

Stories of Survival

THE SWEET LIFE

SUNDAY BARRETT



Dedication

To all the people suffering with physical disabilities that consume their lives and hamper their ability to fulfill their hopes and dreams.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This book is a compilation of survival stories, written to make a difference in the lives of other women who may be experiencing a relatable situation and feel alone in it. What is my goal? To show that pain does not discriminate and that by sharing our stories now, we may be able to prevent other women from experiencing the same in the future.

No matter your ethnicity, diversity, financial status, level of education or understanding of safety and protection, we have all been violated in some way or another. The sadder part of the situation is that there are many others that are carrying guilt and embarrassment because they think it's their fault and/or preventable.

No matter the conclusion, it's time to talk about it.

In the midst of all of these movements, I find it imperative to show that all lives matter. There is no need to be ashamed of your story. You are here today because you have survived. You made it. Some days it may not feel like it, but, you are still here and there are others who want to let you know that they are still here too.

I want to show other women out there that they aren't the only one living thru their trauma That you cannot only get thru it but use it as a stepping stone to survive and thrive. Thank you to all of you who have taken the time to share your courage and peel back the band-aid to reopen a wound that will help heal another person who thinks they won't make it. I know this is hard and I am not asking you to do anything that I'm not willing to do myself.

As I am rewriting my testimony, I have my tissue, my tea, and my sisters. This is not easy, but it is necessary. I will gladly revisit my past if it will help heal someone in the future and I thank each of you for being willing to do the same.

How amazing is the journey of a girl like me? I shouldn't be here, even after the survival of a brain tumor I should be gone. Now diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension, it's just another method of trying to take me out. I'm a fighter though! If you want to take me out, not only do you have to deal with me, but my God, and He's not letting me go anywhere.

Two years ago, this very month I was diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension, and my life changed completely from being a strong independent woman to one feeling defeated and alone. Now mind you I have an awesome support team and wouldn't be here today without their help but all the help in the world is insignificant if your mind isn't in the right place. Talk about a battle! What do you do when even the simple tasks that you used to perform now require aid? I recall days of

needing my walker just to go to the bathroom. If I wanted to eat, it was my moms and loved ones who were there all the way taking care of me. Well, tomorrow marks the day that I return to work. It has been one hell of a ride and I'm glad to be getting off at the next exit with two brand new lungs. Thank you to the family who made the difficult choice to donate their loved ones organ. I appreciate every breath I take.

Bloom

*Petal to petal, I fall for you, weakened by my own ideas
No words have you spoken, no need to damage my head I'll do
it on my own,
Wilting away my self-esteem
Focusing on my dirt, not the good seed that I've sown,
But the weeds in its place,
I've allowed them to be there,
And grow wild they've tried but fertilizer is the crap that's
helped me grow,
Though the bad tried to grow as well,
I've yanked those weeds away,
I've bloomed beyond the darkness and let my stem be my
strength,
Those thorns have helped protect as well as keep away,
And I'm thankful for those who saw my beauty instead of my
pain,
Thank you, water, for washing away my sin
And thank you sunshine for allowing me to shine,
Photosynthesis feeds me,*

*It's oxygen that writes these words and allows me to breathe
with gratitude,
Each petal unfolds daily hoping to attract goodness and mercy,
Expelling my aroma is a joy because I'm filled with love,
No matter which part of me you see know I come from
greatness,
From Mother Nature, from Heaven, from God,
For nothing He makes is meant to spoil but through Him all
things bloom.*

Sunday Barrett

1970-2019

Sunday was born in San Francisco on July 10, 1970, and passed away on March 5, 2019 in Palm Springs, CA. She developed an incurable lung disorder and died from a failed lung transplant. During the last year of her life when it was clear the transplant was rejecting she chose to keep a journal with poems and recollections and musings. It was decided to put her last thoughts online to be shared with those who knew her and those who would like to meet her. Her life was short and filled with illness but she had a marvelous spirit and to know her was to share in her enthusiasm for life. She was a loving mother and a wonderful daughter. Not a day goes by without her being in our thoughts. She is survived by her son, David Johnson and her many loving family members.

David Johnson

Gail Christian

Lucy DeBardelaben

2. LITTLE GIRL

So, I might as well tell my story because whether the fat lady sings or not, I'm not going anywhere!

My first memory in life goes back to my father's wake and the sisters/mothers of the funeral home having to hold down my uncontrollable sobbing mother. I've passed by that funeral home many times since and that memory still haunts me. Little did I know that 4 years later I'd be saying goodbye to my mother as well due to Lupus which attacked her heart. So, both of my parents were gone from heart attacks at the age of 33 and my life had just begun.

How do you tell an 8-year old that those who are of value won't leave them when the most valuable people in their life did? Yes, that's how my child's eyes saw it. I believed that something was wrong with me and God's punishment was to take them. What a head trip not only for a child but someone who carried this ideology into her adult years.

No Rush

Little girl where did your value go?

You used to be praised now your name isn't even known

Who told you that you shouldn't wait and give up all so fast?

When did you discover that your value wouldn't last?

So, shorter are your skirts and lower is your blouse

Being chased is just a game, like playing cat and mouse

*Where is your pride to make one wait because you deserve the
best?*

*Why do you settle as if there's a clearance and you only get
what's left?*

Your hands on your imaginary hips, trying to be full grown

*So, you attract men instead of boys and then you get your mind
blown*

*No time for games once you're mature, now working hard is a
must*

*But you just jump from man to man because none of them you
trust*

Take your time to be a girl and list to some women

*They've been around and seen some things that taught them
how to defend them*

Wisdom is your greatest tool though it takes years to gain

*Once obtained you'll be glad you have it and that it's not in
vain*

3. GROWING PAINS

So, as a teenager, one already doubts everything going on in their life. How much more does one judge themselves when the two people who are supposed to guide them aren't there or in their eyes, left? Now don't get me wrong, I am very privileged to have been adopted by my godmother who took great care of me and is still the woman I call mommy to this day. Of course, that didn't stop me from acting out, mastering the rolling of my eyes and trying to find a hip to put my hand on. Thank God she never had to spank me cause her glare was much fiercer than mine and those of any person I've ever met!

As much as she tried to guide me, I still became pregnant at 18 and had to leave the college she worked so hard to save for to become a mother. Now, my son is my pride and joy, but boy did I have to grow up quick. Nothing brings you back to reality faster than having to take care of someone who is totally dependent on you. A baby has no ability to say what's wrong other than through the expression of crying. I think I cried just as much as he did in the beginning.

It's amazing to me to see my now grown child so concerned about me. Unfortunately, he's had to see his mother in a less than well-state all his life and that's one thing I wish I could change.

You see it was his birth that brought forth the symptoms which resulted in the diagnosis of my brain tumor at 19.

Normally, when a mother gives birth, her postpartum time is spent healing her body. Well, instead my pituitary gland (the hormone gland), which is supposed to shrink, continued to swell, causing severe headaches. Next thing I know, I can barely see because the headaches became so blinding. This was all happening with an infant child and a brand new job. Thank heavens for benefits. It was through a CT Scan (Computerized Tomography Scan aka CAT scan) that the tumor was confirmed. My understanding is that this gland is pea-sized and the tumor was twice that. My pituitary gland was so encased by the tumor that the only thing to do was to remove both the tumor and the gland. Well, I've been on replacement drugs since. One of the things that you don't realize is that every part of our body has a purpose and without that gland I would no longer be able to perform normally as a woman. You got it, no longer am I able to have children. That's a harsh reality to face at any age, let alone at the age of 19. I wish I could say that a pill works just as well as what God created but we know I'd be lying.

I've returned to the hospital many times because the dosage wasn't right and honestly, a few times because I'd hoped my body would wake up and realize we could do this on our own. That no pill could define me. Ha! I've obviously learned to scratch that theory and accept my now required dependence. I wish I could say that just one pill was all I took. For 26 years, I only needed 2. It's funny that it takes something bigger to appreciate what I now realize was once a simple way of living. Today I take an average of 20 pills and long for the good old days. I've learned to appreciate my existence and if taking 20 pills is the requirement, then that's just what I'll have to do.

*Cradle the child who need your arms,
No age determines she's still not grown,
You've seen much more than she and your knowledge she needs,
Be it her mother, grandmother, sister or aunt,
She needs you, what you have is invaluable,
For her eyes have not yet journeyed to the miles you've passed,
Nurture her wise ones, do not be afraid,
There is courage in the steps you've taken,
She still walks blinded by pretty things and fancy words,
She needs to know someone has taken that path, no matter her
age, she can still learn,
Hold her hand and guide her,
Let her know that those wings are meant to fly,
She is strong not only because of her strength but yours,
Generations carried her before she was even born and they'll
continue to exist,
She has an obligation to do the same,
It's not all just in her name but the lineage that makes her back
straight,
Keeps her head high and her words proper,
It's ok to be different, Matter of fact it's preferred,*

*Be who your God says you are,
A queen, passed down is your crown,
You are regal and the rules that apply come from those who
ruled before,
Learn to be the best you can, and pass it on yourself,
The biggest lesson you must learn is not that greatness is yours
to keep but to spread like wildfire,
For what harm can come from passing a woman and know that
her esteem is high because others told her she was worthy,
She was beautiful, and she was loved?
So be loved my queen and remember that your job is not to just
reign on the throne, but in the hearts of those near and dear
and to be a representative of the Most High at all times,
For it's easy to be seen as a fool, but much harder to be called a
queen.*

4. SICK CHICK

There's nothing like the support of friends and family and a great medical team. As I take this journey I see how much they mean to me. Who really wants to stick around the sick lady? I mean come on. It was cool to be her friend when she could do the same things you could but now every time you talk to her she's either in pain, throwing up, or even worse, has diarrhea. Ha! The true question is would I want to be my friend while going thru this? I say yes because I have empathy on my side and not just the kind that says, "Oh poor thing" and moves on, but the kind that will hold your hand as you take your last breath if that is what's required of me. I must admit, I'm blessed to say that I still have friends. I haven't quite made it to the year mark yet but those who were friends before have remained and even stronger is our bond. To those that left, thank you, you have shown me that you were fair-weather and shouldn't be in my life ever again. Goodbye, I wish you the best and pray that others don't treat you the way you did me. Love is key. Thanks for the season.

Ok, that snuck up quick. It's actually been a year since my diagnosis of 12/2014. I was hoping to be distracted enough that I wouldn't even be reminded. I had warm thoughts of mom preparing her delicious Thanksgiving meal and sliding into December on a full stomach. Well, things didn't go as planned. Exactly 2 days before going into full on beast mode at the table, I started to not feel well. After calling my doctor I just laid back down. Next thing I know my doctor is telling me to go to the ER and

have them transport me to him in San Diego via ambulance. Ok doc, now you have my attention! Fully expecting to be back home and eating left-overs, imagine my surprise when a week later I'm still in the frigging hospital and wasn't going to be discharged until a week later. I must admit, I have also never felt so loved. My family traveled from all over to come see me. I know Thanksgiving is a time of reflection and thankfulness. I am so thankful for my family which doesn't always mean blood relative but those who have found their way into your life and heart. I want to thank you all for your love and support.

I later found out that they were arriving in droves because my doctor had advised my mother and son that I was getting considerably worse and that there was a chance I would die from heart failure prior to any ailments of Pulmonary Hypertension and the receipt of a transplant. In other words, it was time to make that fated call to the family to come and say goodbye as I was only given 2 weeks to live. When my mom later told me of this I can only appreciate her for not telling me. In her eyes, there was no need for me to know. I should just continue to stay hopeful and as a result of that hope, I'm here today. Thanks mom! I want to thank you for so much, but I thank you mostly for being the blessing of you and always wanting the best for me even at a time where you might have to say goodbye.

Sitting in a hospital will give you a lot of time to think and that's exactly what I did. I thought about life, love, and my family and, of course, my health. It was during a visit just two-weeks prior, that my doctor and the transplant doctor determined me ineligible for a transplant because I was too healthy. Well, now I'm facing both doctors who are saying not only do you need a transplant but we're going

to send you home with another pump to regulate your heart, so you don't die from heart failure. GREAT! If that isn't an image that makes you want to scream I must add humor to it. Imagine this, instead of Rambo with a strap of bullets crossed over his chest I had my pump for my lungs and one for my heart. My nickname became Pumpalicious! Ha! Ok, I gave myself the name, but still, hilarious.

Ok, so back to ignoring the anniversary of my diagnosis. It didn't happen. This time last year I was getting on a plane to go spend Christmas with my family in Las Vegas. This year, I can't even get on a plane because the pressure will cause me to lose oxygen and pass the hell out which can KILL ME! Not a good look. I learned that the hard way. Just in 2015 alone I went from walking to a wheelchair to walking again (short distances) from being independent and working to being on disability and living with my parents and the hardest, spending most days inside and tired. I wish this on no one but I'm thankful for my journey. This is who I am, and I love all of me, Pumpalicious, et al.

How do I survive this battle when it attacks my heart?

*How do I breathe and then release when that's the hardest
part?*

You want my air and take it freely without thought or care

Then when I try to recover you put me in a snare

So, sitting home just isn't enough to fill your boredoms beat

You start hiding fluid from my stomach to my feet

How tricky are you PH an evil unnecessary?

But here I sit mad at you, a burden I must carry

Now fairness you don't like, nope it's not for thee

Not only are you hurting me but friends and family

*So, with this breath I say these words and please take it as the
truth*

I am simply overcoming you!

I'll be healed, I'll be whole, whether it's with these lungs or not

You can take a piece of me but I will not be stopped

For my Father is my maker and He decides my fate

No matter what you want or what you try to take

He will be the final speaker and silence you in the end

Then dismissed will be your final call cause I'll be on the mend.

5. 2668.9 MILES

So, I guess you're wondering how I got from Washington, DC to California? Well, in May of 2015 I did a serious nose-dive and had to be admitted to the hospital again. This time they sent me home on oxygen to be used 24/7. Well, that just seemed to make matters worse. I remember being taken to the hospital and normally you are directed to sign in and take a seat. Well, the two triage nurses looked at me, asked for my info and told me to wait a moment. Next thing I know I'm being wheeled behind those big white doors and a lady is waiting at the end of the hall and says "Is that her? Bring her in here!" Now I have been to the hospital many times and even by ambulance, but never and I mean never have I been placed in the trauma room.

All I recall is a bunch of people rushing in, talking and telling me everything was going to be ok as they were removing my clothes, so what do I do, I go into full on panic attack mode. I start to lose my breath and my heart feels like it's going to burst out of my chest and take the paddles itself it's beating so hard. I was just waiting for them to say "Clear!". My man is there watching all of this and I thank him for his patience and ability to still be sane after watching that. After being stabilized, the doctors then placed me in a regular room and later had the conversation that it was time for me to have a transplant. Now mind you I've only been on one medication and after that, that's it, no more hope for Sunday? Mmm no! I think I'll take a second opinion for \$200!

After a week, the hospital then transferred me over to Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia and what a difference. They knew what they were doing and that's when I started on my first pump. I was given a medication called Remodulin which went thru an intravenous pump 24/7. Now as thankful as I was to be able to breathe, the side effects of this medication for me was leg pain to the point of not being able to stand for more than 3-5 minutes and back spasms that would make you want to smack someone. I was also placed on some other medication to open the vessels in my lungs and others to help my heart not work as hard as it was.

Here's the tricky part. You are taught how to make the medication that is fed thru your pump. That's great for days when you feel well but on days you didn't, you were screwed. It's no fault of the hospital or nursing services but if you don't have someone else who is there to make that for you, again, you're screwed. I still recall days of making my medicine and crying because I couldn't get the bubbles out of my package which could kill me and I knew I was close to the running out of the one attached to me.

