

# She Is

MAGAZINE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

## MINDING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Happy New  
You!

*The Way Tour 2026*

New Edition  
Boyz II Men  
Toni Braxton

HAPPY

NEW

YEAR



Welcome to 2026

2026: "My year of what if it all works out?"

**SHE IS MAGAZINE**

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Malika Steen



OWN

# iyanla:

THE INSIDE FIX

IYANLA IS BACK  
WITH THE FIXES  
WE NEED FOR  
THE NEW YEAR

NEW SERIES | 1.17

OWN

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SHE IS MAGAZINE 2026



DASHA KENNEDY  
Financial Advocate for Women of Color

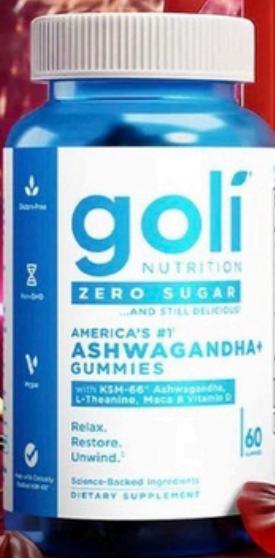


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# POWER. PURPOSE. POISE.

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Esther Energy by Reka Lefridge is not just a read—it's a divine download

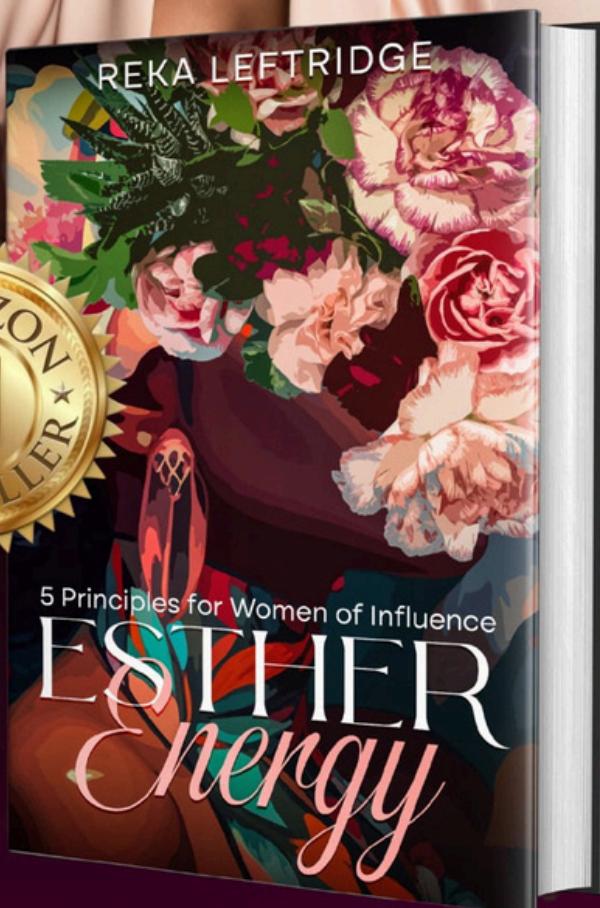
## POWERED BY GRACE DRIVEN BY FAITH

Esther Energy is your divine wake-up call for the women who has ever questioned their voice, delayed their dreams, or downplayed their calling.

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- Own your **POWER**
- Walk in **PURPOSE**
- Lead with **POISE**—the kind that shifts rooms

SCAN & STEP  
into your Esther Era



# FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year, beautiful family! Welcome to 2026 — we made it! I'm stepping into this year with laughter in my spirit, gratitude in my heart, and a fresh determination to stay grounded in what truly matters. Last year was a season of realigning and regrounding for me... slowing down, breathing deeper, and letting God remind me who I am (and who I'm still becoming).

Across the culture, Black women showed up and showed out all year long — and I loved watching it unfold. Alicia Johnson became the first Black woman elected to Georgia's Public Service Commission — a major statewide milestone reflecting Black women's ever-growing influence in governance and policy. Shout out to my hometown; Savannah, Georgia.

As the year unfolded, we also paused to reflect on loss in the creative world and within our communities — honoring voices, artists, and storytellers whose work shaped memories, inspired us, and reminded us how precious time truly is.

We honor the life of Malcolm Jamal Warner, Roberta Flack, Diane Keaton, Imani Dia Smith, Rob Reiner, D'Angelo and Ananda Lewis.

Personally, 2025 was full of milestones and miracles. My mom — fabulously single for 30 years — got married (yes... love is STILL in season!), and our family celebrated every moment. I became a contributing author in The Resilient Two, I was ordained as a Pastor at Vertical Church, and I joined a cohort to begin my trauma-informed certification — learning, stretching, and growing in ways that humbled me and filled me up.

