close is a family trip to Mexico in 2021. All of our kids were together, laughing, enjoying themselves, and making memories. I remember looking around and thinking, "This is it. This is what home feels like." I still love that memory.

There was also a period when my oldest son wasn't living under the same roof as us. We had this beautiful house and so many things I'd worked toward, but I remember feeling like part of my heart was missing. That was one of the times I began to understand that having a house and feeling at home could be two very different things.

My faith was challenged during that season, too. I had some pretty difficult conversations with God. There were prayers that weren't answered the way I'd hoped and moments when I was angry, confused, and unsure of what came next. But my relationship with Jesus has always been an important part of who I am. I've come to appreciate that faith doesn't mean I have to pretend everything is wonderful when it isn't. I can bring my disappointment, my questions, and even my anger to Him. He's God, he can handle it all!

RACHEL: What did starting over actually look like?

CHELSEA: Messy! Haha!

I think social media can make starting over look pretty glamorous. You get your own place, take some trips, start going to the gym, and suddenly you're this healed, independent woman living her best life. I wish it worked like that!

In September 2025, I moved to Sylvan Lake with my youngest son, Teej. We created some really special memories there, including hosting Christmas for our family. My parents were also living close by again, which meant a lot to me. Years earlier, they'd given me somewhere safe to land when I became a young mom, and here they were supporting me through another major transition.

There were days I was genuinely excited about my future and others when I felt completely overwhelmed. When Garrett and I went our separate ways professionally, I also had to consider what I wanted the next chapter of my career to look like.

On July 1, 2026 I moved to Sherwood Park, and I had this familiar feeling that God was opening doors again.



This time, I was making a decision about where I wanted my life to go. It felt strange and exciting to be making that kind of decision for myself.

RACHEL: You've talked openly about becoming an empty nester at 38. What's that been like?

CHELSEA: I always joke that when I was 19, I thought it would be hilarious to be 40, an empty nester, and a young, fit, kinda trendy, cool mom. Well, here I am at 38, and apparently teenage Chelsea was onto something! Haha! At least I like to think so! But nobody really prepares you for how much your identity changes. When you become a mom at 19, motherhood is pretty much your entire adult life. For almost two decades, my days revolved around my boys. And then suddenly, they didn't.

I'm so incredibly proud of Kaden and Teej.

Watching them grow into young men, make their own decisions, and build lives of their own has been one of the greatest joys of my life. But man, I miss them! I miss the noise, the everyday conversations, and having them around. Thank God for FaceTime! We still talk almost every day, and I'm so grateful for the relationships we have now.

What's been interesting is realizing how much of my identity was connected to being needed. For years, there was always someone to make dinner for, somewhere to drive somebody, or something that needed my attention. Now I have all this space in my life, and I've had to ask myself what I actually want to do with it.

One of my favourite lines is from Robert Frost: "Nothing gold can stay." I think about that when I look at pictures of my boys when they were little. Those years were beautiful, and sometimes I wish I could have just one more afternoon with them at that age. But I wouldn't want to miss the men they're becoming, either. I'm learning that I can miss those years terribly while still being excited about what comes next.

RACHEL: What's helped you begin creating that sense of home within yourself?

CHELSEA: Honestly, a lot of ordinary things. Going to the gym, building routines, showing up for my business, and spending time with people I love. I've become really intentional about keeping promises to myself, even the small ones. Exercise has become something I genuinely look forward to every day.

I'm also learning how to enjoy a quieter life. For so long, I was constantly thinking about what everyone else needed. Now I have opportunities to make decisions based on what I need too. That doesn't mean every day is wonderful. I still overthink things, have anxious days, miss my boys, and occasionally wonder what on Earth I'm doing! But I'm getting better at not expecting myself to have everything figured out.

RACHEL: And somewhere along the way, you found love again!



CHELSEA: It's been such a beautiful surprise. Justin came into my life during a time when so much was changing, and one of the things I appreciate about our relationship is that we both have very full lives. I'm discovering how much I enjoy having a relationship where we can support each other while still pursuing our individual goals. Sometimes it's just making coffee together, going to the gym, laughing about something ridiculous, or spending a quiet morning at home. We're getting ready to move into an acreage together. I'm really looking forward to making it our home.

Something I've been reminding myself throughout this season is that I'm allowed to have a different experience this time. I don't need to assume that my future will look like my past. Justin and I each have these enormous lives, and I really love that about us.

RACHEL: Does moving into a new home feel different this time?

CHELSEA: Absolutely! I'm excited about the acreage, having our families over, creating traditions, and making memories together. But I'm equally excited about continuing to build my own life. I'm expanding my real estate business into Edmonton and the surrounding communities, continuing to work on my health, spending time with my friends and family, and enjoying my relationship with my boys as they become adults. For the first time, I'm starting to see how all those different parts of my life can exist together without any one of them needing to define me entirely.

RACHEL: What would you tell another woman who's facing a major life change?

CHELSEA: I'd probably tell her something I've had to remind myself of quite a bit lately: Give yourself permission to have a different experience this time.

I think we sometimes get so caught up in what happened before that we assume things will always turn out the same way. Maybe a relationship ended,

a career didn't work out, or life simply didn't follow the plan you had for yourself. That doesn't mean the next chapter has to look anything like the last one.

RACHEL: You started this conversation with memories of Christmas and family. What do you hope home feels like this Christmas?

CHELSEA: Oh, I hope it's full of all the things I remember loving as a little girl! Good food, music playing, family coming through the door, lots of laughter, and probably a little chaos because that's just who we are! Haha!

I hope our boys walk through the door and feel that same sense of belonging I remember from my childhood. I'm excited for Justin and me to create our own traditions and enjoy this new chapter together. But I think what I'm looking forward to most is having a moment to stop, look around, and appreciate how far I've come.