I basically spent the next month at home, in pain, staring at the walls or the idiot box and trying not to go insane. Now don't get me wrong I had support, but nothing like that of momma who was asking me when I was coming home. So, that's the decision I made, to go home where she could take care of me full-time and was willing to do so.

I bet you're wondering how a person who can't breathe gets across the country. Well, that was a big question for me as well. Turns out there was good old Amtrak there to help me along. It took 3 days, the help of a family friend,

and a lot of pain pills but I made it. I wish I could tell you that the view was amazing, and you should consider it but I don't know if everything whizzed by or if it was the drugs. I do know that I made it to California and right there was my baby boy to greet me. Too bad my luggage didn't find the same warmth. Yep, I'm still in Chicago, taking a vacay! LOL!



*Awaken my child, no time to sleep,
wipe the dust from your eyes and take a peep at how bright
your future is going to be,
at all the people you'll touch, just wait and see,
This walk is not just on a broken path,
It's your destiny's end, your moment at last,
That touches the heart and seeps to the soul,
Look at what happens when you simply let go,
The moon can be yours as well as the stars,
You can soar to the heavens, or land on Mars,
there's no limit to what you can be when you let faith lead and
believe in Me,
Fear must be left behind like a leaf in the wind,
So, your branches can grow and you can bloom again,
You'll grow like a weed though a flower will bloom,
Like an ivy you'll shoot straight up to the moon,
You'll attract birds and honey bees,
Some come to take and pollinate trees,
Though small is your size what an impact you'll leave,
As the wind carries part of you to strange land and seas,
No need to prepare cause God's thought of everything you'll
need,
Since before you were even a thought, a blip, a seed.*

6. WEAPONRY

It's funny that I find myself writing while sitting in the hospital. I guess this is where I'm most focused on things I need to do before I leave this earth. I want to make sure that I check things off my bucket list. So, first I must make sure that my priorities are straight and that my life is in order. I always knew that I'd list my son as my beneficiary. I guess I never thought I'd have to consider my mom as well. I thought she'd be long gone from old age by the time I wrote my last will and testament. Now, I have not only added mom as a beneficiary, but also the heartache she must carry when considering burying her child. I wish a sick child on no one.

Yes, I'm 45 and have been blessed to have a child of my own but there is supposed to be a certain order to things; first my mother, then me, then my son, etc. This is just wrong, and I'd be lying if I didn't say I wasn't angry, if I didn't feel this was unfair. My leaving is one thing but the people it would hurt, the people who depend on me for friendship, love, kindness and support don't deserve this. Maybe I'm being selfish and not thinking of God's greater plan. In my eyes a bigger plan is me staying and fighting for my life and that's exactly what I'm doing. FIGHTING!

Boxing gloves and mouth guard, let's go! Ding! Ding!

WAIT - I also need:

Belt of Truth

Breastplate of Righteousness

Feet with the readiness of the Gospel of Peace

Shield of Faith

Helmet of Salvation

Sword of the Spirit

Ok, now I'm ready for battle. Be it against my illness, the enemy, or my own mind.

To be victorious one must prepare themselves for war. We rage against war on a daily battle sometimes just to get out of bed. Then we do things like get in front of the mirror or look at other people who seem to have it all together, then sit at our desks and try not to let our minds wander. Yeah right. It's funny that we were all made in God's perfect image but then we doubt Him. Like maybe, He was close, but not with these hips, or this tummy, or nose, etc.

As a child, my feet were fully grown by the time I was 12. Yes, I was a size 9 skinny girl. I was literally shaped like an L with no curves. So yes, even I had that talk with God about my own looks but today I embrace them and I'm asking you to do the same. No one can fully accept you until you have, and you can't accept anyone else's flaws until you've accepted your own. There is nothing worse than going to war and realizing that you've provided the enemy with weapons to hurt you. It's important to know your enemy and make sure it's not you.

Oh, wicked web we weave when we deceive ourselves
No need to block the missiles thrown from someone else
It's our own bullets that ricochet back
It's our weaknesses we've left open for attack
We are our biggest target and we strike repeatedly
Before others can come in and even propose to thee
Our backs against the wall no room or space to run
Feeling we're always being robbed but we're carrying the gun
Self-hatred, depression, anger and pain
We carry them with no umbrella s they fall on us like rain
Where's the sun, the moon, the stars?
Why do we live in the clouds and enclose ourselves behind bars?
So, limited by our past we don't allow ourselves to see
That joy, peace and love are possibilities
If you're going to be a slave to something always carry the key
To be reminded that at any given time you can be free
For the way we live is but a choice
We can choose to be silent and what to voice
To be safe and not allow love to hurt
To know we came from earth but are not to be labeled "dirt"
But queens and royalty who wear bejeweled crowns
To act like a lady when sitting down

*You must represent who you want to be
While you're teaching yourself that you're also teaching me
How do I know your value unless you show your worth?
Do I have to pay full price or will you go on sale first?
Should I compare shop or are you a one of a kind?
I need you to help me out, I can't read your mind
Though expensive is your price and investment can be made
Before you're even tested, ridden or laid
If I find you worthy, it's not just due to your brand for fashion
will fade
It's because in 20 years, I'll still see in you what I do today, that
you were well made*

7. NO

Using the word “No” is not something you’re taught but you learn. Especially as a little girl you’re taught to say things like “please” and “thank you” and “yes sir” and “yes ma’am”. The word “No” is not brought up and definitely not OK to use against your parents, elders, or adults in general. So how do you, suddenly, voice that word when someone does something you don’t like?

When a child is inappropriately touched by an adult, especially a family member, how do you suddenly use that word, which is taboo? Well, most of us don’t. We keep it in and bury it deep down inside along with the incident that occurred. We think if we bury it deep enough then it can’t affect us. WRONG! I have personally carried it with me in every relationship I’ve ever had. From my mother, to my son, to a girlfriend and even in my marriage I was terrified of saying no. The craziest part is people will be brought into your life who will try to make you feel guilty even when you try to use the word. The test is, will you grow a backbone and fight for self and realize that it’s a mechanism used to control, or will you falter and say yes?

Well, to be honest, I’ve had people call me “Jellyfish” for not having a backbone and it was a well-deserved title. I had no identity and just did what I was told for years. Now my son may see it differently, but he was a child and my responsibility. I now know that what led me in other relationships wasn’t companionship and equality but fear. I was afraid that they’d leave and I’d be alone or that I wasn’t

loveable, or good enough. I was afraid that their harmful words used to influence were right and others were wrong. Of course, those people were wrong in their actions but so was I in staying until the end and not knowing my own worth.

Again, here comes the word no. Using it doesn't make you mean, evil, or label you a bitch. Using the word "no" means that you have a certain level of respect for yourself and that level does not allow you to accept certain behaviors in your life. That's why it's so important to be completely at peace and happy with oneself before entering a relationship with anyone else. Our insecurities will eventually show themselves and not everyone who sees them will ignore them and use them for good. Some people keep them and use them against us at the most opportune moment. We choose the people who are in our lives and it's ok to choose to let them go.

The key to self-preservation is to put ourselves first. Now that doesn't mean one needs to become an egomaniac but how can I be the best for you if I can't show you that example by being the best for me? Especially as mothers, when we lay down our rights and allow ourselves to be pushovers, we are teaching our children to either be the same or be the bully's. Now is the time to be selfish, put oneself first and be the best you that you can be even if it means you must say no. Say yes to self and to the healing it can bring.

8. TRANSPLANTATION

So, on January 21, 2016, I'm sitting at home and talking to my mom around 6:30pm. I get a call and I see the number and immediately my heart starts racing because it's the San Diego area code. I answer the phone and it's the transplant department and they have my lungs. All I could do was smile from ear-to-ear as my heart raced. I laugh now because the young lady was so polite and basically said we have received a donor and would like to know if you're able to receive, and are you available? I said of course. After ending the call and grabbing things I'd need plus my already packed bag and waiting on my moms to finish packing my phone rang again, it was the transplant department saying "Sorry but the lungs are too big. It's not a good fit".

Now my son and I had taken the education class and were advised that this could happen. Of course, I was disappointed but thankful to have only been on the list less than one month and to have received the call. That also showed the gravity of my health. So, I'm talking to my mom again who's trying to lift my spirits and they call back again saying that the doctors measured the lungs and they'll fit. So, we do the mad dash of packing and getting the rental car and zoom, we're off! I remember being in the car texting everyone I love, letting them know the great news. I still have the picture my girlfriend told me to take of that day. Thank you Z.

As I continue to heal and sit at home I spend a lot of time thinking and rearranging my life. I think about who was there in the beginning and who's there now. I think about how I've separated myself from those who didn't take our relationship or my health seriously. Had I died, I'm not sure they would've missed me or me them. As of today, some of those relationships are stronger and some have ended. Shit happens!

I sit here now alive celebrating a new birth and a new me. I am definitely less tolerable of those who do not have the best of intentions for me at all times. I believe there is no need to waste time on others because time is precious. My time is that which is meant to be spent lifting up others. I have no time to make myself or anyone else feel less than loved. If you want to be in my circle, then you can have my world - if not, then good luck and God speed. I wish you no harm I just don't see the need to sit around and lollygag when we both know there is no sincerity there.

I want to thank the people that are in my life because they have not only shown me love but taught me how to love.

Is it time?

*Can I receive my healing?
And remove the pain I'm feeling
Is this mission now complete?
Can I take a seat?
From all this hurt and pain it's caused
Oh, no need to be depressed
Just close the door and get undressed
So rushed to give a pill
And by the way, here's your bill
Now add that to your list
But don't get pissed
Just put a smile on your face
For all the world to see
This disease can't break me
I'll beat it for sure even after listening to what the doctors say
They're not discouraging in any way
Ha! It's so funny I forgot to laugh
As I continue down this interesting path
Hopefully to health and recovery
To a better and stronger me
One that surpasses my own mind
And pray I remain kind
For pain can make you mean
Make you hulk out and see green
When all you want is peace
And to live another day
The question is will I get my way
Is it time?*

9. TUMOR

At the age of 19, I was a brand-new mother with a baby who had colic and I had migraines - that's not the best of combinations. Fortunately, his colic stopped, but unfortunately, my migraines didn't. So, I finally decided to go to the doctors and they sent me to have a CAT scan done, and it was then confirmed that I had a brain tumor.

I remember being in bed one morning not feeling well and my son's father catering to what I thought was a cold. I asked him to go make me some tea and by the time he returned I wasn't even able to lift my head due to pain. He went to put some tea on a spoon for me to sip it and he said the next thing he knew my eyes were rolling in the back of my head. The next thing I know I'm surrounded by men in white as water is falling on my face. I later learned that it was the EMTs taking me to the ambulance and driving me to the hospital.

My next recollection is of me being placed in a CAT scan machine and then waking up in a hospital bed. What I hadn't realized is that those two events happened at two totally different hospitals and I had been in an 18-hour coma. Yes, scary stuff! So, it was determined that the tumor did in fact exist and needed to be removed immediately. Well, my condition was so poor that they had to pump me up on meds to make sure that I would survive the operation.

Now what I had was a non-cancerous (benign) tumor on my pituitary gland, but because of the size, the entire gland had to be removed. Well, that is your hormone gland and that meant never having a period again. I know some of you are jumping for joy over the idea of not having another period ever. Well, we don't realize the importance of that little monthly bug. No period means no ability for the body to produce as it should, which means no ability to have children, painful sex, and having to take supplements to replace what the body should produce.

10. MY SCARS

I have many scars, from the time I scrapped my knees after I decided to play basketball with the boys in my dress and Candie's heels to me doing the Superman from my son's scooter where I fractured my pelvis, and today with my clamshell scar from my double-lung transplant. I take it that some people look at their scars and have moments of regret but I'm just the opposite. I look at them as warrior markings. Those scars were things that tried to break me but I'm still here. I survived this, and I survived that and whatever else may come my way I will survive because that's who I am, A SURVIVOR. We all have scars, some can be seen, and others are well hidden. The hidden ones are the deepest of them all, the scars of the heart. The scars that no one else can see we carry with us far beyond the incident that caused them to occur in the first place.

It's time to heal my loves. It's time to forgive not only that person but yourself.

It's funny because that's where I had the most trouble was in forgiving myself. That person was no longer there or even cared but I carried them with me every single day. I allowed them to continue to hurt me and say those same words and act those same actions out every day in my heart until I remembered my value. Until I remembered that I was the daughter of the Most-High King and how could I allow someone to continue to beat me down who wasn't even there? Basically, what I was doing was abusing

myself at that point. Wait a minute, you mean to tell me by not forgiving yourself and carrying around that guilt is abusing yourself? YES! It's time to bury that relationship and fall in love with yourself again, scars and all.



11. GRIMM REAPER

There's nothing more awakening than facing death. At the moment you face it, you make the determination as to whether you're going to live or die. When I was told that I only had two weeks to live, I decided that's exactly what I was going to do, LIVE! I decided that there were so many more things that I wanted to do in this lifetime and it was not going to be cut short. Not if I could help it anyway.

Prior to my surgery I never saw myself in pain. I only saw myself receiving the call that I was going to get my lungs and then being healed. That was it, plain and simple.

When you decide to live, you also determine who is going to live that future life with you. I have seen people who thought me a priority in my dying and so on 1.22.16, when I was reborn, I only brought certain people with me. To those who have shown me love and refused to say goodbye, I thank you for your love, your prayers, and your support. To those who are no longer in my life I thank you for the time that we had and for the life we shared. You were a teacher and I'm glad I learned the lesson so that I don't have to repeat it. I wish you the best and hope you soar as I have.

You may see that I have covered this topic many times, but our lives are lived that way. People will repeatedly show us who they are and we sometimes choose to ignore it, thinking they're just being insensitive or mean or just that

they're having a bad day themselves. No boo, that's who they are, and you are wiser for paying attention to it the first time, instead of just letting it go. Real talk is always necessary and anyone who can't be real with you is someone you don't want in your life anyway. Let them go. Your self-worth should be so high that it takes a ladder to reach you.

There is nothing more despairing and final than death. You can't come back from it. Once it comes knocking you can try and run and hide but it will find you.

Now there are certain circumstances where miracles happen. Where the doctor has called time of death and the family has been notified, then God does something miraculous. He brings you back! He decides that there's still more for you to do.

I've been at death's door and trust me I wanted to play Ding! Dong! Ditch! Un Uh! Not me! I'm not ready! I still need to do this and that!

Well, there's no time like the present. To do that we must move forward and let some things die. For some of us it's a relationship that we know is toxic but stay in it for fear of being alone or lonely. Well, honey, at the end of the day, when you leave this earth, it will be alone. What if you lived the rest of your life in the same manner? When you're at work do you insist on having a partner there? When you get your check do you say half needs to go to my co-worker? No!

Please don't misinterpret my desire for you to not be lonely means I want you alone. I just want you happy and not faking it. So, bury those things that have long since died. Whether it's an old outfit that you know you better not wear one more time or if someone needs to be forgiven but your pride just won't let go. Bury it. Death is a natural part of life. So, grieve. It's ok to grieve but then live!



12. WE'LL LEAVE THE LIGHTS ON

There are many things that we must face in life but there is nothing worse than facing them alone. I've noticed that there are people out there that would choose to do so, because they feel that they are strong enough to handle the situation or don't want to "bother" anyone. I'm sorry, but as someone who loves those near and dear, who are you to determine whether I want to be a participant in your life during a hard time? How do you decide that I don't want to be there for you? Yes, I'm calling selfish. I know, you're independent and strong and can handle any obstacle that comes your way.

Just know that there are people who want to be there for you and will show in a state that you feel is less than accommodating. We want to help. Being alone does not have to be an option. You choose whether or not you should let those in and trust me for those of us who have been hurt, it's hard to let others in, but that's when faith comes in. You are a good judge of character and all that you've learned from past experiences will allow you to determine who's to be accepted into your life and when. So, have faith and let your life be plentiful. Being alone is a mentality, choose to reflect the greatness in you and the right people can only help to be attracted to it.