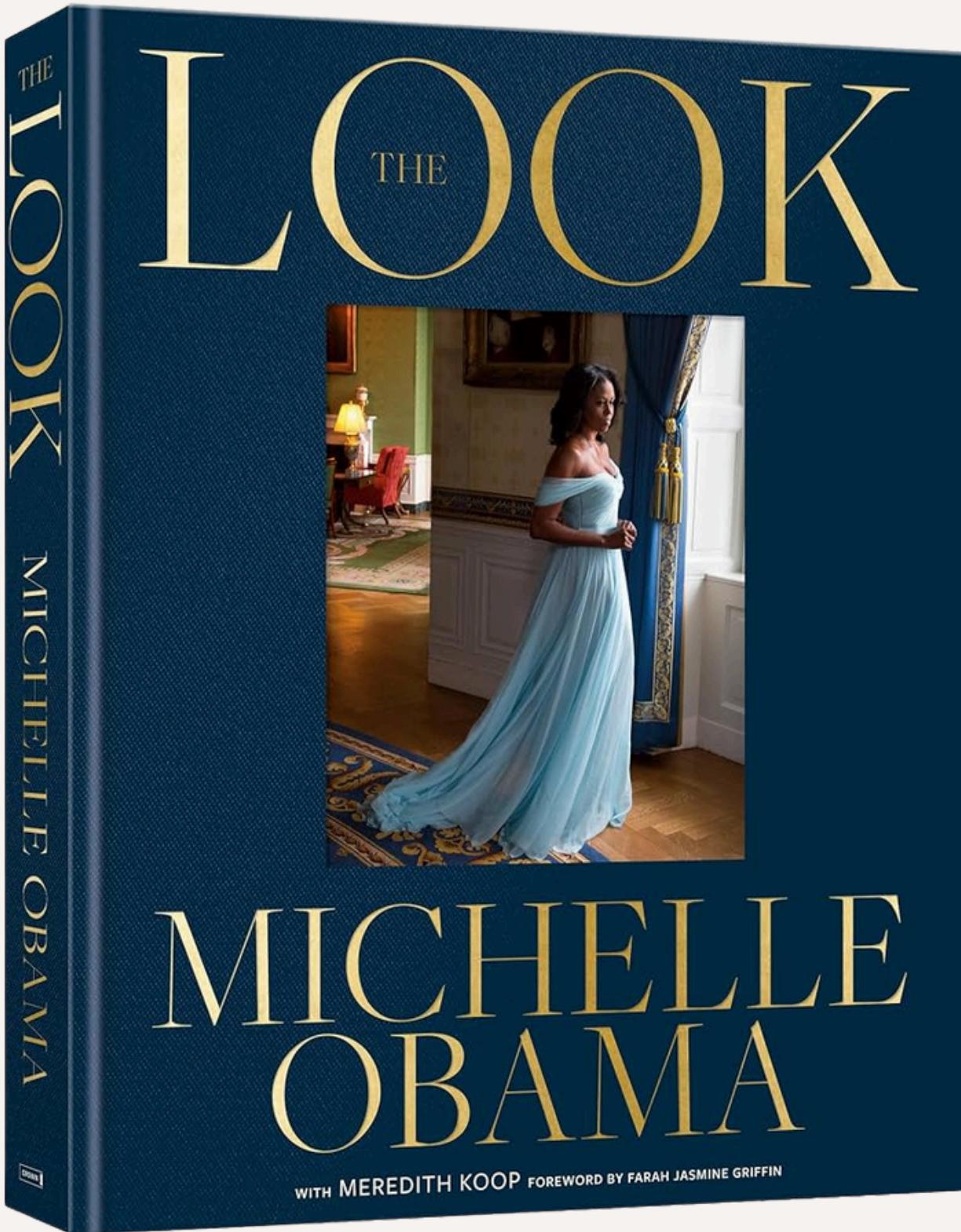
And listen... I also witnessed history — because I saw Brandy and Monica on The Boy Is Mine Tour! I went by myself, but I didn't stay by myself for long. I made new friends in the crowd and we sang every single song like the '90s never left. My heart was full — and my voice was gone! Our family also witnessed a miracle. My precious nephew Denim arrived at 26 weeks. We prayed, we trusted God, and our tiny warrior became an A+ graduate of the NICU. That testimony still leaves me in awe of God's goodness.

As for resolutions? I'm keeping it real simple this year: in 2026, I'm breaking the spirit of procrastination — one day at a time. Oh... and I'm determined to keep up with BOTH AirPods. (Because somehow one always disappears into another dimension!) New beginnings feel exciting, but this year isn't just about starting strong — it's about finishing well. No wasted minutes. No missed moments. Time is a gift — and I'm grateful for grace and time. Here's to joy, bold faith, soft hearts, steady courage, and beautiful beginnings.