A year ago, I couldn't have imagined what my life would look like today. There were so many unknowns. I was grieving a future I'd spent years imagining, rebuilding my business, and preparing for Teej to leave home.. I think about that young mom packing up her boys and moving to Red Deer with little more than a job, a place to live, and a whole lot of faith. I think about the woman who worked so hard to build a family and a career, and how difficult it was to accept that some things weren't going to turn out the way she'd hoped. And I think about the woman I am today. I'm proud of her. Not because she's done everything right, because Lord knows she hasn't!



But because she's continued to grow, to learn, to love, and to trust God even when life didn't make sense.

If my children or grandchildren ever look back on my life, I hope that's what they see. I hope they know that I made mistakes, experienced heartbreak, questioned things, and had moments when I was genuinely afraid. But I also hope they see a woman who never stopped believing there was something beautiful worth moving toward. My life looks very different from what I thought it would at 38. And you know what? I'm happy. I'm grateful. I'm hopeful about the future. For so long, I thought home was something I needed to find in a place, a person, or a life that looked a certain way. Now I know that the people and places I love can change, and my life will continue to change with them. But my faith always gives me something steady to center me and come back to, and I'm learning to find peace with the woman God created me to be. Maybe that's what coming home to myself has meant all along.



Chelsea Zimmerman is an Alberta REALTOR® with more than 200 properties sold and a passion for helping people navigate life's biggest transitions. A proud mother of two grown sons, she's expanding her real estate business throughout Edmonton and surrounding communities while embracing a new chapter of life, love, and personal growth.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

Ephesians 3:20



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Libby Ward

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My Life as Clay

Kirandeep Kaur

I landed in Canada with two suitcases, excitement for the future, a pep in my step, and a heart full of faith and courage. Charting my life in accordance with the societal standards of ‘success’, I enrolled in graduate studies. The future looked bright to me as I continued to fulfill my obligations successfully. I personified the values that made me a ‘good person’: hardworking, agreeable, easy-going, and ready to please, even to the detriment of my own aspirations. I worked diligently to create a successful career for myself and be a productive member of society. I got rewarded for my perseverance: I finished my graduate studies, got married, and started climbing up the career ladder steadily.

In 2019, I was diagnosed with a chronic illness. I choose not to share the details of my diagnosis here. In 2020, I took a break from work. Soon, the strain of the health condition tore apart my marriage. I also lost my mother, the source of strength, to cancer, all within the span of a year. I was no longer a daughter, a wife, or an employee.

Moving out of my marital home, I found myself standing in the middle of my new home, a one-bedroom apartment with my belongings scattered haphazardly and consumed by a deafening silence. It was the absence of familiar items, my husband’s belongings, and the dogs and their toys, that made my heart heavy and ache beyond my conception. The bright sun glared through the curtainless windows, but the light inside me had turned into an unnerving darkness. Losing my familial relationships and affiliations, I felt like a boat stranded on the rough sea of life, without a beaten path to follow or an anchor to hold steady. The deep grief of losing the life as I knew it and the future that I had envisioned crushed my soul. Life had humbled me thoroughly.

Every time I experienced a low or a high, I reached out for my phone instinctively to call my mother or my ex-husband, only to lament that I no longer have either of them anymore. The repeated waves of grief that followed my reflexes forced me to find my intrinsic source of strength and emotional autonomy. Life forced me to stop running the race to reach the never-ending milestones and finally face myself. For the first time in my life, I asked myself, “Who am I without my career, relationships, affiliations, achievements, and a vision of a worthwhile future?” I set out on a journey to get to know myself. I educated myself on the workings of the mind, and intentionally slowed myself down. Separating my self-worth from my productivity, abilities, and achievements, I softened my inner voice, and started practicing self-compassion.

I decided to stop postponing my joy and indulge in life with a sense of pure frivolity. Art seemed to be a good option to start with.

As I entered the art studio for the first time, I was smitten by tens of small white clay sculptures, sitting patiently on the shelves along the hallway, waiting for their turn to the baking kiln. On my way to the studio for my class, I peeked into the studios on either side of the hallway and saw people deeply absorbed in creating their art.

Sitting in my studio, I gently touched the clay already laid out on the workstations. Its mild plastic smell took me right down memory lane to my childhood, where I was carefree and enthusiastic about life. The dense and cool texture resisted any manipulation initially. But I continued to knead gently and patiently. The warm kneading finally made it through. The clay yielded and could now be crafted into anything that I wanted. The possibilities were infinite!

Looking at it, I asked myself, “what if I look at my life as clay? Can I be patient and gentle with myself and my circumstances? What if I muster the courage to experiment again and allow joy in my life. I observed the sculpture I had created, and my heart slowed down a little. A sudden calm washed over me as I heaved a sigh of relief. The boat that once felt uncontrolled on the surface of the sea of life had started creating its inner anchor. The waves of life will get rough again, and the winds will often be out of my control, but my inner anchor will strive to keep my boat afloat. Now I see glimmers of hope shining through the dark clouds of grief and can honour both. I live for the future that is full of potential opportunities and deserving of freedom from the past.



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Content note: This piece discusses postpartum psychosis, including suicide, self-harm, and the deaths of children. Please read in whatever way feels right for you, including pausing or skipping ahead. Postpartum psychosis is a medical emergency. It is treatable, and support resources are listed at the end of this article.



The Uninvited Party Guest: My Journey Through Postpartum Psychosis

One Survivor's Journey Through Postpartum Psychosis

By Chelsea Ramsey

We all know the postpartum psychosis story the headlines tell: a mother, a family, an unthinkable tragedy. We debate it over cocktails at girls' night. It consumes us for a few weeks, then fades into silence until the heartbreaking headline...

I am the outcome the headlines don't prepare you for. I survived postpartum psychosis. I know the terror of it but I also know the quiet work of treatment and the slow climb of recovery. I share my story so other mothers know they aren't lost, and so the world can see that a medical crisis for what it is, not a moral failure.

Lately, the trial of Lindsay Clancy has dominated my feeds, and the comments fall into two camps. Camp A believes she is a cold-blooded murderer who needs to rot in prison for the rest of her life. Camp B believes she was mentally ill, the system failed her, and she is living the worst nightmare a mom ever could.