13. DON'T RUN!

Have you ever watched a scary movie and there's the woman who is being chased through the woods and she falls, and you lose all faith in humanity right at that moment as you throw your hands up in the air? You wonder why she left the safety of her home, school, work, well-lit area and headed straight for the impossible way out. I mean, who does that? Who says that spooky house, cave, forest, etc. looks like a better option (in heels, nonetheless) for survival and safety?

Well, we point the finger, but we do it all the time. We do it when we text and drive, or drink, experiment with drugs, and even with love. Everyone said he was a "bad guy", "roughneck", "rocker", "ho", or something was just off, but noooooo, we had that "I can change him" attitude and had to go there anyway. Then we get upset when his "behavior" affects our lives. "Why does he treat me so bad?" It's a question you spend countless hours crying over. He is exactly who he always was, it's not his fault that you allowed yourself to be the target but yours. Yes, I said it. As amazing as you are, the only man who can gain from loving you is one who sees your value and it's up to you to tell him what that is. Love is not a guessing game. It takes hard work.

Now, don't get me wrong gentlemen, there are some hellaciously clad women out there as well and I'm sure you've been caught up too. The same rule applies, know your worth and find someone who does too.

I say all of this to say, don't go into that dark room without knowing everything that's in there first. If you're not sure, bring the right tools, like a flashlight and a weapon and be prepared to protect yourself. The one thing you don't do is go into unknown territory without a plan and a map to make sure you can find your way out if necessary. The most important item to carry is your faith for if nothing else can guide you to safety, faith will.

14. EVER WONDER WHY YOU'RE ALONE?

Do you ever wonder why you're alone? I mean not in the sense of being lonely, but by yourself, single, not dating anyone, even if you wanted to it seems that you are meant, at this time and place in your life, to be utterly alone.

Your family is there and friends and all but then there's that time that you wish you could share with someone special. Someone who gets you and you don't have to pretend to be anyone but yourself.

Does that person really exist in the world or is it just my imagination that when I see couples that there is truly a genuine love interest and they're not trying to be "The Jones"?

Is that what we spend our life doing, trying to find success in all ways possible, be it work or family, or love? What are we truly embracing when we say we want to be loved and what are we willing to sacrifice?

So many of us give up one set of loved ones to accept another. Sometimes even abandoning the ones who raised us and supported us through it all, just to have a warm body at night.

Is that the fear that we have, being a cold as the darkness we feel inside? Where is the light? Who is providing it and are we so willing to accept a light bulb moment that we don't realize we can have a constant sunbeam? Love is something that you should always feel internally not something that you should have to go find in the dark and get excited when you see a spark.

The only other persons you should accept into your life are those who beam as well. You should be attracted to the light but only to brighten yours not to let it be dimmed.

As it is said, our futures are bright! We make the choice of how bright it can be, but we must first start knowing that it comes from within and only those of value can add to it.

You are a shining star created by a mighty God who loves you more than anything in this world. Never let anyone devalue what was not created by them. You are spectacular by design and the only one who can diminish the way you see yourself is you. No words or actions can take away what was not an original and that is what you are.

A HEALING

*It hurts to walk, the pain is real
How am I supposed to deal?
According to doc just pop a pill
Now tell me how you feel
Much better until it's back
Then there's another pill I'll lack
So, pop another but don't become an addict
This is not supposed to be a habit
Yet there's rehab for those who've done the same
Because they can't stop the pain
How do you stop this trend?
When the pain doesn't seem to end
You try something else and keep going if you must
Until you find something you can trust
For your sanity and peace of mind
You'll figure it out in time
Don't give up and don't you quit
This is not the end of you
Your peace and life will flourish soon
No longer drenched in this eternal monsoon
Have faith, hold strong, don't let this break your heart
You have courage, you have faith, and most of all you are smart
There's nothing that can stop you with God on your side
So, follow your heart and let it be your guide
For your journey's just begun and there are many paths to take
Some are meant to help along others to forsake
But intuition should be key, see with your third eye
Say hello to what's enhancing and to all else say goodbye*

15. WOOD VS CLAY

In speaking with my girl-friend the other day, we had a conversation about someone in my life and I realized that the lesson I learned could be applied elsewhere. When in a relationship with someone they can either be made of wood or clay. Let me explain.

Wood though beautifully carved, requires tools. If you want to shape wood into something other than its natural form you need tools such as a knife, whether your whittling, chip carving or you can just plain out take an axe to it. Whatever you choose, there must be an idea of the end result and you must wear safety gear to protect yourself from getting hurt.

Though clay tools can be used it is not required. We have already been given the greatest tools needed - our hands. Clay is also very pliable and willing to move in whatever direction you take it. You can decide to leave it as a lump or create a beautiful masterpiece. The main understanding is that this is all formed by the idea of what you think is beautiful. Though sometimes it seems our hands don't exactly do what our mind tells them to, in the end what we still create is unique to our own individual thoughts and ideas.

The difference of the two is same with people. There are people in your life with whom no matter how much you try and conform them to an idea they are not moving. Is it just

me or is that also that same person that when someone else tells them the same damn thing they suddenly have a “light-bulb” moment? That’s the moment when you start catching flies in your mouth because of your own ability to not look slack-jawed. MMM! MMM! MMM!

Now on the other hand, there are others who you can have a conversation with and they get it right off the back and might even apply it to their life. As a mother’s guidance is always key and you can only hope that your child listens to your wise advice. As a daughter, I also remember well what it was like to roll my eyes as my mother went on and on about things I wish I had now paid attention to. Boy would that have saved me a lot of heartache. But as they say, a hard head makes a soft behind and I’ve fallen on this tush way too many times.

At the end of the day we must decide if we want to be the wood or the clay. Both are beautiful and can eventually be molded but do you want someone to be able to touch you and help mold you or first must they break you down? The choice is yours. Either way you are and will always be a masterpiece.

16. WHEN IN DOUBT LET IT OUT

One of my favorite songs is by Tears for Fears, titled "Shout". This is the hook:

Shout! Shout! Let it all out

These are the things I can do without

Come On

I'm talking to you

Come on

Have you ever been in a situation or had a conversation with someone and really wanted to let them have it but held your breath? Thought to yourself, no that's mean, or I don't want to hurt their feelings? Well, I'm sure we all have tried to be courteous and tactful but who do we hurt in the end? We hurt ourselves. We instead chose to internalize those feelings and bury them and they either end up causing us to become ill or just one day explode. BOOM!

To the person who's being attacked they have no clue as to why and it's because we never confronted them when we should have. Allowing someone to hurt you and then not responding to it is saying not only that it's ok to do then but to do again. Now there are ways to go about it. You can hold a decent conversation with someone and express yourself without eyes rolling, hands flaring, hips swaying, feet stomping and for some of you throwing things as well. It does not have to go from zero to 100. You are always in

control of your emotions and it is up to you as to how you react to a situation. Especially as a grown adult, right?

Trust me this is a lesson I had to learn. I loved to slam doors and make noise. I look back now and can't remember what most of those arguments were about. Can you? It took me meeting someone who showed me how to have a discussion. We can agree or disagree but at the end of the conversation I still wanted to be in the same room as that person. That was a first. I actually even made love to them. I know crazy right? Who wants to be touched after being pissed at someone. I mean I've heard of angry sex, but I wasn't even angry. That was a first.

I also learned that people cannot argue alone. If you start to raise your voice and get into a snit about something, I do not have to respond in the same manner. You also must learn to pick your battles. Would you rather have a heated discussion about the trash not being taken out or the mortgage not paid? It's always about a matter of what's important and darling, you are. That's where it all starts, with you. The most important person in the relationship is you and things will go according to the way you react to them.

Alchemy

Merriam-Webster

A power or process that changes or transforms something in a mysterious or impressive way

Yourdictionary.com

Alchemy is defined as the process of taking something ordinary and turning it into something extraordinary, sometimes in a way that cannot be explained.

So, I had a dream one night that I was covered with a blanket that had static electricity all over it and instead of being shocked my hand flowed along with the current of the electricity. I mean you could actually see the blue current follow my hand and there was no charge. I didn't get shocked. In the dream, I even went as far as to get out of bed and go touch a doorknob to see if I'd get thrown across the room, but I didn't. Not even one spark.

Now I believe that we are shown things for a reason, call it signs, or visions or what have you, but all in either preparation of what's to come or a reminder of what has happened. After having that dream that word "*Alchemy*" popped into my head and though it is normally a definition known as "*the medieval forerunner of chemistry, based on the supposed transformation of matter. It was concerned particularly with the attempts to convert base metals into gold or to find a universal elixir.*" I also noticed that it had another meaning which is, the process of taking something ordinary and turning it into something extraordinary, sometimes in a way that cannot be explained.

Now mind you I had this dream after returning home from the hospital from a double-lung transplant. I've had many things happen to me in my life but none that have so "*transformed me*" into the person I am today. I have found a value in me that didn't previously exist. That those who are meant to be in my life are there to add and not take. I believe God has taken what was once someone with basic thinking and turned her into something precious and extraordinary. The funniest part is you cannot be made into something that doesn't already exist on the inside. So, the

ability to be amazing has always been there, it just took a little transforming of my own mind to see it.

I believe we all have the powers to be great within. Ephesians 4:23 Amplified says *"And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind."* We were created by a perfect God and He has given us the ability to become any and everything that we want to be. So why do we settle for mediocrity? Please know I've had this conversation with myself before and out of habit will surely need to have it again. If we believe in the same God who created the heavens and the earth, the moon and the stars, why do we not believe that we can be one of them?

I also found my voice. This is something that I had lost. I was so used to just agreeing with everyone and not really giving my opinion. I have survived relationships that almost killed my spirit completely because I didn't know how to use what God had given me naturally. I had allowed this multiple people in my life to crush my spirit and as a result my voice. Did you notice the key word there? Yes, I said I was the person who allowed it. Nothing can be done to you that you do not allow. You may allow it to happen out of fear but you still make a decision each time and you have to accept that. Ok, now that you've accepted it, forgive yourself and heal.

If you need to talk to someone about it, then please seek that care diligently. I know it may be hard to talk to someone about something that you're embarrassed about or about something that causes you pain, but you deserve the right to set that bondage free. If you don't, it will remain as just that, bondage. It will hold you down and try and

keep you in that moment for as long as you allow it to. I believe that my God is a healer and that there is nothing that keep me bound except my own mentality. I believe that my God went to the depths of hell and set me free from death, my past, illness, debt, my enemies, and anything that can keep me from living the life I was destined to live. All my dreams are possible if I believe. Now am I having a good day, yes. Do I have bad days, of course! On those days I doubt those things but again, that's my mind, not my God. He hasn't changed, just my view has.

I allow myself and those I love a one day pity party/temper tantrum. You are allowed one day to stay in bed, cry, eat whatever crap you want or not at all, cry, throw shit, watch crappy tv, cuss, stomp, talk bad about whoever the hell hurt your feelings, etc. But that's it! After that, you clean yourself up, and move on. Only you can determine how much power you give another person, and the longer you dwell the longer you stay there. Now I'm not saying that you won't ever think of them again, but let it be a thought, and remind yourself of your own worth then move on.

Bashing a person is still giving them energy. Be it positive or negative, if you truly want to move on, you need to remove that energy and put it towards yourself. Also, ask yourself if the shoe was on the other foot, would you want to be treated the same way? I know I only want the best for me so why wouldn't I want the same for them.

When you are able to wish someone else success even though they hurt you that shows real growth and that you might actually be an adult. So, the question at the end of

the day is this: *"Are you going to use your voice to encourage and embrace or bash?"* What goes around comes back around. Are you willing to accept the damage that you may cause back in your life? Only time will tell. How much do you have? Good question, huh?



17. SIDE EYE

Ok ladies, this is for all of us. Why is it that when we see someone who is doing well for themselves and particularly better than us, we give them the side eye? Like, I bet she/he thinks they're all that! Why not aspire to be at that same level for yourself? I have friends that are like an apartment building. Some are trying to get above ground and out of the basement and others are living in the penthouse. For me, that keeps me grounded to know that at any time I can be back in the basement, but I will always strive to climb higher. I love to see people succeed and especially those in my corner because I can see how faith and hard work do pay off, but you must keep pushing and not let a set-back become your new destination.

I can't imagine where I would be in my life right now if I let what others were doing determine what I should do. Be stronger, braver, and more confident in your decisions about you. Instead of throwing shade on the next person, use their light to teach you how to be a better you. Our daily goal should be to strive to be the best we can be not to be like someone else. I say this because everyone has issues. Don't let the outer shell fool you. You never know what that person is carrying on inside of them that makes them feel as if things must be perfect on the outside. There is no perfect human being on this planet. We all fall short, so why not be you? You're an original and no one can do you better than you, so instead of throwing shade, smile and say, I can do that, matter of fact, I might even be able to do it better.

18. DOPPLEGANGER

Definition: *"Someone who looks spookily like you, but isn't a twin, is a doppelganger. Originally, this was a type of ghost. The word doppelganger is German and literally means double walker, as in a ghost or shadow of yourself."* (vocabulary.com)

Have you ever felt that you were average? Well, I'm here to tell you that you're not. You were divinely created and born into this world at the exact precise moment you were supposed to. You are exquisite! There is no one on this earth that can do what you do the way you do it. Others may try to duplicate but can never replicate. Does that make you an egomaniac? No, it makes you a realist. There is a gift in you that only you can provide. People may wonder how does she do that, and you may not know yourself but it's in you and nobody else has it.

You are qualified to say *"I'm beautiful, amazing, unique, etc."* Others may try to tell you different and that's when you know you're with the wrong people. We spend so much time trying to convince ourselves of this that when someone comes along and tells us differently, then we believe them. Why is that? I think you've had more experience knowing you than anyone else (other than parents and certain family members). I mean how is it that we let someone come into our lives and dictate how we should be? I'm speaking both male and female.

So, if someone says you're great but you should be more like so and so, then tell them to go be with so and so. Accept me for me! I am beautifully and wonderfully made and if it's not good enough for you then you're not good enough for me. Now ladies, this is the time when I want you to get up and go to a mirror. There she is! Love her! She is amazing, and God doesn't make mistakes. He broke the mold when He made you. Please believe. We need you. Your input into this world is amazing and though others may not say it, you are loved, and I send my love to you. *Radiate the gift of who you are and watch how you change the world.*

Woman you are Strong

*You carry the burdens of many, though hardly ever recognized
You push through each day and your biggest reward is a quiet
house*

*And the moment your head hits the pillow thankful for another
day, rest never comes easy*

As soon as eyelids close, the "to do list" begins

Amazing how you lie awake when there's silence

Is it because you hear noise all day and know that need is near

Is that our true peace, being needed?

*Is that how we're programmed, to jump at the words mommy,
honey, boss, assistant, teacher, cook, driver, friend, SLAVE*

Is this the price we pay for eating the forbidden fruit?