With love and laughter,

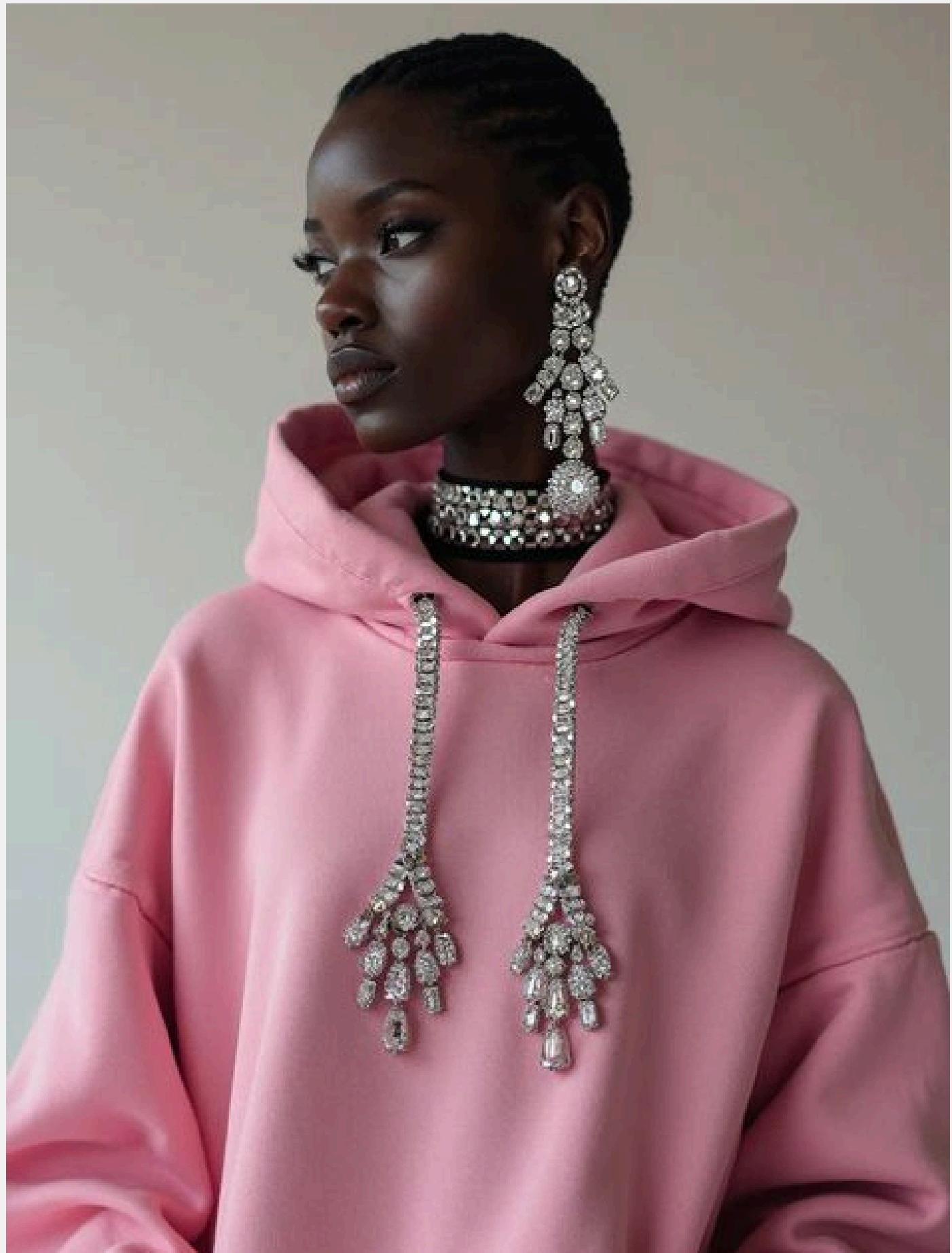
*Michelle Rousche'*











LOULOU



LOULOU



A graphic design featuring the words "HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are composed of various shades of red and orange, creating a layered and textured appearance. The 'H' and 'A' in "HAPPY" are white with a red outline. The 'V', 'A', and 'L' in "VALENTINE'S" are dark red. The 'E', 'N', 'T', 'I', 'N', 'E', and 'S' are orange. The 'D' and 'A' in "DAY" are white with a red outline. A small white heart is positioned to the right of the 'E' in "VALENTINE'S". Below the main text, the date "14 FEBRUARY" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.



BRANDON BLACKWOOD

BRANDON BLACKWOOD





## FIVE WOMEN YOU SHOULD KNOW





**ZION  
WILLIAMS**  
AUTHOR/ACTRESS/ADVOCATE



**ZION WILLIAMS**

**FIVE  
WOMEN  
YOU  
SHOULD  
KNOW**

**What is one lesson 2025 taught you that you're carrying into the next season of your life?**

It's hard to sit back and think about the lessons you're learning in the present. 2025 has taught me I can chase my dreams AND achieve them. I moved to Los Angeles, California to pursue my acting career. Moving to a new state at a young age is a blessing because it reminds you of the freedom you have in life. During the transition there was a period I didn't have a choice but to rely solely on God. It's often in those times where all you can do is ask for peace. I'm reminded God will always carry me through.

**What is one non-negotiable when it comes to friendships, and why is it so important to you?**

In every friendship I have I've recently asked myself "is it fruitful"? How can I pour into my friends and how are they reciprocating. What are my friends encouraging me to do? It has recently become nonnegotiable in order to keep progressing in life.

**What moment or event in history shifted your perspective on life, purpose, or identity?**

Working with a nonprofit that focuses on uplifting migrants, seeing the changes face to face after the recent election has been unreal. My favorite line while visiting a border shelter in Mexico was "once you see you cannot unsee". Experiencing the border with FaithWorks has taken the oblivion I was living in and turned my heart to compassion. Working in this field and not speaking up about recent policy changes would be a disservice to so many mothers, children, and young adults whose only hope is to be free from life threatening conditions.

**What makes you laugh out loud-like uncontrollably laugh-every single time?**

The first thing that came to mind when thinking about sharing laughs is my family. They always know how to enjoy life and make jokes. As I laugh with them I slowly start to feel my family healing and forming into a life we haven't experienced or seen before.

**What version of yourself are you most proud of becoming?**

The version I'm most proud of becoming is me. I spent a lot of my life trying not to become my mom, or trying to please others. As I was

seeking God he gave me a new perspective of myself. I got to fall in love with the version God always saw me as. I'm still young and as life goes on I'm sure there will be more to be proud of.

**What belief about yourself did you have to unlearn in order to grow?**

It always feels embarrassing to know at one point in my life I believed I was unlovable. At a young age I lost my grandfather who I thought was the only person who could love me. I avoided so many relationships and self sabotaged anything good because I didn't think I deserved it. I can't say it enough: getting closer to God wired my brain to believe I deserve love. As I healed I realized I could let the love of my grandfather live on through me.

**How do you protect your peace when life feels loud, demanding, or overwhelming?**

I mentioned before during my moving process God gave me peace during my struggles. I will continue to abide by that. When I pray out loud it seems like the world comes to a halt and it's only me and God. Stillness and harmony is what I long for in my life.

**What does success look like for you in this season-not by society's standards, but your own?**

That's an interesting question... success is continuing to show up for the things I believe in. Whether that's acting, my job or my family, if I'm showing up and doing my best then I'm successful.

**What is one thing people often misunderstand about you?**

People often misunderstand my softness. They see grace, creativity, and calm, and assume my life has been easy. What they don't see is the discipline, the sacrifice, and the quiet resilience required to keep showing up. My softness isn't fragility, it's strength shaped by experience.

**What advice would you give to women who feel like they're starting over or starting late?**

"Belief is contagious. When you believe in yourself, you give people permission to believe in themselves too." -Unknown Whatever you want to do in life at whatever age or starting point, do it with confidence. You got this. What you have a desire to do is already waiting for you baby!



**DR. RAI  
WASHINGTON**  
FOUNDER, AT HER DEFENSE

She Is Magazine



**DR. RAI WASHINGTON**

**What is one lesson 2025 taught you that you're carrying into the next season of your life?**

It has taught me that I don't have to rush decisions just because something feels urgent. I've learned to pause, think things through, and choose what actually fits my life. That shift has changed how I lead and what I'm willing to step into publicly and privately.