"I could never harm my children."

"I'll never understand how a mother can kill her own child."

"What a terrible mother...she deserves to be locked up for the rest of her life."

"She needs to pay for what she did."

"I don't care how sick I was, I would never kill myself or my own kids."

"Postpartum psychosis is such a bullshit excuse."

These are all things I thought and said before 2023, when postpartum psychosis showed up to my party, almost as if to say, "Oh, really? I'm a bullshit excuse? Ha, we'll see about that".

Who's That Girl?

Postpartum psychosis (PPP) didn't show up loudly. She didn't burst through the door with noisemakers, confetti, and an outfit demanding to be seen. That would have been too kind. That would have allowed me or my loved ones to grab hold of her and toss her out.

She was more the quiet type; the wallflower who finds a corner to observe. Little by little, she made her way into the centre of the room. Before long, all eyes were on her, and BABYYY, she was thriving. She never wanted to leave. When the night should have ended, she turned the music up. PPP demanded one more drink, one more dance, each moment more aggressive and volatile than the last.

She showed up quietly, yet blasted her playlist loudly. Three years on, the ringing has faded... and most days, I pick my own music.

The Guest List

For my entire life, I wanted to be a mother. People often told me how good I was with kids, that I was meant for it. Baby fever started at 23, two years after I got married. Not having children was never part of the plan, but neither was infertility.

For someone who so desperately wanted children, infertility felt like the worst thing that could happen. That journey was painful, yet it gave me a profound sense of pride and appreciation when I finally did have my first child. My firstborn, now eight, came into the world and we thrived instantly. From day one, I fell into motherhood with ease. There were the "normal" challenges like breastfeeding, a baby who wouldn't sleep, adjusting to a new lifestyle, etc., but for the most part it all just came naturally.

You can imagine my surprise when that wasn't my experience with my secondborn. Infertility struck again, but I persevered. I couldn't wait to give my oldest a sibling. I knew he would be the best big brother. I felt happy, excited, and prepared. It never once occurred to me that my second postpartum experience could be vastly different from my first. I had no idea exactly who or what would be coming to that party once my youngest arrived.

The Party Begins

The party began on January 5, 2023. My second child was born at 9:44 a.m. I didn't know it yet, but PPP had snuck in. Over the next six weeks, she slowly moved her way off the wall and toward the centre of the room. In hindsight, I can see the small moves she made. Moments where I would stare blankly at my baby, feeling nothing. Moments of thinking, "What did we do by having another baby?" or "Stop crying! You're being ridiculous!" I didn't recognize how frequent they were, or how they were building on one another.

As PPP inched closer to the middle of the room, the thoughts turned to belief that my two-week old newborn was a burden. I felt detached from him. I didn't want to hold him, feeding him felt like a chore, and I disconnected. Those feelings spread to my oldest as well, and I started withdrawing from everything around me. These moments moved slowly enough that I seemed completely okay on the outside.

I knew that postpartum depression had arrived around one-week postpartum, but I kept it to myself. I'm strong, I figured it wouldn't last, and I thought that I could manage on my own. By the time I realized I couldn't do it alone, postpartum depression had turned into postpartum psychosis. Looking back, I carry a lot of guilt for not speaking up earlier. I often wonder if I could've prevented PPP from getting to the centre of the room, but I know it wasn't my fault. The reality is she got there, changed everything, and blasted her personal playlist.

"I hate him. He's such a burden."

"Ugh, I don't want to hold him. Someone else get him."

Those thoughts played on repeat in my head, no matter how many times I tried to shuffle the setlist. I was no longer the DJ of my own party.

When the thoughts got too loud to ignore, I did all the "right" things. I saw my physician, I started medication and took it as prescribed, I reached out to family and friends. I figured I would simply need a couple of doses and I would be good to go. Spoiler alert: I was wrong. Very, very wrong.

The Party Crashes

One dose of medication sent me into a complete spiral. It was like reaching the part of the party where your body knows it's over long before your mind does.

It all came to a head one night while cooking dinner. Out of an abundance of caution, I hadn't been alone with my boys for about a week, but one night I convinced my mom to let me take them home to start dinner because my husband would be home soon. I was making pasta sauce, and ended up burning my hand when some of it splashed over the side of the pot. I collapsed on the floor, not because of the burn but because I couldn't tell whether it had been an accident or on purpose. I had only been alone for less than twenty minutes, and I had hurt myself. I shudder to think what could have happened if it had been longer.

My mom rushed over and my parents took the boys for the night while my husband and I went to the hospital. I checked myself into the psychiatric unit voluntarily. I wanted help. I needed help. I no longer trusted myself. My thoughts were no longer mine. My body was no longer mine. I was simply not okay. I spent a week at the hospital, separated from my six-week old newborn and my four-year old. We believed I was doing the right thing.

When it came time to go home, I thought I was "cured". The party was over, and I had made it to the next morning... or so I thought.

The Unwanted Party Favours

Postpartum depression and psychosis are fickle and cruel. They show up in their own way, and what they look like one day can be the complete opposite of the next. I came home on a Wednesday. By Saturday I was right back in the emergency room, with a security guard checking on me every ten minutes. I felt “fine” on Friday, yet awoke to voices on Saturday morning.

Voices that were not mine. Not my son’s, not my husband’s. They were unrecognizable, but there was a calmness amongst them. They could have almost been comforting, if it weren’t for what they were telling me:

“Hurt him.”

“He’s the reason you’re not getting better.”

“Do it. He’s a threat to you.”

The “him”, the so-called threat? My four-year old son. My precious boy, my firstborn, the one who made me a mama. My son who had just spent a week away from his mother, only seeing her for thirty minutes at a time behind locked doors in a scary place. He missed me so much that he had crawled into bed with me every morning after I came home. I will never forget that voice or the feelings it stirred in me.