And if so, how long does this go on

And when can we release the rage within

When can we lean and not be the shoulder

How many more times do we have to bite our tongues

Is it all worth it, YES!
When the 'I love you's, thank you's, well done's' come
Though infrequent, YES
Is that what gives us fuel
Or is it knowing that we're needed
Whatever it may be
I wonder what our image of heaven is
We probably think it's a tranquil place where the children are
well mannered
The hubbys give massages and cooks and cleans and adores
The boss takes the pressure
And our loved ones call to give and not to take
Well that may be the case
But as long as we're here we have goals to meet
And prayers to make for peace and health and faith
Most of all favor and wisdom
Women we must remember that when we burn ourselves out
We do it for love
Just remember that we're training our children on who and
how to be
So please find peace because our children will be like us
Whether we want them to or not
Because if we are anything we are teachers
What's the lesson I'm teaching
Insanity isn't pretty
But patience, wisdom, laughter, joy, faith, guidance, love and
hope
Are the best of us we can give

19. INSANE

Have you ever said something to someone and their response was "Girl you're crazy!" Well the saying is "If someone tells you who they are believe them the first time". Have I called myself crazy? Of course, but I wonder where it comes from. I mean I remember being a little girl and believing that I was sugar and spice and everything nice, but something happened around the age of 16 that switched me into the crazy zone. I would love to blame rap music because everyone else did at the time, but I know that's not it. I think I just started to see and process things as more of an adult or the one I wanted to be anyway. I know I met the title of crazy when my son was born. I was his protector, and no one would ever be able to get close to him without going thru the "crazy lady". Funny thing is I've always been that protector, even when I was the shortest and smallest one of my girls. Let someone open their mouth to say something and I was going in. Even today, I'm still going to want to protect my people though they can handle themselves.

Sometimes passion and crazy can be confused also, so can abuse. There is never an excuse for hands to be placed on a woman and ladies we should act accordingly. I'm not saying that you're not to use your voice but there's a way to say things and it's all about timing and respect. I don't know about you but when I knew I had bad news to tell my mother I always made sure that she was in a good mood and the timing is right. For some reason, we don't do that

with our partners, we tend to just go in. We've seen countless commercials, TV shows and movies with the woman ready to talk and standing in front of the TV during the game or even worse turning it off. That is not the way to start off a discussion unless you want it to turn into a heated argument over something that could've been resolved later.

Back to being crazy, it's ok to be a little tweaked, just a little though. If you are the one that likes to throw things and hit and go off because things aren't going your way, that's called a temper tantrum and we should all be too old for those. There is nothing worse than being an adult and having your behavior compared to that of a 2-year-old.

I understand that you may want things a certain way and I'm not saying that you don't deserve them, but that's when it's your turn to figure out how to obtain it. If you've already tried it your way and it doesn't work then that's the time to go to the other person, not just because you don't feel like it or are spoiled or lazy.

So, get up, dust yourself off and take your crazy butt somewhere and be productive. Have fun and live life, it's much shorter than you think and the things we focus on will one day disappear and all you'll have left to deal with is yourself. Now's the time to be the best you that you can be, and we'll love her crazy butt! Lol.

Girlfriend Wanted

*40 Years old at the time and I only have a few friends
The closest ones are the ones I rarely see and two of them are
family*

So is there something wrong with me

Is it a B.O. issue?

What the heck is going on?

*You would think that would be the question that I would be
asking*

Yet, I enjoy being Me

*I would rather be by myself than have people around me that I
have to perform for*

*If you think I need to change, wear my hair, clothes, make-up,
or anything different than I am not the friend for you*

I am me!

*God loving, heart on a sleeve wearing, will kill if you hurt my
loved ones, crazy as a bat, poetry writing, hard-working,
bargain hunting, tear shedding, me.*

*Yes, it has taken me a long time to figure out this person but I
love her dearly.*

*So, if you think you can handle being this person's friend, then
please respond.*

*If not, keep it pushing, just as I have and will continue to do.
Even though I may not be the right fit for you, I am perfect for
me 'cause God don't make no junk.*

Sincerely,

Girlfriend wanted.

20. TMJ

You ever go to open your mouth and you get this shooting pain in your jaw? Welcome to TMJ also known as your temporomandibular Joint. This disorder is defined as “pain and compromised movement of the jaw and surrounding muscles” per Mayo Clinic.

Why am I talking about this, because pain can be the result of not keeping your mouth shut? Yes, I went there. Have you ever said something and the moment you did, you regretted it? I know I have and it resulted in pain. If it didn't hurt the person I said those words to, it definitely hurt me. What did I learn? I learned to make my words profound and not open my mouth to let just any ole' thing come out.

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Just know that there are consequences and every action will receive a reaction. I understand passion and I understand getting things off your chest, but there is always a way to handle things. You determine the effect those words will have. There should be no eye and/or neck rolling, hand on hip, finger in face waving moments. You are a woman and should act accordingly.

I understand that those closest to us seem to bring out the worst, but this is where we learn. If you look back at most of your emotional outbursts, do you even recall what the argument was about? It's just a waste of energy and very unbecoming of a lady. Your words can change the world,

so let them be positive, encouraging, hopeful. There is enough going on in the world to break a person. Don't be a participant, be a leader, a demonstrator, a queen. Let your words inspire the hearts of the hopeless. You have the power to change the world but only if when you speak, you speak wisdom.

Be wise my Queens and when you open your mouth ask yourself "If the shoe were on the other foot, would I want those same exact words said to me?" More than likely, the answer would be no. Yes, there are some of those who would say "She or he had it coming," but if we spent more time focusing on ourselves then we wouldn't need to focus on others. Ouch! Yeah that one hurt.

TMJ pain is nothing I'd recommend, so for now, I'll choose my words wisely or keep my mouth shut. As the saying goes "You can catch more bees with honey than with vinegar". Be kind in your words, but more important, don't be a flytrap.

21. ROYALTY

I believe myself to be a Queen and I believe that for all women. For those under the age of 18, you're still in Princess status. There's nothing wrong with this status, you're just in training and will graduate soon. Queen status is obtainable at any age. If you have not already received your rite of passage, you can start today!

Being a queen is a privilege. There is no time limit to start the program, it's all a state of mind. Now some are fortunate and can take the accelerated course. Some seem to never graduate. Others don't even realize that the program exists. Well, today can be your day.

It's all about your own self-esteem. You are who you believe you can be. If you believe you're not worth much, then you'll always be the servant. Now don't get me wrong, some of us were placed here to be servants, but if you're going to be one, be the Queen of servants. Let no one be better than you at what you do.

We must remember that Queens are trained from the moment they are born. EVERYONE has been through something that would make them believe they are less than worthy of such a title, even if just for a moment. Just know that you are teaching everyone around you how to treat you. In the way you walk, how high you hold your head, and in the way you speak. There is nothing worse than opening your mouth and speaking something

incomprehensible where a book, be it Webster's or the urban dictionary is required. Being told "I speak white" is something I've often had to deal with because I have been raised to speak properly, eloquently and prolifically. Excuse me but what language is that? Does that mean I am articulate? Yes, indeed it does and that's a goal we all should have. Speaking properly is the only way to speak and that it will take you far in life. I only want what's best for me and in order to reign as a queen I need to present myself in such a manner that others see the Queen in me.

Now here's the tricky part. We all want that frog to turn into a prince when we're younger. We believe that we can marry a King and try our best to avoid a jester. How can we expect that level of love if we don't see ourselves at the same level? The answer is we can't. That's why it's so important to work on self and be the best you that you can be.

Now I know that we're in an age of independence and there's nothing wrong with that but if you want to let someone in, you must be prepared to let them reign as well. I don't want any Alice in Wonderland moments whereas soon as you see a fault you scream "Off with their head!" No, that is not the goal here. The goal is to continuously work on self to obtain and keep the title of "Queen". Trust me the time will come when your crown will permanently be placed on your head not because of the thoughts and words of others but because you looked in the mirror and saw something beautiful. You saw yourself whole and transformed into a Queen.

Now when that moment does happen take a bow, and reign. Know that moments will come that may make you want to step down and transform back into a princess, but you must look in the mirror and remember your oath. Your oath is to represent self, be self-confident, to be bold, be loving, be humbled and graceful and to always shine above thoughts that say that you are less than. That for those of you who believe, you serve a God who loves you and you were created in His perfect image and are wonderfully made. When you are facing a challenging situation, just ask yourself how you would want to be treated and then act accordingly. If it means that action act would require you to do anything less than like a lady, then be prepared to live with the consequences.

Please also understand that in us is a warrior and should someone attempt to harm someone we love, I understand the need and want to protect them. Some may even want to seek revenge. It is very hard being an adult and choosing to take the higher path. You must go by your belief system. I believe that my God is a very protective one and He has blocked others from hurting me, but should I receive the wrath of someone, I try my best to not react. I know this may sound crazy, but my God is the creator of all children and as a result, knows exactly how to and when and where to reprimand us. His timing is perfect.

Have you ever been the person to treat someone else in a manner that was less deserving then have that same treatment returned? Some call it karma, others call it payback. It never feels good and at the moment, we may not understand it. That's when you reflect. Right there. That's when forgiveness comes into play. I ask God to

please forgive me for any wrong doing that I may have done. I ask that you do the same. To whatever God is your deliverer and healer, ask them for forgiveness and seek wisdom so that you may not repeat such behavior.

I'm not saying not to take legal action. That is the law of the land and justice can be served that way as well.

For those of you that choose revenge, just know that your action could result in you serving a prison sentence. I understand that you may not care and will feel your action necessary. Just remember that your loved ones will have to serve that sentence with you.

Testing the Waves

Friday, May 6, 2016, was a phenomenal day. My cousin and I decided to hang at the pool and get our tan on. While hanging in the water my bravery peaks and I decide I'm going to attempt to swim the length of the pool underwater holding my breath. Now too many this may seem no extraordinary feat but to a lady with brand new lungs this might as well be the Olympics. As I prepare myself I say it's ok to stop half way, or to turn my head and take a breath. Just to be safe I give myself a good kick off from the pool wall and I'll be damned if I didn't make it all way to the end. Yes! Victory is mine! Where's the yellow tape and the gold medal? Do I get to play my own national anthem? It was awesome, and I did it all by myself. What a privilege to know that someone else's lungs helped me achieve that goal. So, I guess I didn't do it by myself; that it was the help of my donor who with every breath will remind me that I am still here, and I am not alone.

So, to those of you who are scared to try something new after facing a difficult journey. It's ok to start small. It's also ok to fail. The key is to start and if it doesn't work the second time, keep going. That's right, don't give up!

Even if others are saying that you can't do it, keep trying. Having a hater in your life is considered a negative by some but here's how it should be look at, a gift. I know this sounds crazy but let me explain. Having a hater is really someone who wishes that they could be you and since they can't, they hate. It has nothing to do with who you are and how you should feel about yourself. Ok, enough energy spent there.

So back to not giving up, please don't! You are entitled to a 1-day pity party for anything that makes you want to quit, then the next day, write a list of all the reasons you will succeed and start to check them off one by one. Now make sure the items on the list are obtainable. Baby steps.

Got it? Good!

22. COIFFURED

We spend so much time perfecting our coif, be it long or short. Looking in every mirror to make sure it's in place. Especially as a woman of color, we want our hair to have movement and though we love our family so, please don't touch. On goes the jealousy of wanting longer when it's short and shorter when it's long. Let's not even consider the color, that's a subject of its own.

It wasn't until I was 19 with a brain tumor and facing chemotherapy and radiation that I considered the loss of my hair. Now I refused them both, and am gratefully here, but I realized how attached I was to my locks. So, a couple of years later I buzzed it all off. What a freeing experience and I wore it that way for years. Even now, I have the itch to do it again.

I'm not just sharing this to tell my story but to share the story of those with any hair loss related condition, be it cancer, alopecia, or even now my medication. There are others who don't even know why their hair loss is happening.

Please know that you are not alone, and your hair does not define you. You were created by a divine God who put greatness on the inside. The external is temporary. Let your beauty shine.

I Am Not My Hair

Very proud am I today of the locks that I portray

Be them curly, be them straight

*Many have fought their crinkles patters with lye's, dye's, and
fryers*

Anything to switch its natural fate

So desired is the change that pockets have been emptied

Just to look like someone else a sight previously envied

*From pin curls to finger waves, the beehive and the fro, let's not
forget the Jerri Curl and the bob and now the weave*

All to stay within fashion, a cliquish look believed

*But who is bought by the temporary and stays for what's not
real*

*When did unoriginal or unauthentic become what sealed the
deal*

Not just with love but also in the work front

Why is natural not acceptable or what we want

Don't get me wrong I've dyed my hair the gamut of the rainbow

I've also had it so short longer was a 5 o'clock shadow

Never as an adult was it because I wanted to fit into the crowd

More because I wanted to yell, "I'm Unique" out loud.

So be yourselves and not your hair, just let your insides shine

Because baldness isn't for everyone, a thought to keep in mind.

23. HERCULES

The strongest woman I know is my mother, Gail P. Wells-Christian. Though she may not have birthed me, she has raised me and taught me everything I know. I am who I am because of her. It's funny to hear her say she couldn't handle my illness as well as I do but I believe she would do it 10 times over. I've seen her hand what would break most people like a G. In true form, she is respected and by some (myself included) even feared. I handle things with strength and dignity because I learned from the best. I believe we are all to be the best representations of ourselves and who better to represent than our parents; our creators, our designers? Yes, God planned it all and I thank Him. Not everyone is blessed to have a second chance at love. Though my birth parents became Angels way too soon, I thank them for my mother, my mentor, my hero. I am because she is. I'm thankful for the passing of the torch. I just pray I'm found worthy.

Who is the Hercules in your life, your mentor? Please take the time to thank them and continually seek their knowledge. Of course, I had to become an adult to appreciate the advice that she had given me for years. It also took me being a parent myself to finally get it! To finally realize that she wasn't trying to hurt me or break me but mold me into the best person I could be in this world. That in order for me to be successful, I would have to be able to handle some things that my sensitive butt couldn't

handle at the time. I was so ready to fly off the handle as a teenager and be disrespectful that it later resulted in me receiving the exact same treatment and missing out on opportunities because I was behaving in less than the manner of a Queen.

Well, today I am grateful to have raised a child who loves me dearly and I would give him the world if given the key. How much harder was my behind due to not listening? There are still days that I feel the pain. SMH.

24. THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

I have noticed that in seeking the advice of others we don't necessarily take the best part of it but the part that makes us feel best. For example, if you tell your girlfriend that you and your partner got into it about you not cooking. If her response is that your partner needs to understand that you work and take care of the kids and they need to pitch in, it's up to you to realize whether or not there is some place that you can compromise. Unfortunately, you go home with an attitude and start telling your partner that you're not cooking and if they want to eat they need to prepare it themselves. Now hold up ladies, if you started something, it's up to you to compromise. The better example would be to make meals ahead of time or create a schedule that says this is what's for dinner throughout the week. If you don't want to cook every day, create a schedule and list the days that the family is on their own so that they can prepare something else to eat on those day. It's not really about the meal but about the compromise and communication.

I think of a relationship as a tree, you and your partner are to come together as a tree and your foundation should be God, strength and each other. Nothing should be able to shake you from that foundation. In the beginning, you only have buds on your tree, so you have the opportunity for them to be bad fruit that has not developed yet because you're in the cute phase. She still gets all dolled up and

you're still hiding dirty socks and pizza boxes under the sofa.

Then after time, or for some, even after marriage, suddenly, she's changed, or he changed. You get ready for bed expecting to see this gorgeous vixen and you see a night cap and facial cream with furry socks. We women suddenly see faded boxers and a holy t-shirt that has more holes than Swiss cheese. Why does this occur? Because we're comfortable.

Well, now we have some fruit on the tree. You see she has this thing or that thing that you don't necessarily agree with and she's seeing the same thing in you. Then they always have that one relative or friend that you can't stand but they seem to love to death. Bad fruit. The person who loves to give advice but has never experienced your issue. Bad fruit. How about those who don't want to see you succeed but act as if they're your friend. Bad fruit.

There is a reason why you don't pick the low hanging fruit on a tree. The cream of the crop is always at the top. It requires patience, time, and skill. Sometimes you may even need equipment outside of your own thinking. That's where faith and prayer come in.

It's ok to let those lower fruit drop, matter of fact, you may want to get them out of the way, so you can have space for good fruit. Now some of those fruit may be stubborn but letting go of that which isn't good for you is always a plus. Even if those fruit carry the title of family.