**What is one non-negotiable when it comes to friendships, and why is it so important to you?**

R-E-S-P-E-C-T. I value friendships where there's mutual understanding and room to grow. I don't want to have to justify my boundaries or explain every shift I make. When respect is solid, the relationship can move forward without friction.

**What moment or event in history shifted your perspective on life, purpose, or identity?**

Over time, I noticed how women are often the ones expected to hold everything together when things fall apart, at home, at work/business, and in the community. Yet those same women are rarely given real authority or credit once things stabilize. Seeing that pattern changed how I think about leadership. It made me more direct, more protective, and more mindful about the kinds of spaces I help build.

**What makes you laugh out loud-like uncontrollably laugh-every single time?**

When people say things honestly without trying to be funny. Dry humor and unfiltered stories catch me every time because they feel real and unexpected.

**What version of yourself are you most proud of becoming?**

The version of myself that listens to herself and acts on it. I don't second-guess every decision, and I no longer put my own needs last to make things easier for others.

**What belief about yourself did you have to unlearn in order to grow?**

The idea that life has to be hard to mean something. For a long time, I believed that if I wasn't struggling, I wasn't doing enough or earning what I had. Over time, I realized that ease can come from experience and growth, not shortcuts. Letting go of that belief allowed me to move forward without any guilt.

**How do you protect your peace when life feels loud, demanding, or overwhelming?**

I don't rush to respond to everything anymore. I take time to think before I engage, and I'm more selective about who has access to me. I've learned that I don't need to explain or defend those choices. That's how I keep myself grounded.

**What does success look like for you in this season—not by society's standards, but your own?**

Steady and manageable. It means I'm not constantly stressed or trying to prove myself. I'm doing work that helps people, but not at the expense of my health or my ability to speak up for myself. If my life and my work can exist without burning me out, that's success to me.

**What is one thing people often misunderstand about you?**

They believe I'm unaffected or distant because I don't react to everything. The truth is, I feel things deeply. I just choose carefully what I give my energy to and what I let go.

**What advice would you give to women who feel like they're starting over or starting late?**

You're not behind. You're starting with experience and perspective. You know more about yourself and what you don't want than you did before. That makes this next chapter stronger, not weaker.



## **COMIA FLYNN**

**VLOGGER, V/O ACTOR  
BRAND AMBASSADOR  
INFLUENCER**

**She Is Magazine**

## COMIA FLYNN

### What is one lesson 2025 taught you that you're carrying into the next season of your life?

One of the biggest lessons 2025 taught me was the courage to go after what I truly want without apology. This year showed me the power of saying no just as confidently as I say yes. I learned that boundaries aren't walls; they're filters. They protect my peace, my time, and my purpose. I stopped entertaining obligations, conversations, and commitments that didn't align with where I'm going. I no longer pour energy into things that don't serve a clear purpose in my life or support my growth. Moving into this next season, I'm choosing intention over people-pleasing, alignment over access, and peace over pressure. Saying no has become an act of self-respect and that has changed everything.

### What is one non-negotiable when it comes to friendships, and why is it so important to you?

I value friendships where my evolution is honored, not questioned or resented. I've learned that real connection doesn't require access to every part of me, just alignment with my values. Respect matters because without it, even history becomes a liability. When boundaries are respected, trust deepens, honesty thrives, and the friendship becomes a safe place, not a drain. I no longer make room for relationships that require me to shrink, over-explain, or abandon myself to belong.

### What moment or event in history shifted your perspective on life, purpose, or identity?

The moment that forever shifted my perspective was losing my dad in 2021. Grief has a way of stripping life down to what truly matters. In his absence, I gained a deeper understanding of time, purpose, and identity. I realized how fragile life is and how intentional we must be with love, words, and presence. Losing him taught me that tomorrow isn't promised, so living fully, honestly, and courageously isn't optional it's necessary. His passing reshaped how I show up in the world, pushing me to lead with more compassion, to pursue purpose without delay, and to honor his legacy by becoming the fullest version of myself.

### What makes you laugh out loud—like uncontrollably laugh—every single time?

What makes me laugh out loud every single time is when I let myself be completely silly and childlike. Those unfiltered moments where I stop being "put together" and just play. Whether it's doing something goofy, laughing at my own randomness, or leaning into joy without self-consciousness, it reminds me that laughter is freedom. Those moments matter because they reconnect me to my inner child, keep my spirit light, and remind me that joy doesn't have to be earned; it's something I'm allowed to experience fully and loudly.

### What version of yourself are you most proud of becoming?

I'm most proud of the version of me who chose growth over grief, peace over noise, and purpose over proving. The woman who learned that I don't owe access to everyone, that boundaries are a form of self-respect, and that slowing down doesn't mean falling behind. I'm proud of becoming someone who honors her journey, trusts her timing, and shows up fully confident, grounded, and unapologetically herself.

### What belief about yourself did you have to unlearn in order to grow?

I had to unlearn the belief that I needed to be smaller, quieter, or more palatable to be accepted or successful. For a long time, I thought strength had to come with constant explanation and overextension. Growth required me to understand that my confidence isn't arrogance, my boundaries aren't distance, and my presence doesn't need permission. The moment I stopped shrinking and started standing fully in who I am, everything aligned.

### How do you protect your peace when life feels loud, demanding, or overwhelming?

I go off the grid intentionally and unapologetically. I step away from the noise, the expectations, and the constant access people think they're entitled to. Protecting my peace means choosing quiet, clarity, and presence over performance. I reset so I can return grounded, not drained.

### What does success look like for you in this season—not by society's standards, but your own?

Success, for me, looks like time, real time. Longer vacations, slower mornings, and the freedom to live well without rushing back to obligations that don't serve me. This season is about expansion through rest, and yes, that includes extended stays in beautiful places like St. Tropez. Success now is a life that feels as good as it looks.