Over time, the voice grew louder, more forceful. . I resisted as much as I could, but felt my strength waning as PPP turned the noise all the way up. In my experience, psychosis was not an all-or-nothing void. It was a room full of deafening music, punctuated by brief, unpredictable windows where my rational mind surfaced just long enough to signal for help before being swallowed again. In one of those rare moments of lucidity, I managed to whisper, “Get Daddy” to my son. It was a desperate survival instinct breaking through, but the window closed fast. Moments later, I was no longer in my body, no longer in control of my mind. I wasn’t scared. I felt as if I were preparing myself to obey.

When my husband entered the room, the party abruptly stopped. The deafening music vanished as if someone had pulled the plug, leaving behind a suffocating silence. I was terrified, trying to reconcile the horror of what had just happened. I hated being trapped at this party. Building up the courage to tell my husband what I heard felt like stepping off a cliff. Anxiety, guilt, and shame flooded in: Would he take my kids away? Would he lock me up? Would he think I was a monster? Would he even believe me?

Deep in my soul, I knew I had to speak. Saying those words out loud remains one of the hardest things I have ever done. I still ache thinking about what it took for him to hear his wife admit that voices had commanded her to hurt their son. He deserves every medal in existence for how he held himself together in that room, becoming my anchor when my whole world tilted. Unsure how to keep everyone safe, we decided I needed to leave the house for the night. I walked out of the house carrying the ultimate unwanted party favour: persistent, terrifying voices commanding me to break the very world I was trying to protect}

The Party’s Not Over

That night, I went to a friend’s place. I arrived a shattered version of myself, pouring out the awful truth through tears. I didn’t find judgment or horror in their eyes, only unwavering concern. They saw that the uninvited guest had taken over, and they stepped in as my defence.

They didn’t ask questions. They surrounded me with empathy, compassion, and patience. They fed me, held space for my grief, and gently guided me toward the reality that I had to go back to the hospital. They packed my bags, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with me as I said goodbye to my family again, and stayed at the emergency room until I was admitted. They were the ones who finally helped me say last call on the party. Their fierce love played a vital role in my survival, and “thank you” will never be enough.

My hospitalization lasted a mere four days. The doctor was blunt: they were a “stabilizing unit, not a treatment unit.” I wasn’t being healed; I was being cycled through. I was discharged while still in active psychosis with the expectation that I would return to the very boys I had been desperate to protect from the voices in my head.

Going home wasn’t an option. It felt entirely unsafe, and the people who loved me agreed. My support system became my bouncers, protecting me when I couldn’t protect myself. Instead of heading home, I retreated to my parents’ lake house to live with my brother, who put his own life on pause so I could attempt to piece mine back together. He took time off work and became my full-time support. He took me to the gym, walked with me outside, and held space while I cried and shared the true grief and horror I was experiencing.

Because I had been released without a psychiatrist or any specialized support, my recovery became a makeshift effort. My family and I were left to invent a care plan from scratch. Without guidance from the medical system, we built our own safety net out of doctor appointments, therapy twice a week, and pure determination.

Popped Balloons & Broken Glass

For six weeks, I threw myself into doing everything right, desperately trying to get better. I followed every piece of advice, attended every appointment, and fought with everything I had. Yet the depression didn’t lift, it deepened. The depression didn’t just make me sad; it warped my logic.

The uninvited guest was still there, telling me a devastating lie: that the boys deserved a better mother. A terrifying precision set in. In hindsight, that sudden calm was a warning sign.

On the night I planned to end my life, I stared at my phone and made one final, quiet pact with the universe: I would call my brother. If he answered, I would stay. If it went to voicemail, I was gone. It was 11:30 p.m. on a Sunday, a time when most people are asleep, but he answered. In that single, ordinary

“hello,” he saved my life.. My brother didn’t ask questions, panic, or judge. The next morning, he walked me right back through the hospital doors. For ten agonizing hours, we sat side by side in a cold suicide watch room, bathed in fluorescent light, waiting for someone to finally step in and help us shut the door on this nightmare. He never left my side, holding the line until a doctor entered the room.

If you are ever standing where I stood, please don’t leave it to chance. Call or text 9-8-8, tell someone, and keep reaching out until someone answers. An unanswered call isn’t a verdict from the universe. Call again, or call someone else.

The After Party

What makes this chapter so ironic is that my first two hospitalizations were in a specialized psychiatric hospital, the very kind of place supposedly designed for complex cases. Yet this third time, the place that actually saved my life was a regular hospital floor. There were no special facilities or state-of-the-art programs. There was a single physician who looked me in the eye and said the words that changed everything: “You will be here until you get better.” For the first time, I wasn’t being cycled through or rushed out the door. He adjusted my medications, built a real treatment plan, and gave my mind the time it actually needed to heal.

The system had failed me, but the relentless love of my family and friends held the door open long enough for me to finally find the right room, and the right care, to begin my true recovery.

Leaving the hospital this time didn’t mean I was magically cured. It meant I finally had the right tools and space to rebuild. My recovery wasn’t a sudden event but a slow, deliberate crawl back to my life. I eased back into motherhood in increments: one hour with my boys grew into two, then three, and eventually back to full-time. We hired a nanny who lightened the daily load, giving me the grace to step away whenever my mind needed a breath. I kept my weekly therapy appointments and psychiatric check-ins as non-negotiable. I prioritized the gym, reconnected with friends, and found solace in weekly

steam room visits. I recorded a podcast episode to speak my truth out loud, and joined a maternal mental health steering committee, determined to turn my survival into advocacy so no other mother would be left to navigate this darkness alone.

Bit by bit, we ushered the uninvited guest out the door and I reclaimed my mind.

With time, a stark realization settled in: I am not special.

My story could have just as easily been one of the ones that made headlines, so disturbing that you'd be the one judging me the same way that I had judged moms before me. In 2023, I vividly remember hearing about the Lindsay Clancy case and instantly thinking, "What kind of mother could do such a thing?" A few short weeks later, I got my answer. And perhaps she's not the monster everyone thinks she is. Maybe, she's a mother who was incredibly sick. A mother who reached out for help multiple times. A mother who was failed by the system.