Build your tree and make sure the fruit you bear are good fruit so when it hits the ground its seeds can become the likeness of you and not something ugly.

Allow yourselves to be an example of how things are done. Now you're always going to have bad fruit that tries to grow, and sometimes it may feel like a full harvest, but with each other, your faith, and God, you will always bear good fruit and you will always bloom.

25. PRODUCTIVITY

How do you feel productive when in a situation where you can't be?

Let me explain. I've been on medical leave since May 2015, and don't get me wrong, there was a point where I didn't care what day it was because of pain and nausea. Once I received my lungs and started to heal, I was ready to go. I was at the starter blocks, my butt was up and my hands were at the line. All I needed was to hear that bang of the gun and I was off. But Nooooo, the doctors said it was too soon, then I had a set-back just to make the process ever slower. So now I'm back in training. I'll get to do practice runs every now and then, but I want to run the race.

There are those of you who are hobbied out! (Yes, I made up that word up.) You've knitted and crocheted so much that you can't recognize anything in your house and your cat and dog are hiding and planning an escape. Or maybe your hobby is being a foodie and trying new places to eat but you've done it so much that your scale is showing some very rude numbers. Whatever your hobby is, I'm sure that it can get boring at times. You can only do so much of the same thing before you go stir crazy, so mix it up and try something different with that hobby or something new altogether. Trust me, I'm thankful for time spent with my mom and our Fridays at the movies. It gives me something

to look forward to even if we are at the theater at 10:30 in the morning. Lol.

So, what is it that you look forward to? How are you keeping yourself busy? What is it that you can do now to prepare yourself for the future?

You have nothing but time. Use it wisely or it will pass you by. Find out what you want to do, where you want to go, and who you want to be. Not everyone is given a chance to restart their life over or take a new direction. This is a privilege. Use your time wisely.



26. TIME AFTER TIME

They say time heals all wounds but how much are you still holding onto of an issue that happened years ago?

I believe that we all need to forgive those who have wronged us, but that question is have you? Have you forgiven that person or persons? More importantly have you forgiven yourself? That was a doozy for me. I realized that I had forgiven the person for their participation but hadn't looked in the mirror and said to myself "Sunday, it's ok that you made that mistake, I forgive you." That is one of the ways we make sure we don't repeat that same mistake. The other way is by asking ourselves "What did we learn from the situation?".

I'll never forget the first time my sister asked me that question. I was boohooing as I was telling her about a relationship that had ended, and she said, "Ok, what did you learn?" I remember looking at her like she had just grown another head. That's when I realized I hadn't learned anything and I'll be damned if I didn't repeat that same behavior in the next relationship.

So, the same question applies to you. What have you learned from your relationships that haven't ended well? Are you ready to repeat that same behavior and have the same outcome, or are you willing to make some changes that will affect those relationships and the people in them? Now when I say relationships, it could be with your parent,

your partner, your employer, your co-worker, your child, your friend or even the mailman.

Being in a toxic relationship does not require being in love, it requires acknowledging the fact that there's no balance and you're giving way more than you're receiving. Yes, I know you love that person, but love should be reciprocated and should not require excuses.

There is nothing worse than looking back and realizing that the problem is you. Now don't get defensive, I'm just saying that we are all participants when in a relationship and the more you accept another person's behavior, the more responsible you are for allowing them to continually treat you the way they have. "Girl, he's only playing" or "She only gets that way when she's really mad" are excuses. There is never a reason to be abused! I don't care what the circumstances are, be it verbal, emotional, or physical, they are NEVER acceptable! Also remember that your voice is key.

A person will only treat you the way that you allow them to. If you are being treated in a manner that is less than lady-like and the way they treat you needs to change and they don't, and you stay, then remember, that is a decision you made.

You are too beautiful a human being for anyone to do anything but lift you up and abuse reflects their own insecurities, not yours.

Ok, I think I got that off my chest. Now it's time for you to do the same. Take a piece of paper and write down the

things that you love about yourself and place them in a place you spend the most time. If it's your car, then on the dashboard, if work, then pin it to your cubicle or desk, if your phone, take a pic and make it your background, if a stay at home mom, tape it to the baby (just kidding), but you get the point. Make it visible.

In order for someone to love you, you should first must love yourself and know your own worth. No one can devalue you unless you let them. So don't.

27. DON'T BE SCARED

Have you ever had to face an obstacle and were terrified? Not because it was something that you knew could hurt you but it was the unknown. It requires going into uncharted waters and facing your biggest fear: failure.

Well, writing this book is exactly that for me. Telling others my story which has been locked in an eye scanning, blades that come flying down, floor dropping out, acid spraying closet, with a deadbolt for quite some time. Heck I didn't want to open it let alone allow someone else to.

But I did it. It took me and a team of ninjas, but the skeletons are finally free and believe it or not, I'm still standing. I just knew I was going to be like the wicked witch from "Oz" screaming "I'm melting! I'm melting!" but here I am, standing tall and praying that my words will reach out to someone who's closet they wish to never open and hide parts of themselves as a result.

Your story is there for a reason and it's to be told because there is someone out there who's going thru the same exact thing and they feel so alone in the situation that they either continue to tolerate it, or they hide it and become ashamed.

No matter what you did, you are still loved and lovable. The forgiveness of yourself, the person or persons involved, and the situation will free you. You'll find that once

forgiveness has been achieved, when you open that closet door, it will be empty inside and you will be free.

Love heals all wounds. To me the greatest love of all is God and through His love I learned to love me and to live free. I don't believe anyone was created to be made less than equal or should be left to feel that way.

There are people out there who have nothing better to do but to point out your faults and make you feel inadequate. For those who might be teenagers, that is a hard-enough sentence to have to deal with. The last thing you need is for those emotions and inadequacies to follow you into adulthood.

I mean look at you, you are a beautiful creation who is put here to thrive. You are here to place your thumbprint on the world and be able to say "*I was here.*" It's only the fear of those who see you as a threat that try to break you, and boy will they try. That's when your strength comes in, your character, and your definition of self that says "*I don't care what you say or think, yes, I can do it!*" If you believe in yourself then you leave others no choice but to do the same. If they don't, then shame on them. Be the best you, that you can be despite what has happened to you in the past. Don't let that determine your future.

Some of you will say that you don't have the money, or don't have the knowledge, or don't have the skill, but yes you do. That one thing that you're scared to do, is the one thing you should be pushing for (it needs to be legal, of course). If you must start out of your home, your car, or just

with your close friends, please start. You'll find that they believe in you and your idea and will have your back.

Even if you must start alone and it scares the crap out of you. Please know that your gift is needed. That there is another person in the world who is crying out at this very moment because they feel alone and are in the exact same situation that you are. Know that the gift that you have may inspire them to make a move that could change their life for the better.

Now here's the real test of friendship. You may lose some of them because you are now moving to another level. Some will help push you up, and some will try to pull you down. Those that pull you down are not your real friends. They were there for a purpose and a season and now that your purpose has changed, they won't like it, and all of a sudden, won't like you. That does not mean that you need to stay at that level, you need to thank them for being there and move on. Trust me, you will have others in your life that are ahead of you, and it just may not be meant for you to be friends at that time.

You may see them as "Bougie" but they are just getting their grind on and are focused. Once you get to their level you will understand. Be thankful for those who tried to break you, it has all been a test and you've succeeded. You've broken the mold and stepped out of who others thought you were but what faith says you are.

28. WADE IN THE WATER

There is nothing more refreshing than water. It can be used to swim in, bathe in, be baptized in, etc. It's amazing that over 70% of our body is made up of it and yet we still require it, we even thirst for it. We are surrounded by it and then to make it even better, it comes from the sky. So why is it that we are still so thirsty? We have an unlimited access to it and yet we don't use it as we should. We waste it.

Same goes with the gifts that we receive. We are all talented individuals with something that we are specifically able to do. For example, we wouldn't have that sweater in the closet that we only wear for grandma if she wasn't able to knit. When sitting in our cars and listening to the radio, there would be no music without those who have the gift to sing. So, what is your gift, and why aren't you using it? There is no one who can apply that gift like you can. You have been given something special and the world would love to see it. Whatever it may be, don't let anyone diminish your light but shine and show us your talent. We are excited, we support you and can't wait to see you soar.

I know that you may be afraid to fail, but you will never know until you try. Taking that first step is the scariest but that is the only way you will succeed is by trying. Imagine taking that first step and soaring. Your imagination is limitless, and your dreams can come true, but you will never know until you try.

It's ok to just take a baby step, I'm not suggesting that you leap immediately unless you are prepared to do so. Taking that first step is huge by any definition and those that love you will support you and be there should you fall and continue to elevate you as you soar.

Anyone, and I mean anyone, who say's "*I told you so*," is only saying that to make you feel bad because they wish they had the courage to do what you have done. More than likely they have not made any attempts at change in their life and when someone else does, it causes them to be afraid in their own hearts making them believe that you will no longer want them or need them in your life. That is something that they will have to deal with and you shouldn't feel any guilt.

29. WORN OUT

We all have that one item in the closet that we continuously wear. For some, it's a pair of jeans that has holes and rips, for others it's a pair of shoes that long ago lost their shine and some of the heel but they're comfortable. Well, the same goes with us. We have the ability to be refreshed and renewed but sometimes we just get tired and I'm not talking long day, feet hurt tired, but just a feeling of I've had enough. Just like those jeans or shoes are begging for retirement, but we just hold on because of the memory.

There is nothing wrong with having a memory but there is also a time when you need to learn to let go. It will be ok, you will survive. Yes, though I mentioned material things, you can also be in a relationship that's worn out. You are just staying in it for a matter of convenience and comfort. You know that you want better and deserve it but leaving would mean going into uncharted waters and possibly feeling and being alone.

Being in a state of unrest isn't always a negative thing. Many successful people have such moments and that's how they grow. Staying in the comfort zone is just a move of safety. Be with someone who challenges you to be better. Now please don't take that as me saying something is wrong with you, because I'm not. What I'm trying to say is growth is a natural process and we should constantly aim for it.

We live in stages, we're newborns, then infants, then pre-teens, then teenagers, then adults. The adult part is the longest but there is nothing that says you shouldn't constantly try to renew yourself and your mind. There is a reason that we live so long on this earth, it is to teach and to be taught. So, here's the lesson plan: grow!

Now growing means you must let go of that comfortable thing that's been with you. There are circumstances where that person, place or thing can grow with you but that should not determine the path you're taking. It's time to try something new and you will find if you try to take that old thing with you that you just might not get anywhere. You'll find yourself in the same situation and wonder why your life is constantly going in a circle. It's because you're still holding on.

Have you ever seen a dog tied to a post and notice that it will still try and get to you but can't go but so far as a result of that chain and post? Well, the same goes for us. When we try to hold on to something from the past we can only go so far until we find ourselves reaching the maximum distance. We can bark all we want but nothing changes. Until you realize that you need to either be released or you let go, you cannot experience anything new. You may see the opportunity, but it will always be out of your reach.

So, what do you do? There are a couple of options. One, stop barking and start planning. Maybe it's your behavior that caused you to be tied up in the first place. Also, there may be fear in place which says I'm scared to go past this part or that place. There are some of you that have never traveled outside of your state. Time to do something

different. It's ok. You'll be fine. If it doesn't work, that doesn't mean you're a failure, it may mean that it wasn't meant for you at that time and it's time to find something that is and to try again later.

You are gifted and unique. Let that part of you shine and please toss out the old and replace it with something new, even if those worn-out things are related to the heart. Never allow someone to take up space where they're not willing to pay the rent.

30. THE QUEEN OF GET BACK

Ok, I first have to tell on myself before I can speak to you. When I was younger, (I'm not even going to try and blame it on just childhood) I was the Queen of Get Back. There was no way that you were going to do me dirty and I wasn't going to treat you in the same manner at an opportune time.

I spent time planning and plotting on how and when and then, like a tiger upon its prey, I'd pounce! Now mind you this didn't always make me feel better, but I couldn't let anyone else see me as weak. I had a reputation to uphold. Then I remember one occasion where a guy was trying to holler at me and when I didn't respond he said "You ain't all that" and for some reason, I believed him, and my self-esteem took a serious nose-dive. I then found myself in the position of being vulnerable and I didn't know how to get back on my feet.

It took me many years and a lot of heart-ache and a double-lung transplant to get back to me, but I'm finally here and this crazy, out-spoken, lovable Queen ain't going nowhere.

So, to those who have lost themselves along the way, remember who you were when you were an original and get back to her. We love her, for she is wonderfully and beautiful made.

31. I'M GOING DOWN

Okay, I found it time to talk about the little monster that some keep secret and would never admit to - depression. We all have bad days or those where we just don't want to get out of bed. In some cases, it can last for a few hours and for others a few years. It really depends on the occasion that got you there in the first place.

Your depression can be the result of a death, divorce, loss of a job, end of a relationship, failing or from something that happened in your childhood or some other upsetting situation that may have occurred in your life. The key is to acknowledge it and try your best to break free of it. Now I know from personal experience that breaking free is very hard. It's easy to go into a mindset that just wants to give up. It really doesn't help that our body doesn't cooperate either and for some reason we either start craving food or don't want any at all.

At the end of the day it's all about perspective. How do you view yourself when you're down? I know I immediately start to degrade myself, becoming my biggest critic before anyone else can get a word in. I've had days where I would leave the bed for only two things, kitchen and bathroom. Nope, not to shower because for some reason that's against the rules in the depression rule book.

Is it just me or is this also the day where you want to be left alone and suddenly you're feeling like a telephone operator. Normally I wouldn't get a call if I wanted one and, in that moment, when I want to go into hiding, everyone has found my hiding spot. So now, not only am I not being

left alone but I have to answer with my fake chipper voice, so I don't get interrogated by those who love me.

As I was saying earlier, this funk can last for a few hours or years. When you have experienced a tragedy, one can internalize it. We think that we're not hurting ourselves, but we really are. It has been proven that stress can attribute to illness and even death. This is when we need to talk to someone. Yes, I'm talking psychiatric help. The mind is a key element to our survival and the freeing of it provides such peace and the ability to move forward.

I know it will be hard to rehash an incident but in the end, you will realize that you've been carrying it since the day it happened. For example, there are things that happened to me when I was a child that I didn't know was causing me to react to certain individuals in a manner much unbecoming of a lady. I have been freed from those issues and refuse to carry them into my future. As said before, if you don't learn the lesson the first time you will continue to repeat it. It may be with a different person, but you will find yourself in the same circumstance over and over again. So please, consider talking to someone, it can be an elder at your church, a counselor at your school, a therapist, someone who's wisdom you can trust, and God. In my case, I found writing and my faith a relief. Writing not only allows me to get the situation out of my head but in the end tells me whether the matter may be too trivial to cause me to land into my depressed mood. My faith allows me to send my pain to God of which I believe is a healer.

Find a way to let go, and then just simply do it. It's for your own good and you deserve the healing coming to you. Be blessed, be happy, be whole.

32. A GOOD MAN

I have been blessed in my life to have met some incredible men. They have ranged from partner to family to friend. I have learned so much from them and that's what makes me bring this subject up. There are so many homes out there that are single parent homes as a result of our mistakes ladies. So, why do we punish our children by severing ties with these men? I am a single mother so trust me this subject speaks to me as well. I wish my son's father had more input in the raising of our child, the raising of a man. There are just some things that only a man can teach a man and for those of you who have daughters, that same father can teach those little girls how they're to be treated as they become women.

Now don't get me wrong, if there was abuse in any form in that relationship then that is a lesson that needs to be removed from the history books and safety is primary.

If, however, it is just a matter of you not wanting to be with that person anymore due to irreconcilable differences, then that is not the child's fault and now they are caught in the middle of something they never asked for.