### What is one thing people often misunderstand about you?

People sometimes mistake my discernment for distance. I'm not standoffish. I'm intentional. I value depth, purpose, and meaningful conversations, so I don't engage in foolishness or unnecessary noise. Once people understand that, they realize I'm warm, present, and deeply invested in what truly matters.

### What advice would you give to women who feel like they're starting over or starting late?

You're not late, you're aligned. Starting over doesn't mean you failed; it means you had the courage to choose yourself again. Every season you've lived has prepared you for this moment. Move with confidence, trust your timing, and don't rush what's being rebuilt with intention. Your story isn't behind, it's unfolding right on time.



# LA JUANA(LJ) CHAMBERS LAWSON

BUSINESSWOMAN, AUTHOR  
COMMERCIAL REALTOR  
TACIT GROWTH STRATEGIES, FOUNDER

Shodwe Magazine



## LA JUANA (LJ) CHAMBERS LAWSON

# FIVE WOMEN YOU SHOULD KNOW.

### What is one lesson 2025 taught you that you're carrying into the next season of your life?

2025 taught me that going it alone is inefficient; clarity and progress are the result of intentional collaboration. Moving fast without discernment is just noise; real progress happens when choices are intentional—and when we slow down enough to include people historically left out of the process.

### What is one non-negotiable when it comes to friendships, and why is it so important to you?

One non-negotiable in friendships is integrity. Integrity is the quiet agreement between who you are in the dark and who you allow the world to see in the light. It is truth without witnesses, promises kept when no one is counting, and values that don't bend just because bending would be easier. When words and actions align, trust becomes the foundation that allows relationships to endure, evolve, and remain honest.

### What moment or event in history shifted your perspective on life, purpose, or identity?

The 2008 global financial crisis fundamentally shifted my perspective. Watching trusted institutions collapse while everyday people bore the consequences made it clear to me that systems alone don't save us—people do—and that any purpose-driven work must be human-centered, resilient, and built to last.

### What makes you laugh out loud—like uncontrollably laugh—every single time?

Unfiltered, mature adults telling their own versions of the truth—recounting stories from the past with zero concern for who's listening—will make me laugh out loud every single time. As the unofficial (and sometimes very official) griot of my maternal family, I carry the stories forward, which comes with plenty of WTF moments and a constant need to restrain myself when the tales get too good—usually drifting into the realm of pure folklore.

### What version of yourself are you most proud of becoming?

I am most proud of becoming a woman who tells the truth early, sets boundaries without apology, and stays soft without becoming fragile. That balance was earned.

### What belief about yourself did you have to unlearn in order to grow?

I had to unlearn the belief that carrying everything alone proved my worth. Growth requires embracing collaboration and recognizing that support is not weakness—it's strategy. Entrepreneurship and enterprise only become possible and scalable when people recognize, respect, and assign value to one another's unique and distinct talents, rather than trying to do everything in isolation or simply out of convenience.

### How do you protect your peace when life feels loud, demanding, or overwhelming?

I protect my peace through silence, structure, and spiritual grounding. I say no more than yes, guard my time, and refuse to negotiate with chaos. Like calla lilies, I mirror a quiet strength and understated beauty—rooted, resilient, and unbothered by the noise around me.

### What does success look like for you in this season—not by society's standards, but your own?

Success in this season looks like sustainability: work that matters, relationships that are reciprocal, rest that is honored, and impact that outlives my direct involvement.

### What is one thing people often misunderstand about you?

People often mistake my calm for compliance. In truth, I am kind, strategic, decisive, and fully aware of my value.

### What advice would you give to women who feel like they're starting over or starting late?

I would tell them they are not late—they are informed. Starting over with wisdom is a competitive advantage. Build slowly, choose intentionally, and don't confuse urgency with purpose. Invest early in coaches and consultants to save time, protect your reputation, and avoid costly mistakes—because the right guidance creates leverage most people never imagine. Most importantly, strong coaching and consulting relationships help build a pipeline of high-paying clients and attract more mature business and community leaders who trust you inherently because of the credibility, structure, and leverage those contracts signal. I've told hundreds of clients at Tacit Growth Strategies, LLC over the past 8 years that you can be early but never too late.



**REBEKAH  
REESE**  
PSALMIST, EXECUTIVE PASTOR,  
CRAFT QUEEN

**She Is Magazine**



REBEKAH REESE

**What is one lesson 2025 taught you that you're carrying into the next season of your life?**

Inexperience is not equivalent to incapability. Just because you lack the experience in an area doesn't mean you can't do it. It's simply an opportunity for growth. I've been placed in positions in 2025 that are uncharted territories for me. Instead of shying away from them and going into hiding, I've pushed myself further into them so that I can grow into those areas.

**What is one non-negotiable when it comes to friendships, and why is it so important to you?**

My friends have to be outgoing! As an introverted person, being around someone who is extroverted and a great conversationalist makes talking so much easier for me. Hanging out with other introverted people always feels so awkward because we can talk about something for a couple minutes, but afterwards we're all sitting there looking at each other wondering who's going to kick off the next topic. On the other hand, hanging out with extroverted people is always a fun time for me because there's always conversations about all kinds of things, and there's no pressure for me to have to say something if I don't want to.

**What moment or event in history shifted your perspective on life, purpose, or identity?**

Becoming a mother to kids who are just like me has shown me places within myself that I need to grow in. It's like I'm looking at myself from the outside in and seeing not only where I need to improve but also areas where I can teach my girls how to be their best.

**What makes you laugh out loud-like uncontrollably laugh-every single time?**

Hands down, the video of Terry in his motorized wheelchair lighting fireworks on the 4th of July and failing to wheel away from them before they start going off. "Back up! Back up, Terry! PUT IT IN REVERSE, TERRY!" has been living rent free in my head for the last 8+ years.

**What version of yourself are you most proud of becoming?**

I've become more of a relationship-builder. For a long time, I've been happy with being in the background and observing. However, I'm in a season where I've pushed myself to be a bit more outgoing and to build more meaningful connections with people. It's a little out of my comfort zone, but it has proven to be beneficial.