Postpartum psychosis is treatable, and early detection and treatment are pivotal. It affects roughly one to two out of every 1,000 new mothers, meaning it's not as rare as people think. I often wonder whether there would be fewer tragedies if it were given the attention it deserves. If we start talking about it regularly and educating families and providers, we can prevent harm

Changing the Playlist

The outcomes of untreated postpartum psychosis are tragic.

Lindsay Clancy's case has gripped headlines and created critical discourse about perinatal mood disorders. As we approach Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, my thoughts are often of Cora, Dawson, and Callan Clancy; three beautiful children who devastatingly lost their lives. While I won't comment on the specifics of her case, I know this truth: compassion for a mother broken by illness does not require the erasure of our grief for the children; we can, and must, hold both.

I can only speak to my own experience and share the knowledge I have learned along my journey, and I do so because it matters. Maternal mental health is the foundation for all mental health, and we need to pour into it as much as we can. We must move past reactive headlines towards proactive solutions: rigorous research, universal screening, and accessible, immediate intervention for every parent in crisis. It is time we stop failing mothers and start protecting them, so they can finally return to being the DJs of their own lives.

To my boys, and to every child whose parent has walked through the dark: When a parent goes through a storm like this, the world can feel confusing, loud, and scary. If your parents ever seem lost, please know this: it is never your fault, and their love for you never leaves. Even in the middle of the noise, the storm will not last forever, the sun always comes back up.

To Carter and Nicky: no matter how loud or chaotic the world ever gets, my love for you is quiet, constant, and unconditional. Loving you is the greatest privilege of my life, and being your mom is my ultimate home. You are my sunshines.



Chelsea Ramsey is a certified teacher, mother, and dedicated maternal mental health advocate serving as volunteer co-chair of the Red Deer & Area Maternal Mental Health Steering Committee. Driven by a passion for community-led support, she uses her voice to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and advocate for meaningful systemic change in maternal wellbeing.



LIST OF RESOURCES

Help is available, and recovery is possible. You do not have to walk through this alone. If you or someone you love are having thoughts of harming themselves or their baby, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

ENHANCED SERVICES FOR WOMEN

Specialized, non-judgmental addiction and mental health support for pregnant and postpartum individuals, as well as those navigating pregnancy or infant loss in Central Alberta.

MOTHERS FIRST

A collaborative community network dedicated to strengthening maternal mental health support, breaking stigma, and bridging care across Central Alberta.

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL CANADA

A dedicated lifeline for mothers, partners, and families navigating perinatal mental health challenges.

SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE

Call or text 9-8-8
for a safe space to
talk, available 24/7

NEW PARENT & NEWBORN LINE

Call 1-833-805-BABY
(2229) for a free,
confidential service
available 24/7 for parents
& caregivers with babies
under 2 months old.

YOUR STORY BELONGS HERE.

Feeling inspired? We'd love to see you in a future issue of ROSE Magazine Canada.



Become a Contributor. Have a story to tell? A bold perspective? Knowledge to share? We're accepting contributor submissions for our spring edition, launching May 2027. Articles are 700-1,500 words and written with individualized support from our Content Director. We welcome all experiences and expressions of womanhood, without limitation.

APPLY HERE:



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and pink pants, is holding a young girl. The girl is wearing a pink dress and black bunny ears. They are both smiling and looking at each other. In the background, there are two pink balloons on the left and a string of colorful party decorations (butterflies, stars, and a ladybug) hanging across the middle. The background is a solid light pink color. In the top right corner, there is a green outline of a person's head and shoulders.

The Mom Guilt No One Warns You About

A working mom's honest look at motherhood, career, and the myth of doing it all.

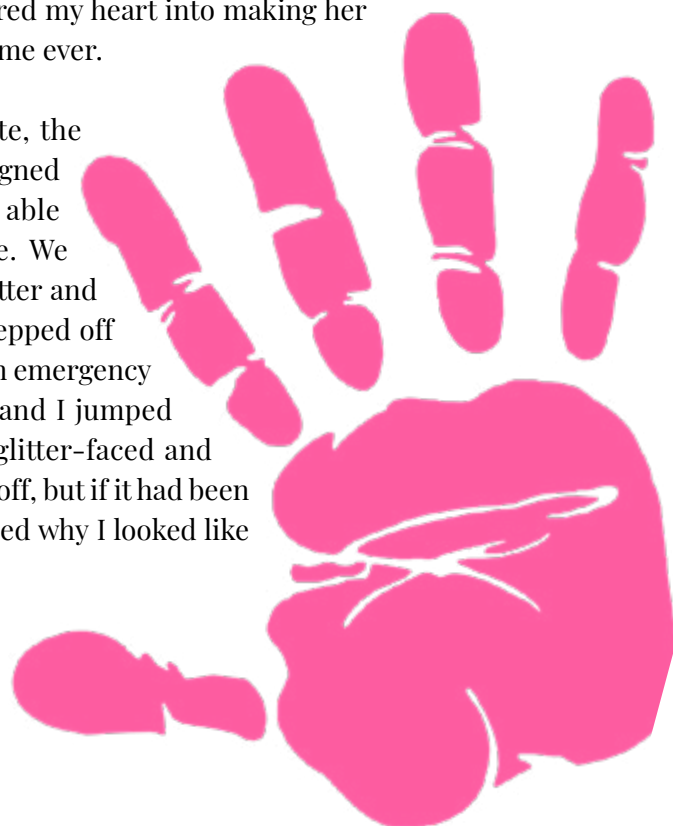
By Luci Morales



Somewhere in between the glitter-covered recital and a video call I almost missed it for, I learned that being present isn't the same as being there every second.

Not long ago, my daughter Catalina had a show at her music school. I had been feeling guilty about missing her weekly classes due to work conflicts, so when she excitedly told me she was going to be the Lagoon Monster, I promised myself I would be there. Then reality hit: a work commitment was already scheduled at that exact time. I felt like the worst mom on earth. But I decided that if I couldn't be in the audience, I would be present in another way, so I poured my heart into making her the cutest Lagoon Monster costume ever.