That child doesn't understand why they can no longer live in the same household with both parents and why the two of you can't "just get along." They only know that one day everything was fine and the next one of them is moving out, and for most, that is the father.

Men, we need you. We need you to teach our children just as much as we need you ourselves. Most parents do not prepare for a single life or to bring a child into a single home. I know that there are women out there who appear to only want your money, but it goes so much deeper. We need to see you interact with your child and teach our daughters how to be treated by men as well as show our sons how to be men. There is a reason that it takes the two of us to create a child. We need you from conception on. We do not want to repeat the history of single parent after single parent but the history of staying power, endurance and just doing the right thing.

Now I'm not saying that the reason relationships end is always your fault but changing your location should not mean that you should lose your voice as well. I am not applying this to all men, but to those who are so angry at that mother of their children that they chose to not do for their children anymore to get revenge upon the woman (their mother) that hurt you. That decision will hurt those children and they will now have to deal with the hurt of losing you and, unfortunately, in most cases, become bitter.

Even if the both of you can't be in the same home that does not mean you cannot raise an intelligent, established, well-rounded and grounded child. There are some things that need to change in the way you think. To whom this may apply. Please consider this.

I also want to speak to those parents who don't have a kind word to say to or about the other parent. There is never an excuse for you to disrespect the person you once loved. And there definitely isn't an excuse for that child or

children to hear those words. The issue you have with that parent is an adult issue and should be heard only by that other adult. No child should ever be able to question the character of their parent because of the words of the other parent. This is a childish move and should be put away with that same mentality and age.

You, as an adult, made a choice to lay with someone all on your own. There are court systems in place set for differences to be worked out. That is where those matters should occur. If you as a parent want to be called a lady or gentleman, then please act like one. You are rearing a child who sees and hears way more than you think and calling their parent anything other than their name is an impression that you've chosen to leave. You are now asking a child to pick sides and be unfair to someone based on your own unfair thinking. If that other parent is such a terrible person, trust me, your child will see that in them.

Now if that parent is abusive, be it verbally, physically or emotionally, then I understand needing your child to be safe and preferably away from them, but again, this is where the court system comes in and takes action.

For those men who are out there raising their children alone, I thank God for you. For those who are the head of their households, I am thankful for you as well. For those men who are in the courts trying to seek justice and custody, I am thankful.

Now for those of you who had no problem laying down but now are lacking the ability to be responsible, I feel

sorry for you. You have created a beautiful being or beings into this world that are gifts from God and it's a shame that you don't see the beauty of their life. There are only certain ways that life can be brought forth and God chose your seed to bloom. He blessed you with ancestry by the deliverance of an act of love and you have chosen to not embrace that.

I speak this also to the women who are not doing their part as mothers. I understand the need to give up a child for adoption, as I am adopted and am thankful for the selflessness it must cause to want the best for your child and knowing that you are not able to provide that. As for those who are just being lazy and selfish, I again feel sorry for you, because there is a great blessing in that child and you'll never get to see it or when you're ready it will be too late. There is nothing worse than waking up and realizing you're too late. So, wake up!

33. THANKS FOR MY CHILD

Thanks for My Child

*You came into my life
You just made everything right
And even though my man has left me behind
I don't regret a thing for having you*

*Thanks for my child, I'm really thanking you, the man above
Thanks for my child you brought me so much joy
This bundle of love, thanks for my child
And though your father, he ran away free
The love I have for you baby, is the love I have in me*

*I'll stay and watch you grow, yes I will
I'll raise you by myself, a one woman show
You make life worth singing a song
You make life worth singing a song
With you right here with me, I'll have the strength to go on*

*Thanks for my child, here we are to today, the years have gone
by
Thanks for my child, you grew before my eyes, time after time
Thanks for my child, I'll hold you in my arms, I hold you close
to me
Rock a bye my baby, I'll rock you to sleep*

*I understand your language, your baby talk
You forgot to crawl, before you walked
There you are just looking so beautiful*

*And all the while, you are wrapped in blankets
You are my love child*

*Thanks for my child, I really thanking you, the man above
Thanks for my child, you brought me so much joy, this bundle
of love
Thanks for my child and though your daddy, he ran away free
The love I have for you baby*

*Is the love I have in me, inside of me
The love I have in me
I just know, I'll never let you go, no, no
No, no, no, oh yeah*

*'Cause you're my sweet baby
Papa can't preach, papa was a rolling stone because
He left his beautiful, 'cause he left, us alone
But that's okay 'cause I'm you mother baby*

*I carried you for 9 months, and I'm gonna carry you
Until you can carry yourself on your own
I love you sweetheart, I love you too mommy
(Child)*

“Thanks for my Child” is a beautiful song by Cheryl Pepsii Riley, that happened to come out at the same time I was pregnant with my son. I ask that you look at the lyrics and

you'll understand why I love it so. I became pregnant at 18 and must admit I had no clear direction in my life prior to my son's birth. If anything, I saw myself heading in the wrong direction.

I was partying way too hard and not taking life seriously at all. Even though I had just started college I was not in the correct mindset and failure was right around the corner.

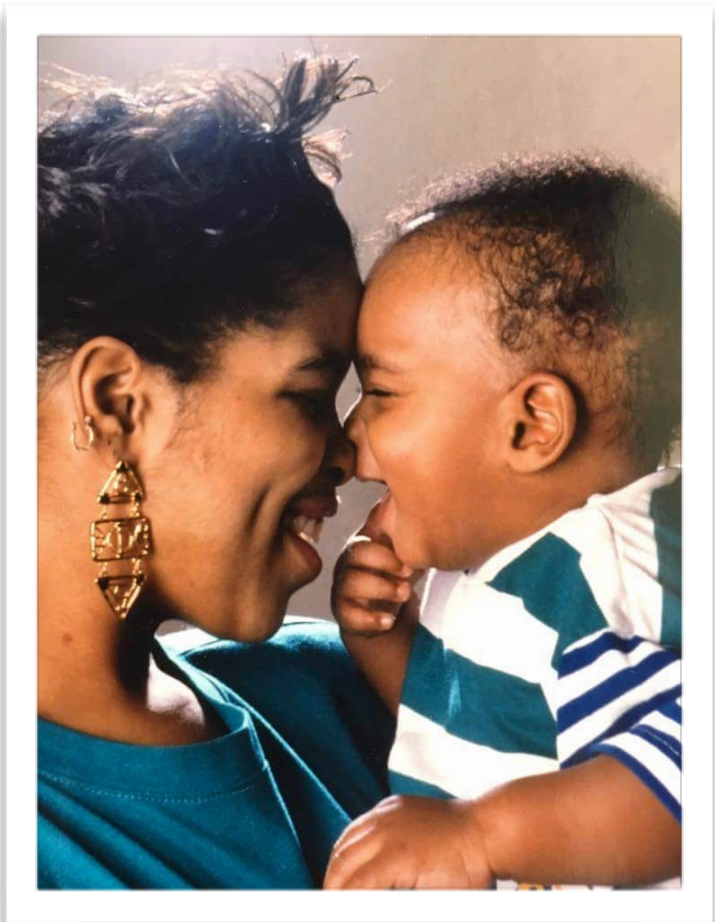
It's funny how you can see your life taking a nose-dive in the wrong direction and what you may have originally looked at as a curse turns out to be your biggest blessing.

My son is the biggest blessing that I could ever receive. I thank God for him and I love the man that he has become. He made me grow up quickly and I appreciate that. I know I was very selfish in my ways and it took looking after someone else who was completely dependent on me to realize that my priorities needed to change.

It's very hard to do what you want to do you when someone is there who needs you more. Now there are those of us who don't stand up to the challenge and as a result our children suffer. It is never too late to try and right a wrong. I say try because sometimes our own selfishness gets in the way and we let time slip by and that person, place or thing has either moved on or no longer exists.

I want to take the time right now to say thank you David for being the greatest joy a mother could receive. You have done me proud and I look up to you and can't wait to see how you change the future. I love you with all that I am and

thankful that God blessed me with you. I wish the same blessings to you and your children.



34. SHUT UP!

Not a very nice word to hear but one that needs to be said. There is a time to speak and a time to listen. The wisest people I know are those who know how to let someone say what they have to say and then respond, without interruption. I know it may be hard because they're talking about a sensitive matter at times, but courtesy should still be at the forefront and not your emotions.

Yes, I know that hurt but when we remove our emotions from a conversation it's amazing, but somehow, we hear better. Being on the defensive is easy when someone is talking about you or a loved one but if you have the right people in your life then you know when they're speaking to you it is coming from a place of love. Also, when you remove emotion then it is not so easy for someone to throw you off.

Now you may wonder why I say shut up, but in all honesty are you truly listening or just trying to figure out what you're going to say next to get back at someone? I feel you because I've been that person who under their breath has said *"No she/he didn't, and I wish you would, and let me tell you a thing or two because you ain't all that!"* Yes, that was me, eyes rolling and everything without hearing a single word that was being said to me. It was so important that I got my two cents in that I didn't shut up long enough to see where I was wrong.

So, what happens to those who don't listen? They repeat the same behavior, mistake, etc., all over again.

We are here to learn. When in school we don't interrupt the teacher when they're talking. When at home with our parents when they speak, if we have any sense, we don't interrupt them either, so where did we learn to not listen and talk when someone else is talking?

I know for me it was with my girlfriends at school, we would have 3 conversations going at the same time. The one thing I noticed though is that I was never rude, because it was my girl and she got me, but on occasion should I be, then I got called out right away. Funny how when our parents, or partner or someone close to us calls us out we get an attitude, but aren't those the people you want to call you out, the ones who love you the most? I would rather have those people call me out then to be a mess in the world and no one is telling me, but in order to be called out again you have to be willing to listen.

So, get a Q-tip or whatever item you may need to clean those ears good because life will pass you by and you'll find yourself going in a circle because you didn't take the time to listen to someone who told you where the exit was.

35. HAIL TO THE QUEEN / GROWN ASS WOMAN

How to behave!

I have found nothing more unattractive than a woman I can hear before I see. There is a certain way that we are to carry ourselves should we request to be called a lady. Now, for those of you who don't care how you appear, then cackle on. I am speaking to women out there who wish to be called a lady but are not carrying themselves as such.

A lady is defined as "refined, polite woman" and "woman of high social position" according to Dictionary.com. Merriam-Webster defines a lady as "a woman who behaves in a polite way; a woman of high social position; a man's girlfriend". To go into further depth, they also include such definitions as:

1.

A. *A woman having proprietary rights or authority especially as a feudal superior*

B. *A woman receiving the homage or devotion of a knight or lover*

2.

A. *A woman of superior social position*

B. *A woman of refinement and gentle manners*

So, with that being said, why is it that we find ourselves out of character? Now don't get me wrong, there are special circumstances that may require unladylike behavior to occur, but for the most part, when people think of you, they should always think of you as a lady.

Whether you're in the office, the store, your child's school or a function, there is always a way to carry yourself. I say this because you are always a representative. You are either representing yourself, your partner, your child, your God or your family. We come into this world with a name that is just given to us alone and when you are being spoken of would you rather someone have nothing but good things to say about you or would you even question your own actions? Please understand that there will always be haters, but if you're going to have them, let it be because you're being the best you can be and not because of actions that you wish even you could run from.

I am not saying to be fake, I'm saying be you, but there is a level of class that attracts goodness into your life and does not leave you to question why you're always attracting drama.

36. WIFEY MATERIAL

According to the Bible there is a scripture titled **Proverbs 31** which speaks of a virtuous wife.

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor; yes, she reaches her hands out to the needy. She is not afraid or snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her; "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

The question is what are you doing to prepare yourself to become a wife? I know that we've all reached an age of independence and know how to work, go to school, pay the bills and have the house and car that we want but then what? I mean you've done everything that you need to do to look pretty on the outside but what's going on internally? Are you truly ready to share your entire life with someone? I'm not talking about the "see you on the weekend" person who always see's your house clean and you waking up beautiful. I mean are you ready to share every detail of your life with another person? Are you ready for them to see you in those pajamas that cover you from head to toe with the footies and your night cream?

What are you doing to be prepared to cook daily, keep your home clean, your bed made, and allow your dirty laundry to make it into the basket and not close? Do you have that one chair in the room that you bought to use to read in the room but has become an alternate closet? Are you ready for someone else to have an opinion on the decisions that you've been making yourself? I'm not saying these things to deter you but to prepare you. Sharing your life with someone doesn't mean just changing around your world but theirs as well. Once you have decided that you want to marry someone then you are taking on a partnership and not only is what was once yours not just yours anymore but now you are adding on what was once just your partner's. Please take the time to consider what you really want out of a marriage and make sure you're ready to offer and it in return.

37. HOW COME YOU DON'T CALL ME ANYMORE?

Do you remember having phone conversations with your boo, your girl, your boy, or that person who you talk to daily, that on a good day you only take breaks to go to the bathroom or eat? I remember getting so annoyed as a teenager when mom would call me and ask me to do something. My thoughts would be like, "Ugh! Lady I'm on the phone having an important conversation." Though I would never speak those words out loud for fear of my own safety, of course. My conversation, which was about absolutely nothing, was a priority.

Then something shifts, you either start to have other priorities or the relationship just starts to fade for lack of interest. I mean, who are we kidding? Whenever we get something new we tend to treasure it in the beginning because it's something new to us and shiny and different from our normal day to day existence.

Now if we're living accordingly, we should be constantly growing in all aspects of our life. With the right person, we can grow together, but there are those that you just simply outgrow. I know I've had friends that were perfect for clubbing with but when that season of my life changed, that group was no longer seeing the vision I had, and I had to move on.

There is nothing wrong with moving on. That is all part of your process and your growth. I know that you don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but instead you limit yourself and your ability to see what's waiting for you around the corner.

I'm sure there are items that we all have in our closets that we just don't want to let go of. It may be the sweater that grandma made, the old football jersey or cheerleading outfit, or those pair of shoes that you just had to have that even though they may be worn or hurt your feet, you just can't seem to get rid of. I get it, I really do. I still have my sons first pair of shoes and hair from his first haircut. I know, that may be creepy to some, but it's sentimental to me. My little mementos, however, can fit into one small box. I know there are some of us who can't let anything go and could be considered a hoarder. This is not a good look ladies. Things are replaceable.

So, back to letting go. It is ok to move forward and be who you are destined to be and if that means that you've outgrown someone, or something then so be it. Those who are meant to be in your life and truly love you, will remain a constant throughout your change. Those who don't, in all honesty, can kick rocks.

38. QUALITY TIME

What qualities do you have in yourself that you find attractive? Better yet, when a stranger meets you, what is it about you that will stick with them? Is it your demeanor, your attitude, your wit, or do you carry yourself in such a way that a person would rather take their chances playing Russian Roulette than rather spend a second getting to know you?

We spend so much time pointing at someone else and their behavior that we forget to check our own. When we are children it is up to our parents to call us out. Now, you're a fool or full-grown adult and your behavior dictates which one. So, who is calling you out now?

There is nothing worse than feeling like you need to be the one who's wearing shades and a hat or some other form of disguise because your girl is either loud or rude or even worse, both. Now if that's you, then so be it, but don't be surprised if you find your relationships are artificial or temporary because people can only deal with you in spurts.

When walking down the street it may not be your goal to blend in but standing out should be an attraction, not a distraction.

So, what's your quality? How do you value yourself and when others see you and get to know you does that value increase or get decreased?

I know when it comes to me I can only afford for someone to add to me, but I also know that's the only option you have when you come across me. Was I always like this? No. Now others may say yes but I didn't know my value, so people were able to come in and take it away. It took time, facing death, and loving me to know that you only have one option when approaching me. Get right or get lost.