**What belief about yourself did you have to unlearn in order to grow?**

I'm honestly still unlearning the idea that I have to stay the same person that I've always been. One of my most used phrases is "I've never been that type of person." I've always been a very quiet and to-myself kind of person because that's what's always been comfortable for me. However, I've sometimes wished that I could step outside of that, and the truth of the matter is that I can! At any given point, I can change certain traits about myself. I don't have to be married to a certain personality if I don't want to be, especially if it's something that doesn't benefit me or that I simply don't like. Growth requires discomfort, and sometimes that discomfort comes from looking in the mirror at things about yourself that need to be changed or improved.

**How do you protect your peace when life feels loud, demanding, or overwhelming?**

I lean a lot on my husband when I'm overwhelmed. All it takes is a conversation with him, and he brings me back down to earth every single time. Having the right person in my corner to not only vent to but to also receive wise counsel from helps me to quiet the noise in my mind and keep me at peace.

**What does success look like for you in this season—not by society's standards, but your own?**

In this season, success looks like two things: self-advocacy and leading with boldness. I'm the type of person that goes with the flow, even if it's to my detriment because I don't like to shake things up. However, I'm learning that sometimes I need to put myself first and just let the chips fall where they may. Simply put, I cannot be effective if I'm constantly putting my needs on the back burner. As far as leading with boldness, I'm challenging myself to speak up more and to do it with confidence. This doesn't mean being loud or domineering. It simply means making decisions and leading people without question or uncertainty.



I AM  
BLACK  
HISTORY



January  
fifteenth

April  
fourth

1968



TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 25 MIN SERVINGS: 10 (2-1/2 QUARTS)

# BAKED POTATO SOUP

## INGREDIENTS

- 4 large baking potatoes (about 12 ounces each)
- 2/3 cup butter, cubed
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 6 cups 2% milk
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 10 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°. Pierce potatoes several times with a fork; place on a baking sheet. Bake until tender, 65-75 minutes. Cool completely.

- Peel and cube potatoes. In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until smooth; gradually whisk in milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes. Stir in potatoes; heat through.
- Remove from heat; stir in sour cream and green onion. Top servings with cheese and bacon.

## NUTRITION FACTS

1 cup: 469 calories, 28g fat (17g saturated fat), 86mg cholesterol, 563mg sodium, 41g carbohydrate (10g sugars, 3g fiber), 14g protein.

# Creamy Ravioli Soup

- **Fresh Cheese Ravioli:** You could use fresh frozen. Just be sure to adjust the cooking time accordingly.
- **Olive Oil and Butter:** For sauteing the veggies and adding extra richness to the dish. Carrot, Yellow Onion, and Garlic: To create a flavorful, aromatic base.
- **Italian Sausage:** For a bold, savory flavor and protein. You could also use ground turkey.
- **Dried Basil and Dried Oregano:** It infuses the broth with a classic Italian flavor.
- **Fresh Baby Spinach:** It adds nutrients and freshness to cut through the richness.
- **Crushed Tomatoes and Tomato Paste:** It creates a rich, robust base.
- **Chicken Broth:** The foundation of the soup allows all the flavors to meld.
- **Heavy Cream:** It takes the soup from brothy to creamy.
- **Parmesan Cheese:** It adds a salty, nutty flavor.

*With everything cooked in one pot, this recipe is a breeze to make and even easier to clean up!*

1. HEAT. In a large Dutch oven, heat the olive oil and butter over medium-high heat.

2. SAUTE. Add the diced onions and sliced carrots. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 3-4 minutes.

3. BROWN. Add the Italian sausage or ground turkey to the pot. Cook until browned, about 5-7 minutes. Drain any excess grease.

4. STIR. Stir in the minced garlic, dried basil, and oregano. Cook for about 30 seconds.

5. POUR. Pour in the crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, and chicken broth. Stir and bring to a boil.

6. COOK. Once boiling, reduce the heat to a simmer. Add the ravioli and cook until they float, about 5-6 minutes.

7. ADD. Add the fresh spinach. Stir and cook until just wilted.

8. FINISH. Slowly stir in the heavy cream and return to a gentle simmer. Add the grated Parmesan cheese and stir until melted.

9. SERVE. Ladle into bowls. Garnish with additional Parmesan cheese and fresh basil, if desired. Serve immediately.







# FIVE WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN THE NEW YEAR.

Mental health includes your psychological, emotional, and social well-being and affects how you feel, think, and act. It's an important part of your overall health and quality of life. As we enter the new year, it's important to make your mental health a priority. Here are five ways you can support your mental health going into the new year.



## 1. Set Goals and Boundaries:

Make a list of goals for the new year that will help you improve your overall well-being and happiness. Perhaps that's getting more sleep at night, saying yes to new experiences more often, or learning new skills. Make sure your goals are achievable. Prioritize your goals and the tasks on your to-do list so you can focus on what needs to get done now versus what can wait until later to help prevent overwhelm. Remember to also set boundaries so you don't take on too much at once, which can lead to stress and burnout. Setting boundaries also sets standards for how you will allow others to treat you, which can support your peace.

## 2. Connect with People

Spending time with friends and family can help prevent feelings of isolation, help you feel loved and supported, and promote work-life balance. Talking with loved ones can be a good opportunity to talk about how you're feeling, gain new perspective, and take your mind off things that are causing you stress.

## 3. Take Care of Your Body and Mind

Physical health and mental health are intertwined. Support both by getting enough sleep every night, incorporating exercise into your daily routine, eating healthy meals, and drinking enough water. Spend time on healthy activities that relax you and bring you joy, such as meditating, practicing yoga, going for a walk, reading, or listening to calming music.

# YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

## 4. Acknowledge Your Feelings and Strive for a Positive Mindset

Ignoring your feelings won't make them go away. If you're upset, try to find the cause and determine how you can deal with the situation. Instead of bottling up your emotions, talk to someone who may be able to help. You can also try reframing your outlook on the situation. If you're having negative thoughts, identify them and challenge them. Focus on positivity and the things you're grateful for. You can have a positive mindset while still acknowledging and working through difficult situations and negative thoughts.