As luck would have it, call it fate, the universe, or a blessing, things aligned at the last minute and I was able to make it to her performance. We covered our hair and faces in glitter and gave it our all. Right after she stepped off stage, we ran back home, made an emergency stop for celebratory ice cream, and I jumped straight into my next meeting, glitter-faced and buzzing with joy. My camera was off, but if it had been on, I would have proudly explained why I looked like a sparkling monster.



The Best Job in the World

Being a mom is the best job in the world, but let's be honest: it's also the most exhausting. What people don't talk about enough is what life is really like for working moms, the ones of us who choose to earn a living, build a career, or step back into the professional world. Society loves to paint us as bad moms who would rather escape to an office than parent, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Motherhood has been a beautiful journey that I've genuinely loved, but it has also been a massive challenge. It forced me to ask myself who I am, what I really want, and what actually drives me. Part of the answer was my desire to keep building my career. At the end of the day, I'm more than just a mom. I am an individual with my own dreams and aspirations, and having a child shouldn't mean giving up on myself. So, when I felt ready, I took the leap and returned to the corporate world.

Stepping back in after a two-year break wasn't easy. Returning to a full-time corporate role with set hours, high stakes, constant deadlines, and new team dynamics, on top of my permanent job as a mom, was a shock to the system. Finding balance while constantly hushing the internal voice asking if I was being selfish was a battle in itself.

#MomGuilt

Nobody prepares you for the crushing weight of mom guilt: the guilt of wondering if you're doing enough, the guilty wish for an uninterrupted night's sleep, or even wishing for just one day off from being a mom. It's not that I don't love my baby with all my heart. It's just that I'm human. We forget that moms are people too. We get tired, we cry, and even though we can do it all, we don't always have to do it all at once. That has to be okay.

Being a working mom brings me so much fulfillment. I love my job, I love feeling part of something bigger, and I am privileged to work for a company in my field, with the added bonus of working remotely.

Working from home is a massive blessing, no question. Skipping the morning commute is amazing, but people rarely see the discipline it takes. Creating boundaries wasn't easy at first. How do you explain to a toddler that Mommy is right here in the room but can't play? That Mommy is home, but can't give the same undivided attention she used to?

No one tells you how painful it is to know your baby is just on the other side of the door, discovering something new, and you're missing it. Nobody talks about hearing your daughter's laughter and wanting to run out to see what made her smile, or hearing her cry and not being able to swoop in for a hug because you're mid-meeting. Saying "I'm working right now, sweetie, I can't play" breaks your heart, because you are physically there, but mentally light-years away.

Still, there are silver linings. Breaks between meetings turn into cuddle breaks, impromptu living room dance parties, or quick storytimes. Mealtimes have become sacred, an uninterrupted window of quality time that I never take for granted.



Learning to Let Go

This journey has taught me the art of letting go. You can't win every battle, and accepting that is tough. The feeling that you're never doing enough is heavy. You work hard to give your child better opportunities and, a comfortable life. But working means missing moments too. So you wonder: what is the point of working so hard for her future if I'm not fully present with her now? It is a brutal question wrapped in guilt. But if I stayed home full-time and gave up my income, we would lose out on things money does buy. So what is the right answer?

There isn't one. There are no absolute truths here. The guilt will pop up, and there will be moments you miss, and that's okay. Being physically absent for a moment doesn't mean you aren't present in her life.



One Day at a Time

Looking back at how much I've grown through this chaos, I'm reminded of that iconic Rugrats scene where Angelica's mom says the only way to teach a child self-worth and ambition is by example. Whenever life feels too chaotic, I hold onto advice my dear friend Ruby gave me. She said, "Luci, you can be anything you want to be, but you can't be everything all at once. Take it one thing at a time." That reminder grounds me. It helps me stay and let go of the rush and the guilt. Juggling an 8-to-5 job, building my passion project, and being a mom isn't easy. But if you asked me if I would change anything, my answer would be no. Life is sweeter when you work hard for what you love. Catalina is learning that our bond isn't measured by the hours we spend in the same room. It is measured by the quality of our time together, the little gestures, and the fact that we know each other so deeply a single glance says it all.

If you're in the thick of it right now, I see you, I admire you, and I promise you this extra effort is worth it. Your kids don't need a mom who is physically there 24/7 if she feels unfulfilled. They need a mom who is happy, whole, and authentically herself. If working helps you feel that way, they will see it and thrive because of it.

Never forget: before you were a mother, you were you.



Luci Morales is a Guatemalan industrial designer with experience in UX, social media, and marketing. As Creative Director and Co-Founder of ROSE Magazine, she turns every idea into something tangible and beautiful. A crafty, color-loving mom, devoted book lover, and animal enthusiast, Luci brings imagination to everything she touches.

FITNESS

Download here



Band & Bodyweight Workout

Try this at home friendly, quick routine to do when you're travelling, busy, or just want a bit of movement! All you need are some resistance bands and a bit of space. The supersets will keep your heart rate up to benefit your heart health while the resistance bands add... resistance to the movements to make you stronger!

CARDIO WARMUP CIRCUIT:

- Jump Squats, 12 reps
If jumping is too high impact, rise up on your toes as if you were going to jump, but don't fully lift off the ground.
- Fast Feet to Squat Hold, 30 sec
- Repeat circuit two times total



MOBILITY:

- Hip 90/90s – alternate back and forth 10 times.
We sit all day and this will help get blood flowing into your hips and glutes for the rest of our exercises.