Some may consider that being egotistical but if I don't believe I'm amazing then why should you? There are other factors like God and my friends and family that are included in the make-up of me and have instilled my wonderful attitude and I'm thankful for them, but Sunday comes first, others can take a ticket number but don't call us, we'll call you.

39. FORGIVEN

Ok, tissue time. It is ok to forgive yourself? I don't care what you've done. A price has already been paid for you and a clean slate has been washed for you. The only person still holding the incident against you is you. It's time to move on. Whether that person has forgiven you or not, it's up to you to forgive yourself. There is nothing more powerful or freeing than the acceptance of self, the ability to err, and the ability to forgive. That person may have gone on with their life and is not losing sleep over you, so why are you?

If you have asked for forgiveness, truly meant it and are ready to move on, then there's no reason why you can't. It is a trick to believe that you need to still stay in that time or a space that hurts you.

Now please don't think that this is a repetitive forgiveness. You cannot have a "oops, did I do that again" situation and expect to have the same piece be presented to you over and over again. The purpose is to learn the lesson or be destined to repeat it. Again, I speak to self. I've made the same mistake over and over and thought, girl you deserve it or that person deserved it, but we are not meant to judge. Do know that our God is a just one and as they say, karma is a b@t&h! What is done to others will be done to them, but even more justly is our God who knows when and where to do it. His accuracy is better than one could ever imagine. A perfect shot every time.

40. JANE DOE

Who are you? Are you that person that is waiting for a relationship to make you whole? I mean we were placed on this earth to fulfill certain destinies and not be alone, but do you think it will take another human being to make you whole? Then when we're in that relationship you still find yourself unhappy because you've now added the burden of not only trying to make yourself happy but someone else as well and being upset when they don't do so in return. Now what? Now you have to try and find yourself and them. This can happen in all types of relationships. This is where momma's boys come in, because they spend so much time trying to please someone else that the word "No" rarely enters their vocabulary. You have the nerve to get mad because they're supposed to be in your life to please you, not!

This is where it's time to become Sherlock Holmes and do the research on your own likes and dislikes and expectations of a relationship. We as women tend to complain that our partners want us to keep the house clean, cook the meals, and rear the children all while some of have 9 to 5's. Now, don't get me wrong, there are some miraculous women out there who can do that and still go to school and take care of their partner, but ladies this is where we must know our limits. If you know you don't like to cook but are with someone who is requesting that of you, then that's on you because you didn't speak up in the beginning. People will only know about you what you tell

them and maybe instead of dating someone who wants you to cook you can find someone who loves to cook themselves. That doesn't mean you should give up all together but that may be one thing you can check off of your list. It's all about compromise

Back to you. Please do this exercise for me. Write a list describing exactly what type of person you want to marry. List every single detail of them. Then write a list of what you believe to be a successful marriage and what you expect to achieve when in that relationship. In addition, write a list of what qualities you have and how that will add to that relationship as well as the things that you are willing to do on a daily, weekly, monthly basis and things that you will not allow. I know I've done this when it comes to selecting my partner (and yes, I've bent some of my own rules which later came back to bite me in the ass). What an eye opener.

Once you have a clear definition of self then it's a little hard for someone to come in and deter you from that. Also, should you choose to sway you'll also be able to see as clear as day that the other person didn't change you, but it was your choice. So, when you're saying, girl, look what he did to me, you'll have no choice but to recognize, no boo, it was you. Again, a hard pill to swallow, but too often we want to blame someone else for our actions. This is when you put on your big girl panties and move on step by step with your head held high. Forgiveness of self if key. We need you whole, healed, and free. Your peace can change a nation.

41. LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX!

Ladies we have all been told that we're to act like a lady in the streets and a freak in the sheets, but are we holding up our end of the bargain? There are some who are gifted enough to have a sex drive that matches their partners while others may struggle. Trust me, I get it, after work and kids and cooking, you're pooped, but this is where you need to dig deep and find your reserve.

You are a couple and if in a monogamous relationship, then you expect that person to come to you when they're in need. So, that means you need to be available and a willing participant. No need to placate that individual. They want you! There is something about you that does it for them like no one else can. What a blessing. So, while speaking of blessings, bless them with all of who you are. Sex is not just a physical act but a spiritual one. This is the time that you connect with your partner. That you share all that is you with all that is them - your heart to their heart, your soul to their soul. It's a beautiful connection that people choose to not appreciate but instead look of as an act.

Once you start to slip in that area, trust me, it gets noticed and the other person may start to feel like they are not loved and disconnect. The sadder part of this story is that there is always someone out there who would love to give your partner that attention. There is always going to be someone who thinks that the grass is greener on the other

side and want what you have. So, don't give them the opportunity to have it. Be the best woman you can be and find out what makes your partner happy, ask questions. There is nothing wrong in getting to know what pleases a person and then performing it at your best.

Now ladies, I must add this bit as well. Please try your best to be presentable. Lingerie is something that can fit into everyone's budget. Even if it's a hot jersey that reveals just enough. I'm sorry but I don't want to wake up to the bride of Frankenstein so why should your partner? Also, I found that when I go to bed in certain attire I feel sexy my darn self. You are beautiful, and there's no reason why that shouldn't be revealed. I know some of us sleep with night caps because of our hair and the need to protect it, but before you start your evening regimen, think of your partner and initiate some good loving. Love on them, then go back to the face cream and rollers. Now for those sisters out there, I understand the need to not want to sweat out your hair, well, it's time to invest in some scarves that match your lingerie. Your partner will understand and appreciate you more for the effort.

Everyone has a way of being approached when it comes to sex. Some just want someone to initiate, others need to schedule it in on date night. How romantic! Please ladies hear me when I tell you that there is nothing sexier than a woman who knows what she wants and is confident enough to go get it. It's funny how we can tell everyone else how we feel and what we want but turn into shy creatures when it comes to being aggressive in the bedroom. Make sure you have taken the time to find out what you like before you bring someone else into the

picture who has to play a guessing game. Just know that once you've said it, then it's up to you to perform as well. Talk is cheap. You can't tell a person in the beginning that you love to have sex all the time then when approached you're too tired. No mixed signals!

Be the best person you can be and let that person be truthful. We are not teenagers anymore and lying to get what you want isn't cute. All you've done is wasted your time and theirs.

Your first step is to make sure that you know what you want, then present that daily in your walk. If you believe you are the sexiest thing out there, then others should see it in the way you dress and carry yourself. Now I'm not saying show all your assets, but you'd be amazed at how much confidence alone can turn someone on. Lastly, let your partner know how sexy they are and give in to the whims that you know you'll enjoy as well.

Ok, here goes. Ladies, I know there are those of you who also want to perform but can't do to "issues". I totally understand, but please know that you're not alone and that there are options out there for you. I know it can be frustrating but there are dozens of products and medications that can assist. Please seek your Ob/gyn's advice and realize that it's not you and yes it's curable.

42. CONFIDENCE IS KEY

Maybe it's just me, but I'm the type of person who walks down the street with my head up and smiles. I noticed how if you look at someone in their eyes they either tend to lower their head or smile back.

I once used to be that person that always had my head down or averted from the attention of others. When someone would speak then I would lift my head for a second, long enough to respond. Then I finally reached the phase of lifting my head, but it always looked like I was mean-mugging someone to the point where people would pass me and say "smile".

Today, my head is up and I'm proud of all that I am. I believe that when I walk down the street others see a beautiful human being and I now see it in the eyes of those I pass.

Now ladies, this is where we drop the ball. There may have been things that happened in your past that makes you not open up completely but please don't let that steal your joy.

That person has gone on with their life and you're still living in the past. Know that things in life will try to break you but it's up to you to allow it. I am one strong woman and I know that whatever is placed in my life as a challenge will not only be met but conquered. How do I know this? Because I know who my God is and there is nothing He can't do. This

goes for you as well. You were predestined to greatness but that is in your future. You must decide if you're still going to carry around that baggage or dump it and move on. I know you're hurt and what that person may have done wasn't fair or right, but you determine how long they can hurt you and when it ends.

Ok, next test.

Go to your mirror when you first get out of the shower and size yourself up. Realize that you are beautiful, no matter your size, your scars or your weight. God created you for a purpose and He loves you more than you could ever imagine and has placed a value in you that only you can decrease.

I look at my scars and I see warrior, survivor, vindicator! I may not be in the best shape but that is my choice. Yes, it's a choice to look a certain way. If you don't like the way you look, and you have the power to change it, then do so. There is no need to sit and complain about something you have the power to change. So be about it or stop complaining.

I want to see you walking down the street with your head held high and your strut is killer. There should be no suggestion or hint of any lack in your life. I want to see you whole and healthy and vibrant because life is way too short, and tomorrow is not promised.

43. LONELY OR ALONE

I was listening to the talented Phyllis Hyman's song "Living All Alone" and it made me question, can we really stand to be alone or do we settle for fear of facing our own selves?

I may have crossed this topic before, but I find it important to know who you are and what you want prior to being in a relationship.

When all is quiet, and everyone is off doing their thing, are you okay to just sit around and be by yourself or are the voices too loud?

Do you feel the need to call someone or see someone because your own presence bothers you? Does it make you face some possible abandonment issues? Is the person you see in the mirror now so defined by others that you don't even recognize her? Where did that little girl get lost and what you are going to do to get her back?

It's amazing how we can say that we've lost ourselves and trust me, I understand, but who is that really? I mean, I understand dedication because we all give heartily to our jobs, our families, and others which we find important, but what about you?

I get it that we are supposed to put others first and make them a priority and not become so egotistical that the Michelin Blimp feels it's found its twin in the size of our

head, but I do believe that I can't give you something that I don't already believe in myself. When we give, we, especially as women, tend to give our all, then wonder why we feel so depleted. So, it's time to find a happy medium.

You know you've lost your identity when you start getting referred to as "So and So's Mom" or child or spouse. I was that person at one point. I forgot who I was because I was so busy trying to please someone else and be who they wanted me to be. Listen ladies, if who you truly are isn't good enough for someone then you're with the wrong person. If 100% of you isn't accepted, then that person shouldn't be either. Yes, we all have that part of our character that makes people question our sanity, but they should only come out on special occasions if at all. I say they because some of you have multiple personalities and for that you may want to get help. No, seriously!

You were created to be you. There is something that only you can do that no one else can. You hear me?! No one can think like you, walk like you, talk like you or act like you. Some may try but will always fail. Those who are meant to be in your life will find value in you. Those who don't just saved you time that you didn't have to waste. Please don't fall for the words of a fool who tries to threaten you with finding a replacement. Tell them "I am irreplaceable" which is true. God created and molded the perfect you.

44. LIVING IN THE PAST & FACING THE FUTURE

I recall many days of waking up on a Monday and wishing it was still the weekend. Not wanting to go to school or work or just get out of bed period. Hitting the snooze button until it would snooze no more. Then dragging myself around in zombie mode until either water hit me from the shower or I allowed myself to wake up.

No matter how badly I wanted it to still be the weekend, reality hit and off to work I went. Well, we tend to do that with other events in our life. Some of us are still wearing bell bottoms from the 70's. Some of us are driving classic cars from previous eras. Others are still carrying the hurts from someone who has long since moved on with life. So why haven't you?

You are now this person who has a wall up and won't let anyone through, yet at the same time ask yourself and God, why you're alone. Honey, you may think that you've opened up, but others can see your defense from a mile away. You may not realize their visibility, but you carry with you tanks, guns, ammo and even an atomic bomb just in case.

We all have defense mechanisms, but there's a time to use them and it needs to be directed at the right person. Your partner is not responsible for your mommy/daddy issues. If

someone wronged you, then tell them. If they've since passed on, forgive them. Either way, get your healing.

I understand wanting to make a point and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings, but in the end, you are the one who suffers. Some of you have been carrying around that hurt for years. You've been blaming everyone in your life for a mistake either you or someone else made. You have an option to heal but would rather hold on to make sure you don't forget. Now you're at the point where everyone is suspect, and you don't trust anyone.

Pain can be part of the healing process, but you must allow yourself to go thru that in order to find joy again. Happiness is possible, but you are the determining factor of whether you wish to receive it. That incident or incidents does not define you. You lived before it and after it and please don't feel like you're alone in it because you're not. There are so many others that have experienced or are currently experiencing your situation and need to know they're not alone as well. So, find a way to release, forgive, and move on to a healthier, happier you, with less baggage.

45. SMILE

While the argument of whether it takes more muscles to frown than to smile is still debatable, let's discuss what a difference these faces can make. I recall many times where I was asked by a passing stranger to smile. So lost in my own world, I didn't realize the effect it may be having on those passing me by. When we go into a store it is quite a pleasant surprise to be greeted by someone with a smile. Maybe it's just me but that kind of sets the mood for my experience in that establishment. For example, can you imagine going to interview for a job and when the employer goes to greet you they have a stern face? The little bit of nervousness that you had before has now been scaled up a notch and here comes the sweaty palms and doubt of self, all because of the way you were greeted. As they say, you only get one chance to make a first impression, so why not make it count and bless someone with that beautiful smile that you were given?

I've also found that it's the best medicine for those who think that they can break you or make you sweat. I'll never forget being in my boss' office with a smile on my face because he was highly upset that he wasn't bringing in more money. Now, I did feel sorry for the man but all I could do was my best and return to my work. He got so upset that he told me to stop smiling. There are many things I may give away freely but my joy you cannot have. Next thing I know I was fired and I smiled as I grabbed my things and walked out the door. Well, later that night I received a call from the manager asking me to come back. Ha!

46. MY NAME IS WINDY

Yes, I spelled it correctly, Windy. You are the person who goes with the trend and the wind. If someone asks your opinion you're always in agreement with them and refuse to actually use the brain cells provided to form your own opinion. Yes, I know that sounds harsh but it's the truth. See how that works! Again, like I've said before, you were created as a special gift to the world with a voice and talent that is all yours, so why are you wasting it? How am I supposed to learn how wonderful and fabulous you are if every time I speak with you, you're just telling me what I want to hear and not your true and honest response which indicates that I'm hearing from you and you're not trying to appease me?

Also, I need you to learn your footing. There is no reason why as a grown woman that your decisions are made based on the temporary or the unimportant. If you're driving the newest car and wearing the latest clothes but have to live with your parents because you can't afford to have your own place, something is wrong. Now I understand that we all have hard times and sometimes the only choice is to go back home. If it wasn't for my mother who has cared for me during my illness and my recovery, I don't know where I would be. Thanks Mom! Also, don't try and be the Joneses! They are faking the funk themselves and are trying to purchase happiness! Honey, happiness cannot be bought, but it can be sought out internally. You will never find a person, place or thing that will make you

happy. After a while you will find something wrong with it and move on to the next. Nitpicking is not a good look for us either, it's actually downright petty, so stop it.

If you are not happy with yourself then why should anyone else want to enjoy your company? I mean, when the money is low, the products are old, the loved ones are all busy, and you are left to deal with just you, can you stand yourself? Are you at true peace with who you are and who you were created to be? If the answer is no, and I don't mean this for those who are truly working on developing themselves into something, but this is for those who are constantly trying to fill a void that can't seem to close no matter how hard you try to replace it. That man, that woman, that item cannot and anything else will not replace that which has been lost. You must find healing in and with that situation alone. It's not your partners, friends, families fault and it definitely isn't your credit card's fault, so why abuse either?

Whatever trend you are trying to follow will end and then what? On to the next, right? No, set your own trend, one that allows you to be successful in all aspects of your life and where you shine from the inside and not just because of some new product you bought.

Being Windy makes you a shifty character and one that will make others wonder if you can be trusted and will truly stay in their corner or go where the wind takes you. This applies to all relationships including that of an employer and others that you'll do business with.