## 5. Ask for Help

Asking for help from trusted loved ones or professionals can support your mental health now and throughout the year. Mental health professionals can teach you how to work through everyday challenges, set boundaries, cope with stress, and more. If you're in crisis, find an urgent care center.

As you move into the new year, remember that caring for your mental and emotional well-being is an ongoing journey, not a checklist to complete overnight. Small, intentional choices—setting boundaries, nurturing relationships, listening to your body, honoring your feelings, and reaching out for support when needed—can create meaningful, lasting change. Give yourself permission to grow at your own pace, celebrate progress along the way, and embrace the year ahead with hope, compassion, and a renewed commitment to your peace and well-being.



*Research shows that about 1 in 5 Black women experience a mental health condition such as anxiety, depression, or PTSD, underscoring the importance of mental wellness support going into the New Year.*

The more you know about mental health, the better you can support good mental health in yourself and others.



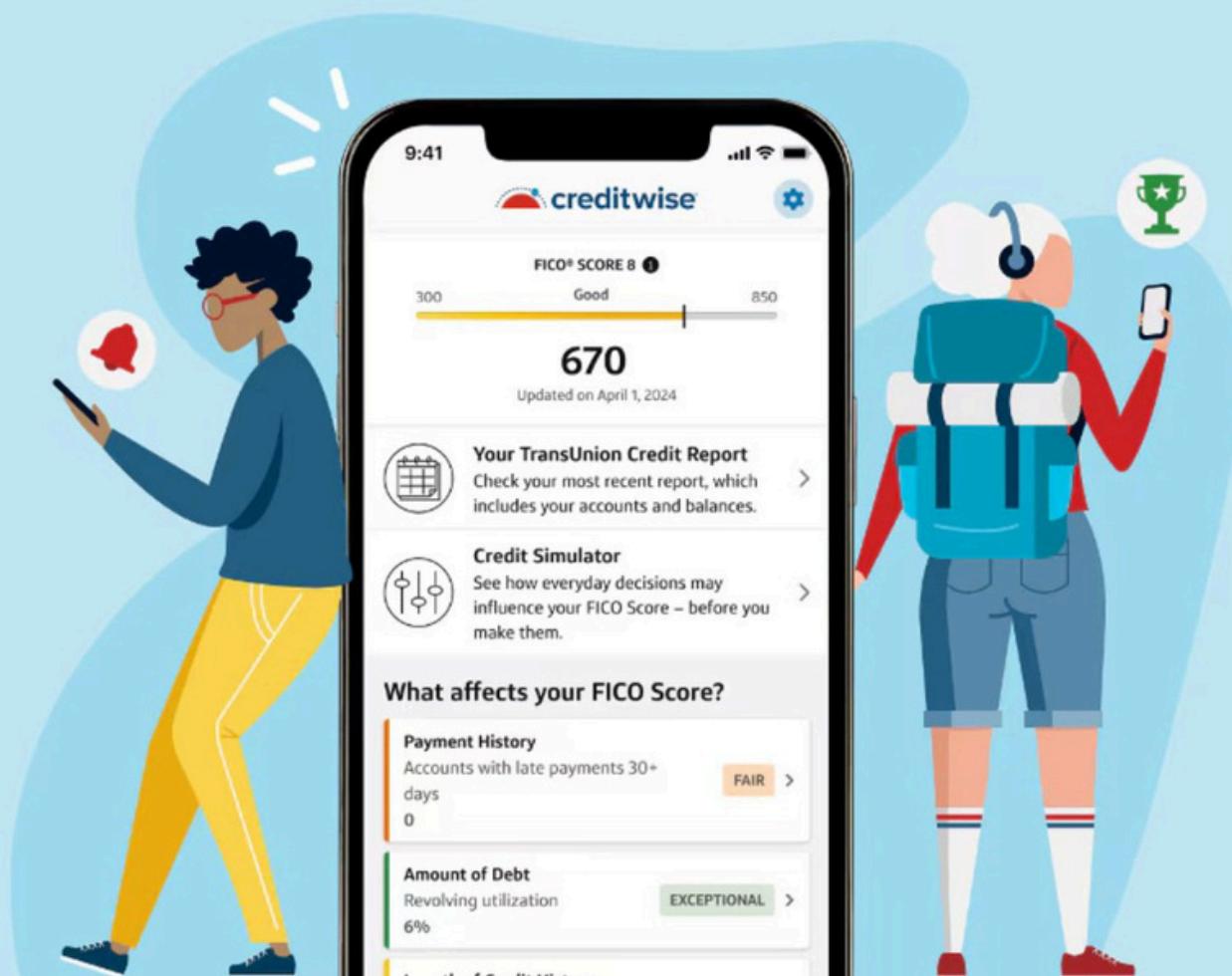
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## HOW TO BUILD FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE

*"Financial wholeness is when all the aspects of your financial life are working together for your greatest good, your biggest benefit, and your richest life". -*

*Tiffany "The Budgetnista" Aliche*

### **Dream Big – and Let It Mean Something**

We spend money on what we value. Many people struggle with financial discipline simply because the reward of spending right now feels clearer than the reward of saving or investing for later. Others are great at saving but hesitate to invest because risk feels uncomfortable — even when their money is quietly losing value to inflation.

Real discipline starts with a dream that's bigger than instant gratification and stronger than fear. Ask yourself: What will my life look like when I reach my financial goals? Take time to pray, reflect, and invite the Holy Spirit into your imagination. How might God want to use your resources — not just for comfort, but for purpose?

At some point, comfort alone won't stretch you far enough. Growth requires courage, love, and faith. Your dream has to be bigger than you — that's what keeps you moving when progress feels slow.