SUPERSET 1:

- Bodyweight Squat to Band Thruster, 10–12 reps, each side, start right away with next exercise

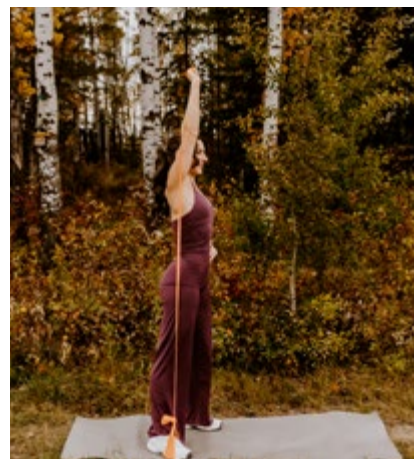
Make it harder: use dumbbells in both hands for your resistance.

- Pike Pushups, 3 sets, 4–8 reps

The narrower your stance between your hand and your feet, the harder it will be (you'll have more gravitational force to resist as you do the movement)

These are hard! Do as many as you can. You can also hold in a downward dog position instead. Make sure your shoulders are still staying away from your ears!

- Rest for 45 seconds.
- Repeat circuit three times total.



SUPERSET 2:

- Band Standing Single Arm Row, 10–12 reps each side, 3 sets, start right away with the next exercise.

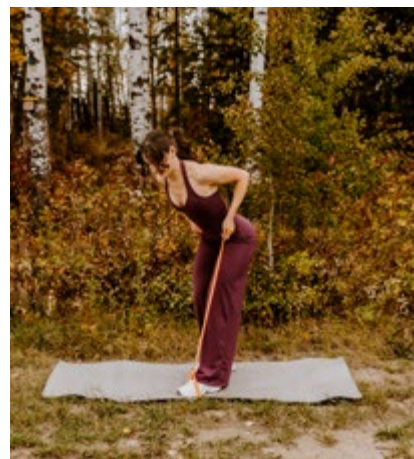
Keep your spine neutral and pelvis tucked – you shouldn't feel this in your low back. Stand up a little straighter if you need to. Make it harder: use dumbbells if you have them

- Body Weight Curtsy Lunge, 8–10 reps each side, 3 sets

Just in case you meet royalty one day!

Keep your knees and toes of the working leg pointed in the same direction – we don't want your knee caving in while you do this movement.

- Rest for 45s
- Repeat circuit three times total



SUPERSET 3:

- Band Good Morning, 12-15 reps, 3 sets, start right away with next exercise

Think about trying to close a kitchen drawer by pushing your bum back.

- Band Plank Row, 8-10 reps each side, 3 sets

Modified: Complete this movement from your knees

Make it harder: use dumbbells if you have them!

- Rest 45s
- Repeat circuit three times total.



Kara is a certified Personal Trainer with a Bachelor's of Science in Health Science and a Master's in Public Health. She also holds certifications in Sports Nutrition, Cognitive Coaching, and Project Management.

Kara has worked in the healthcare analytics field for over ten years in research and evaluation capacities. Her experience in management informs her coaching approach and vice versa - aiming for a participatory relationship with her clients and staff. She started coaching to help women find balance in a healthy lifestyle that still lends time for work, family, friends, and other activities that make each of us unique. She specializes in practical and sustainable habit changes that help you fit health and fitness into your life, without making it your whole life.

When she's not dancing or in the gym, you can find Kara outside with her husband, hiking, camping, backpacking, reading, or snuggling with their cats.

You can connect with her on [Instagram](#) or via her [website](#).

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PEANUT BUTTER DATE BARK



INGREDIENTS

- Appx 20 large Medjool dates, pitted
- 1/3 cup all-natural peanut butter (great value brand or Kirkland work well)
- 1/3 cup chopped pecans (you can really use any nuts you like)
- 3/4 cup of dark chocolate (I use 90% or 100% cacao to keep it healthier)
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil
- Flaky sea salt, to taste (I use Celtic Sea salt)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Line a 9 × 9-inch pan with parchment paper, leaving some overhang.
2. Slice open the dates (I just pull apart with my hands) and arrange them cut side up, slightly overlapping. Press firmly into an even layer. I flatten them with a glass or use a rolling pin with another piece of parchment paper on top and then place them back in the pan or on a baking sheet
3. Warm the peanut butter slightly, if needed, and spread evenly over the dates.
4. Microwave chocolate and coconut oil in 20–30-second intervals, stirring until smooth. (you can use a stovetop and double boiler if you prefer)
5. Spread the melted chocolate evenly over the peanut layer.
6. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt.
7. Spread the pecans over the chocolate layer – you can do that before the sea salt if you like but I do it after because I love the sea salt more evenly coated.
8. Put in the freezer until firm for about half hour and then cut into pieces
9. Lift out using the parchment and cut into 12–16 squares.

Store in an airtight container in the freezer for up to three months, if they can last that long!



Recipe brought to you by
Real Estate with Deanna Bailey



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Enjoy!

Deanna

Final Note



“We learn by finishing things.”

And finishing this issue of ROSE Magazine has taught me so much. Our first issue was a proof of concept that we could make a digital magazine by and for millennial women. This second issue was a test of that vision, and of ourselves. I believe we passed with flying colours, but we came out a little weathered (and a little wiser).

Starting a project, whatever it is, is easy and full of exciting potential. However, the real learning is in the craft. It's in the problem-solving and blind optimism that only come when you push through the messy middle to reach the end. My favourite drag queen, Trixie Mattel, spoke recently in a podcast about the cultural shift where people want the desire of being a creator without actually doing the labour, saying “I think we got obsessed with the outcome and being like, ‘I want to have written a book,’ and it's like no, you need to want to write a book.” And babe, I think she's right. The process and experience are the whole point, and to disconnect from “the making” in order to say you “have made” is “to deny yourself the beautiful experience of being alive and doing things.”

For us, the process, the messy middle, looked like shifting deadlines, stories that took unexpected shapes, and a lot of pivoting to new information and priorities. At times, this was not glamorous, but it was a labour of love nonetheless. One of the lessons I'm taking away from this issue is to make sure you enjoy the process when it's unfolding, and to look where the process can be made more interesting or beautiful, not just productive. To our collaborators and features in this issue, you were our inspiration, and I hope you are as proud of what we have made together as I am.