Learn to stick and stay. Longevity is something we take for granted. There is nothing worse than having a regret, and especially in the times of today where everything can be recorded. Please don't be another fashion statistic, where you see the video or picture years from now and wonder what the heck were you thinking. It's time to find out the real problem, fix it, and move on. Don't waste the time of others because you can't figure out you. It's not their fault and doing things because they have great meaning will always lead to a great reward. Then you can go shopping!

47. DON'T FORGET TO READ THE LABEL

So, I'm talking to my girlfriend as I'm walking thru a store doing a little retail therapy when the conversation resulted in me saying "He needs to read the label before purchasing the product." Now, all I could do was laugh because I know I would've turned and ran from some of the people I've been in relationships with had I read the label first.

When we pick up a shirt we tend to look at the label to determine if it's 100% cotton or 50% cotton and 50% polyester or what material it's made of. The reason we do this is to see if the material is going to maintain its size or if we like the feel of it. What we don't want it to do is stretch out of shape and we definitely don't want it to shrink or itch.

In order to reach the tag, you must first not be fooled by the outer appearance. You must not get lost in the idea of how good it's going to look on you. How it will go with this outfit or that outfit or how others are going to hate. Invest in items that make you feel better about you so when it doesn't meet the expectations of others at least you know how it made you feel.

Now the same applies in relationships. When we don't take the time to learn who a person is, and jump head over

heels in, there's nothing left to do but fall. Yes, they may be fine as all get out and look good on paper but what is it about them that you're really attracted to or are you just fixing a fix? I know it gets old when people are asking if you're in a relationship and the answer is "No, I'm still single". I understand the loneliness and the heartache, but I also understand the pain of settling and wishing you hadn't.

The tag is right there with directions and all, but instead of reading the warning signs you choose to avoid them to get what you think you want. Then the next thing you know you're back at the register returning it because what was cute on the mannequin isn't quite that cute on you. You may, unfortunately, realize that you have missed the expiration date of its return and feel stuck. No one wants that for you and there is no need to punish yourself for a decision you made. Good Will and the Salvation Army exist for a reason. Pass it on to someone who it may be better suited for. Please know that you are not alone and there are people out there stuck in relationships with someone who only looked good on the outside and is terrible on the inside.

I know what my label says, though it may say sensitive at times, a loving heart, loves to smile, there's also the don't mix with crazy unless prepared to face the consequences, does not play with ignorance, and don't ask unless you want the answer attached as well as there is no filter attached. I also have if hung to dry will drift away. Lol. Yes, honey, I may not be the best for you but for someone else I'm spectacular. I am blessed to say that those who took the time to read my label are still my ride or dies and those who didn't weren't meant to be. So, take the time to get to know a person before you make any rash judgements. I'm sure you wouldn't want anyone to assume who you are without knowing if your label reads proceed with caution.

48. LIVING IN A BUBBLE, DON'T LET IT POP!

You ever met someone who seems to live with their head in the clouds? Or even better they are so protected from a past hurt that they choose to live in a bubble. Yes, I said choose.

When you get to the point where you will only surround yourself with a certain group of people or only believe that there's one way to live, you're in a bubble. Don't get me wrong, I understand living in a drama-free bubble, but you aren't the person I'm talking about. I'm talking about the one where everyone else can see what's really going on, but you chose to ignore it and act as if it doesn't exist. For some of us, an example may be a weight issue, and for others it may be infidelity. The signs are there but we choose to act as if they aren't. Then when it smacks us dead in the face we have the nerve to act shocked and thrown off.

Well honey, that thing that you've been trying to avoid is staring you dead in the face waiting for you to deal with it. It could be a past hurt or even a current one that is requesting that you take action, but you believe as long as you continue to ignore it then maybe it will go away. Not! It's still there like a shadow, and the longer you try to avoid it the more obvious it becomes to others.

So, here you go sweetie, take this needle and pop that balloon that's in blocking your view. Allow yourself to deal with the situation and move on. No, it's not the end of the world though it may feel like it. You will survive this and maybe even look back and laugh. The last thing you want is for someone else to pop it for you. Now you're on their time and have no choice but to deal with whatever issue you've been running from.

Even better is dealing with it yourself and seeing who's there to support you. You are not alone in this unless you chose to be. Trust me on this. Even if it means you need to find a support group or seek therapy. Stop with the excuses and start with your healing. No one knows how to take care of you better than you. So, stop hiding.

49. ACHILLES HEEL

Everyone has a part of them that is weak. No, I'm not saying you're weak as a person. You know that you have a weakness to certain things, or people, etc. For example, I can walk through an entire mall just fine until we pass a shoe store. I know I'm not alone on this. Please don't let there be a cute pair in the window or I'm going in. I've already calculated how I can get them before I've even tried them on because once they're on, they're coming home, them and Cinnabon.

My other weakness is my heart. I always want to give my all and not everyone deserves that. Will I find a way to justify it? Of course, I do! I give what I want in return and not everyone is able to do the same. So how do you resolve such an issue - you give yourself a reality check and keep it moving. Love does not hurt, and the minute it starts to hurt it's time to determine where that relationship is going.

So, what's your weakness and what have you done to protect it? I mean I know it's easy to put up a wall and wear armor and assure that you're heavily guarded but what part of you is letting someone in enough to even get close enough to find a weakness? Some of you have allowed what one person did to mess up not only your life but the life of someone who truly loves you. You may be their weakness and that's why they tolerate you and your mess. Yes, I said tolerate because we are all human and though

you may not think you're taking away from the relationship, trust me, you are, and it's been noticed.

Would you want to be in a relationship with someone where you felt you were being cheated because they were holding back on you? Then it's time you either let that person go to live happily and peacefully elsewhere or fix the issue. Don't straddle the fence, pick a side.



50. ARMOR ON

I love meeting people but isn't it interesting how you meet some people and even at the word "Hello" they have jumped 10 feet out of their skin and damn-near gave you the Karate Kid stance? I mean I all I was trying to do was speak. Don't clutch your pearls lady? Mmm Mmm mmm! What a shame. What if I actually needed your assistance, how the heck would we ever get to that point of conversation without me having to go thru your heavy and sign a contract, which you just happened to have on hand? Ha!

I'm saying all this to say that we need to let people in. Yes, I know we've all been hurt, and no one wants to be hurt again but it amazes me that we're able to take those chances on those who don't deserve our attention and affection and push away those that need it.

If you had baggage from the beginning, then you should've made that clear and not show up with 5 men behind you who are carrying all of your shit. Yes, I said it. That's your crap in those bags that you got on sale because it was a matching set. Also, don't get mad at your partners inability to handle all of your baggage when every time he/she saw you, you only brought an overnight bag. You tell them they need to accept you as you are but before today they had no clue who that person was because of a front that you put up. Now you're feeling some type of way and have no one to blame but yourself.

Oh yeah, we've all heard the "No it's not you, it's me" routine. The funny thing is that you didn't know it was you until someone else's personality constantly showed you that you need to work on yours.

Yeah, I know this topic sucks and that you are thinking about a whole bunch of other people who could use this information, but what about you? Whenever you point a finger, you must be in a position to get it pointed right back at you. I speak for myself because I've had a lot of growing to do and doors of opportunity have opened for me as a result of doing so.

We will always have some growing to do. There will always be a next level that we should attain for and that may require leaving your comfort zone. As for me, it was one thing to have these thoughts and an entirely different matter to place them on paper for the whole world to see and judge. Yes, I know some of you won't agree with me and I'm ok with that. In all honesty, oh well to those who don't. I chalk it all up to experience and pray that it does change the life of some.

51. RIDE OR DIE

As I think of the meaning of commitment I wonder do we truly know the understanding of the word? The word commitment is defined by Merriam-Webster as "An act of committing to a charge or trust or an agreement or pledge to do something in the future; especially an engagement to assume a financial obligation at a future date."

Now when we make a commitment to something or someone it is expected to be done until it's completion. We as women do it as wives, mothers, daughters, employee's/ employers, friends, etc. We make commitments daily but what example are we setting when we don't see them through. We say we are there until the end, but as soon as a monkey wrench gets thrown into the picture, we're out. I say we because I do include myself in this equation. I see myself with the whole I'm going to get into shape and change this bad habit or that bad habit and next thing you know I'm sitting there in the same situation, feeling stuck, and trying to blame someone else.

It's funny how when we achieve something we want all the credit but the minute it's our fault we can't point fingers fast enough. If you don't like the job you're working at then please go, get another one so I don't have to be subject to your attitude for something you can change. I understand that times are tough, and jobs don't come easy, but you need to either make the best of your situation or change it.

We are teaching our children and the people close to us how to treat us and who we are. If people see that you can start something and see it through until it's completed then that means the same will apply to them. That now means that I can invest in you and trust you with my friendship, partnership or even as a spouse.

For those who know that they can't stay in the same place for long periods of time, then know that your decision to do so will be reflected everywhere. In all honesty, I wouldn't want to be in a relationship with you because you can't seem to sit still when it comes to all other aspects of your life so what makes me any different? These are just some hints I'm giving out ladies. You don't know how long it took me to write this book, but God knows I had to face some other demons before I could see this thru.

So, I have a question for you, what demons are you battling that are keeping you from your future? I mean we all have them. It could be daddy issues, or some other terrible experience you may have had as a child that you are still carrying around like a hump on your back. You must find out what it is and get rid of it. There is no need to hold onto the past. That person is long gone, and you think you can't get ahead because of what they did to you. Well, honey let me tell you something, that choice to not move on and hate is yours, YOU are the one who's not moving on. You're the one who's still allowing that past situation to run your life. That's why you're not where you want to be in life, not because of them but because of YOU. So, let's move on.

Today I want you to take a pledge to self. Promise to love you for you and to be the best you that you can be. In order to make a commitment to someone else you must first make a commitment to self. You need to make yourself 100% and then only accept those into your life that can add to value. Anyone who wants to deplete you is not meant for your good and needs to keep it moving. I know that may be hard because some of those people may be very close to you but, if they truly want the best for you, they'll step up their game as well.

It's time to be that ride or die chick and if you have the right people in your life they'll ride, as for those other relationships, it's time for them to die.

52. PASSION

There are many things that I think about in life but one that I seem to consider daily is who am I and what is my purpose?

I noticed that when other people tell me what their dreams and aspirations are in life I tend to want to consider doing that myself then I realize it wasn't meant for me at all.

Well, I finally figured out what I want to do and what my life's purpose is and that's to be a motivator and educator. My cause has become one to fight for those who have been through what I have and create awareness nationally. Yes, that's a big shoe to fill but you must start somewhere. So, here's my question, what are your dreams and what steps are you taking to make them happen?

There is no need for your dreams to just lay dormant and die, you can make them a reality, but first you must plan. Taking what's been in your head and placing it on paper is the first step. It's scary because now you actually have to face it and put it into action. In our mind, it's easier to just toss those thoughts to the depths in an old file cabinet titled "Archives". Once it's in front of your face, it's a little harder to avoid.

So, the next thing is writing an outline of what you would like to achieve by starting this venture and what you'd like

the end result to be. If you must, break it down even further, because your items may seem like too much to handle. Then please, by all means, break it down. It's OK to take baby steps. No one is pushing you but you and whether you have a support system or not, this is your baby and it's up to you to nurture it.

You are only as successful as you think you can be. I believe in you so, why don't you?

53. SPACE CADET

As a child, I used to go into my world of imagination as I stared out into space. I was famously named “Space Cadet” and for some reason hearing those words worked. I would snap out of whatever world I created and return to reality. I would say that being a Space Cadet didn’t help me out in later years, but it truly has. If needed, I can look right at you and not hear a word you’ve said. I guess you can say it’s a defense mechanism but we all find a way to tune out. Sometimes, unfortunately, we miss valuable information and it can later hurt us. There are perks to tuning out though.

For example, when grandma or grandpa decide to tell you the same story for the 100th time and you must act enthused as if you’ve never heard it before. That’s the time to be a Space Cadet. When I need to focus and there are sounds all around me, I have actually found it easier to tune out their voices instead of being in a library where there is silence. We all have methods of getting focused but for me the louder the better. I think it comes from the days of mom’s house parties and being told to go to sleep while there was a house full of people and music blaring throughout. We all adapt somehow to our surroundings and being a Space Cadet has been my way.

So, what is your way of tuning out or do you even know how to? Are you left to deal with whatever someone says

and having it affect you? I mean to me we are not 5 and cannot or should not say, "I am rubber, you are glue, whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you". Lol.

As an adult we should've found a new mechanism that allows us to deal when someone is speaking words that we don't like. I mean for some it's their fist and they just punch the person, but when you want to act like an adult and not instantly react to their words, where do you allow them to go? Do you absorb them and take them in and take it personally or do you find a way to understand them and let it go?

Being an adult is hard and finding a source of management is even harder. Some of us just respond by saying unkind words and that isn't necessary. Find a way to remember that one day you will have to look back at that conversation, if you remember it, and realize that it could've been handled better. So why not find a way to speak to others now and not let your ugly actions be the result of someone else's reactions.

Also, meditation helps. I mean don't sit in front of the person Indian-style right there and start doing it, but it may help when you do it in class or at home to get you centered and not allow the rage within to constantly or instantly come out. It may make you actually think about the end result and how you can get further in life by putting yourself first. Let me know how that goes. I'm still working on it myself.

54. LOOKEY LOO

Have you ever spent so much time worrying about someone else's business that you don't have time to focus on your own? I mean it's one thing to be a person who is concerned about another but it's a whole other situation to have your neck turned so sideways minding someone else's business that it takes a chiropractor to get you back straight and focused. Yes, you may think it rude to be called a meddling momma or whatever names they have out there for you, but there is nothing worse than the look you have on your face when someone tells you to mind your business. I mean, you clutch your pearls, your jaw drops, and a gasp escapes your lips. Some of you even have nerve to faint.

Now, like I said, there is nothing wrong with being seriously concerned about someone and trying your best to steer them in what you believe is the best path, but if they chose to disregard your opinion and take their own direction, there is nothing you can do. As a parent, I take this information first hand, I am also doing so as a daughter. There is nothing worse than not listening to someone tell you you're about to trip and all they can do is watch as you fall and land flat on your ass. Ouch! Of course, the last thing we want to do is turn around and hear those 4 words we all hate "I told you so".

There is also a way to go about doing things. When we tend to mind someone else's business, we sometimes are the person waiting to see them fall - just to shove it in their face. This is not a pretty look and definitely not becoming of a lady. Mind your manners and try to remember to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.



55. MOVE

Have you ever gone to take a step and found that you can't move? Have you felt frozen in place or that your feet have been cemented in the ground of your current location?

I mean we find all types of reasons and excuses as to why we can't move on. "I'm not good enough, I'm scared that what everyone else said is right and I won't be successful," "But I love him/her," etc, etc, etc.

No one who wants the best for you will ever allow you to live a stagnant life. They will want to see you grow even if it means without them. But here's the question, do you want to see yourself grow? What is holding you back from being the best that you can be, and don't tell me that it's someone else, because at the end of the day it's you? Even when we have children, we can make moves for ourselves. It's always a choice, even if it's fear, we have to realize that no weapon formed against us shall prosper, and that all things are possible with God.

We were not created to be limited beings. We were created to go beyond the heights of those before us. We have been given the ability to say "move" to that mountain and that mountain will move. I mean we put a man on the moon so why can't your goal be achieved? What is the mountain in your life that you need moved?

What is blocking your view and stopping you from being all that you can be? For a lot of us it's fear, be it fear of failing or the disappointment of others, we still have allowed that to limit us. My question is, if you knew that you would succeed, would your path be different? If you knew that the answer to your question was yes instead of no, would you take that leap?

Well, you will never know what the answer will be unless you take that step. The part that we don't realize is that if the answer is no, then our life will remain exactly the same. So, why not try, instead of question and doubt yourself? Why not take a leap and be who you were destined to be? I believe in you, now it's your turn.