### **Turn the Dream Into Daily Steps**

*Financial discipline is built in the small, consistent choices you make every day. Once you see the big picture, create a system that supports it — one that fits your season and your goals.*

*If you're working to spend less than you earn, start with a plan to eliminate debt. A method like the Debt Snowball can help you build momentum by paying off your smallest balances first.*

*If you're debt-free, the next step is aligning your budget and investments with your long-term vision. A simple starting framework is the 70/30 rule:*

- 10% — Tithe
- 70% — Expenses
- 20% — Investments

*There's room for flexibility here. God may lead you to give more, your expenses may be lower, or you may need to strengthen your emergency fund before investing. As your income and wisdom grow, your investments can grow and diversify, too.*

*If you've already reached financial stability, your next questions may be about protection, expansion, and greater impact. That's where mentorship, coaching, and continued learning become especially valuable.*

## Segment Your Spending

A simple way to stay disciplined is to separate your money by purpose. Consider using different accounts for tithing, saving, investing, and everyday expenses. Automating transfers (especially through direct deposit) helps your priorities stay on track — without relying on willpower alone. When savings live in an “untouchable” space, they’re far less tempting to dip into.

## Practice Consistency Over Perfection

Financial discipline isn’t about never making mistakes — it’s about staying committed over time. Some months will feel tight. Some goals will take longer than you expected. That’s okay. Celebrate progress, even when it’s small. Stay patient with yourself. Discipline grows the same way wealth does — little by little, choice by choice.

*Financial discipline isn’t about restriction — it’s about intention. When your goals are rooted in purpose and guided by wisdom, your daily choices with money start to reflect where you’re going, not just how you feel in the moment. With prayerful vision, consistent habits, and a willingness to grow, your resources become a tool God can use to build stability, impact, and a future you’re excited to walk into.*

## Review, Reflect, and Adjust Regularly

Life changes — and your financial plan should evolve with it. Schedule time to review your budget, investments, and goals. Ask yourself:

- What’s working well?
- Where am I drifting?
- What needs adjusting in this season?

Reflection keeps your finances aligned with your purpose — instead of running on autopilot.



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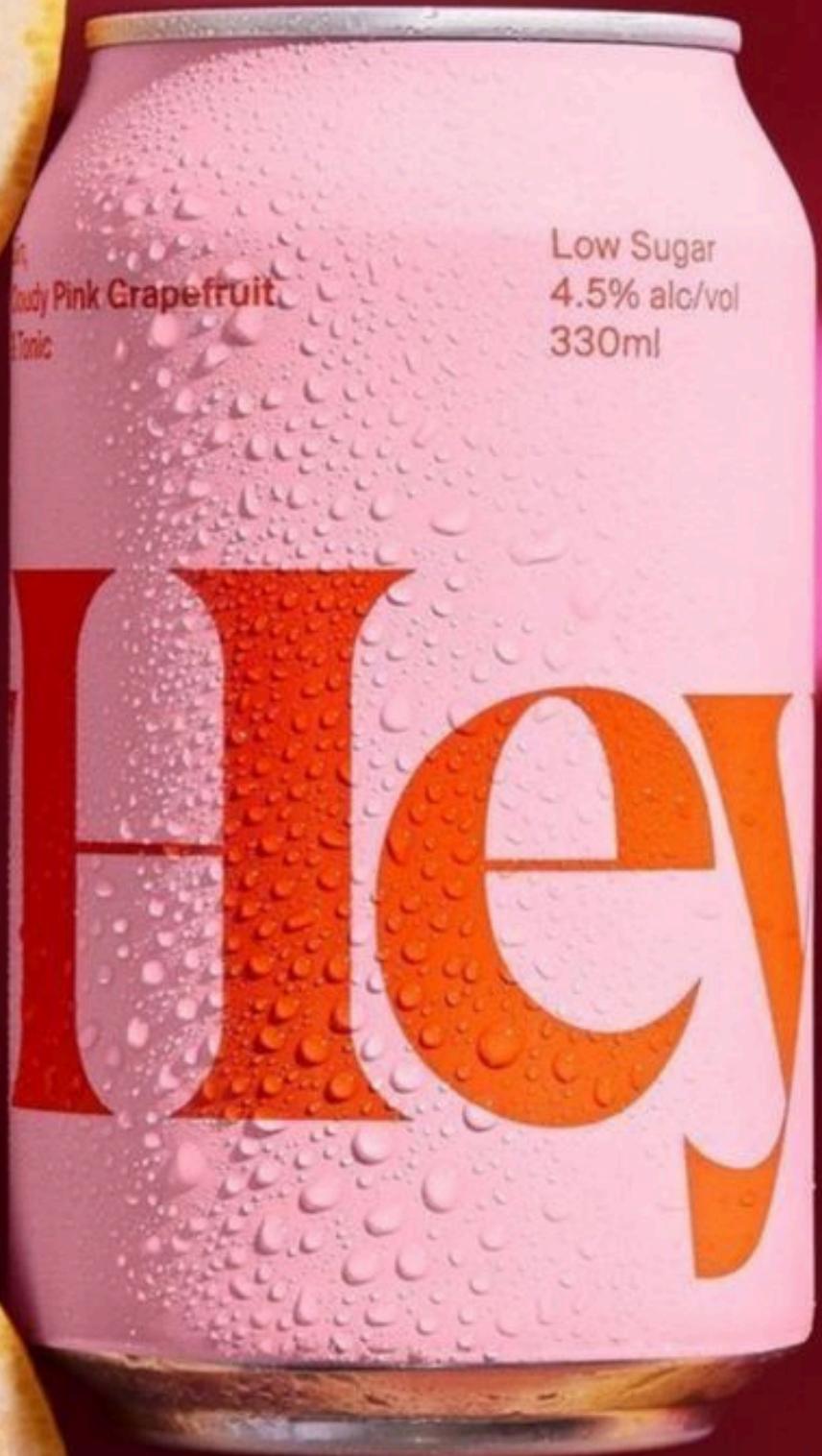
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