To our readers, work has already started on Issue #3 (coming May 2027), and I think it's important we share the process with you. Follow along on our socials as we open up behind-the-scenes at ROSE Magazine. I can't wait to show you what we're making.

Rachel Stewart
Content Director & Co-Founder,
ROSE Magazine Canada

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 Rachel Stewart MA

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

A curated selection of brands, creatives, and business we love.



The ROSE Business Directory is a curated collection of women-founded and women-led businesses across Alberta — created to celebrate entrepreneurship, connection, and community. More than a directory, it is a space where brands, creatives, and industry leaders come together to inspire, collaborate, and support one another through visibility and meaningful networking.

Within these pages, you'll discover a diverse selection of businesses and services, each contributing to the growth of our local communities and the evolving landscape of women in business.

Every feature has been thoughtfully selected to reflect the vision and values of ROSE Magazine: empowering women, supporting local, and creating opportunities for connection and growth.

Apply here:

Interested in being featured in an upcoming edition of the ROSE Business Directory?



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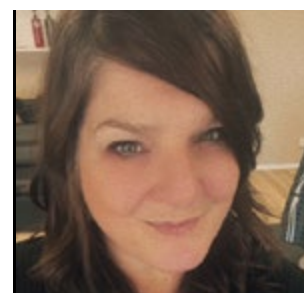
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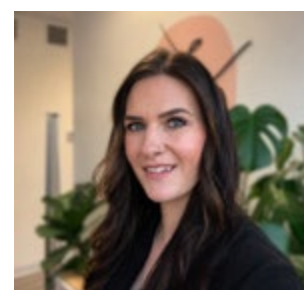
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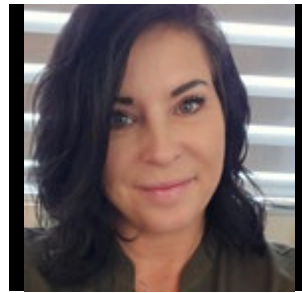
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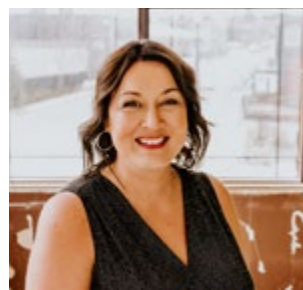


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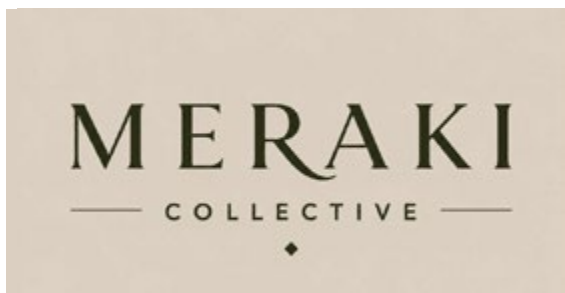
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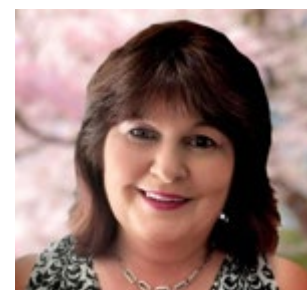
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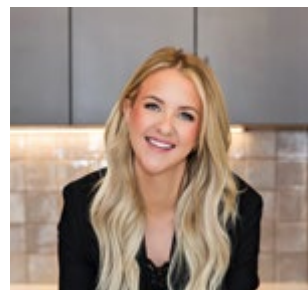
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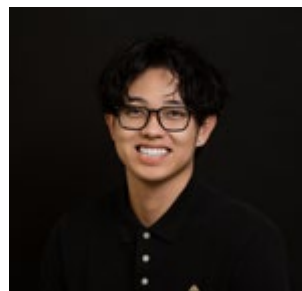


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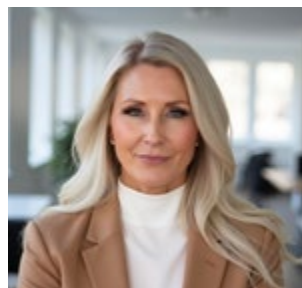


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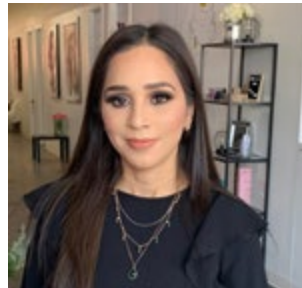


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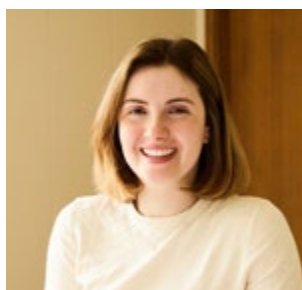


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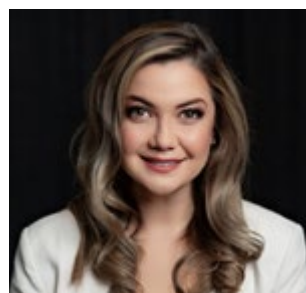


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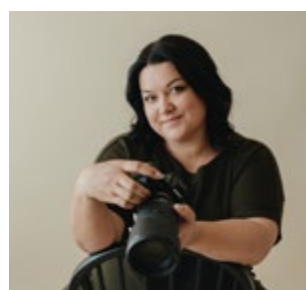


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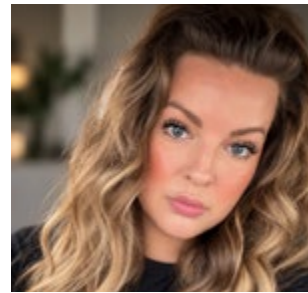
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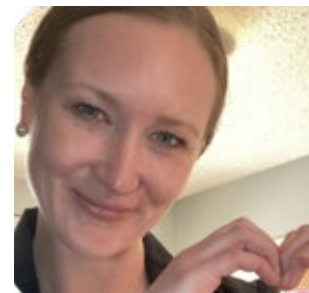
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