

THE ENCORE PLAYBOOK

Bold Strategies for Women
Redefining Their Next Chapter



PAULA WASHINGTON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For every woman who trusts that her greatest chapters are yet to be written, knowing that all she's lived was just preparation.

With deep gratitude, I honor my ancestors, whose faith, strength, vision, and perseverance paved the way for me.

To my great-grandmother Nannie, who graduated college cum laude in 1894 and, alongside my great-grandfather, built a successful shipping company. Your determination is my daily inspiration.

To my grandmother, Dora, a Julliard graduate, concert pianist, and real estate entrepreneur, and my grandfather, her steadfast supporter. You gave me my first desk, a vintage brass telephone, and a notebook, nurturing my curiosity and teaching me the art of business from a young age. Your mentorship shaped the leader I am today.

To my grandmother, Lucinda, a devoted deaconess, and my grandfather, whose unwavering faith and service to the community embodied grace and purpose. Your words, "Lead with kindness, talk less, and you will always receive more," guide me still.

To my mother, Audrey, a trailblazer and the first female manager of a Citibank branch in New York, and my father, her champion. Your courage and resilience shattered glass ceilings and opened new paths for generations to come.

To my mentor, Flora Roberts, founder and chair of Flori Roberts Cosmetics, Inc. who always reminded me: "Paula, create your

own mic so the big boys can't take it." Your words still echo with every bold step I take.

To my extraordinary daughter, Melodie, who is boldly creating her future, never doubting that "Yes, I can, and I will!" Your belief in possibility is a light that continues to shine.

And to the generations yet to come, may you always know the stories, the heritage, and the strength from which you come. This legacy is yours to carry forward, with courage, conviction, and always keeping God first.

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Prelude: Your Curtain Rises Again

Imagine standing at the center stage of your life, the spotlight warm on your skin, ready to unveil a performance more breathtaking than any before. This is not an ending, it's your crescendo.

You are not defined by the roles you've played or the sacrifices you've made. You are a masterpiece in constant creation, and now, you're about to reveal your most extraordinary act yet. This playbook is grounded in one belief, our past does not define our limits, it powers our next.

The declaration, **"I Am Woman First"**, is more than a statement. It's a revolution.

Reflection Questions to Ignite Your Journey

- Who am I beyond the titles and responsibilities I've carried?
- What dreams have I quietly tucked away, waiting for their moment?
- What would true liberation feel like?

This is your time to step into the spotlight uninhibited, unapologetic, unmistakably you.

The Unsung Chapters

For decades, we've prioritized others, navigated unspoken changes, and watched our families grow independent. Our careers have shifted and evolved. Our wisdom is needed more than ever in our communities. Every role mattered deeply, but none tells our whole story.

Now, it's time to honor the wisdom we've earned, prioritize our dreams, and embrace our full, magnificent selves. This isn't selfish, it's thriving. It's evolution, embracing the strength and insight gained, even as our bodies transform.

Who Is This For?

This playbook is a beacon for:

- The mother who has juggled caregiving for children and aging parents is now ready to claim time and space for her well-being.
- The entrepreneur with an unscaled vision burning bright.
- The professional seeking a second act of brilliance.
- The survivor rebuilding after life's most challenging transitions.
- The empty-nester rediscovering passions long dormant, ready to fill her home with the sound of her own dreams.
- The woman who has weathered storms and now claims her seat as the Chairwoman of Her Life, navigating changing family dynamics while embracing new freedom.

My Pivot: From Pause to Power

Like you, I've worn countless hats: divorced single mom, corporate professional, entrepreneur, caregiver, overcomer (often simultaneously). Those roles shaped me, but did not confine me. In my sixties, I asked myself if I could do this again? Do I have the strength to bet on myself, especially after losing my mother and facing my own mortality?

Of course, my answer was yes, I can't punk out now. I have no choice; given what those before me sacrificed, I owe it to them and to myself to keep going. The tenacity and perseverance of the women before us were unparalleled. I chose to process my

emotions and move forward. Imagine being a woman of color in the 1800s or early 1900s: building a thriving business, fulfilling family roles all while facing a world that said you didn't belong.

My great-grandmother Nannie's determination, graduating cum laude in 1894 and building a successful shipping company, established a foundation of perseverance that fuels me today. That same drive led my grandmother, Dora, to defy systemic barriers in real estate, helping families of color secure homes they had once been denied. Due to the laws at that time, my great-grandfather was refused the right to purchase their family home without a mortgage. His white attorney had to purchase it on his behalf. Despite these injustices, my grandmother remained steadfast. She taught me and my sister, showing us that possibility knows no limits.

My voice carries the lineage of quiet strength, passed down from my grandmother Lucinda, whose wisdom guided my mother, Audrey, as she broke barriers few women of color could cross, becoming the first female manager at her Citibank branch. Despite being constantly undermined, Audrey lived by her mother's philosophy, "Lead with kindness, talk less, and receive more." My father stood beside her, often visiting the branch to show his support. Her resilience spoke louder than resistance, she chose to show rather than tell, no matter what society expected. The pressure these women overcame was immense.

Flori Roberts, founder of Flori Roberts Cosmetics, saw that women of color had no makeup options and decided to change that. She asked her husband, a doctor, to help create a product, and from there, she built a multimillion-dollar brand that transformed lives. Flori defied the odds and claimed her space with courage and vision. Her mentorship taught me strategy, niche marketing, and how to lead with strength as a woman in business. She always said, "Never let the big boys intimidate

you.” She tested her products in hair salons, with real women, not just in labs. I’ll never forget her story of launching a product during the race riots at Franklin Simon’s department store in New York. The store refused to let the models enter through the front. Flori refused to launch unless they could walk in with her, and they did. That moment set the precedent for models of color and showed the world what leadership looks like.

What opposition have you faced for what is right?

My family's legacy was not just one of survival, but of strategic reinvention. As women of color and single moms, we don’t always have the luxury to linger in our feelings, but we have the power to rise, rebuild, and create.

I have weathered storms: job loss, divorce, financial setbacks, business failures, and health challenges. Each time, I drew strength from knowing the women before me had paved the way. What I didn't realize then was that life's trials weren't tearing me down, they were forging my resilience. I leaned into what I knew: betting on myself and trusting God to direct my steps. I asked, "How can I turn this around? How do I leverage this setback?" Self-doubt will whisper, but I remind myself: I have walked through fires before and emerged not just intact but transformed.

Knowing we all face different crossroads, I write this to help others rise. Perhaps my experiences and lessons will guide you toward your breakthrough.

Reflection Questions: *What has been your biggest moment of personal reinvention? How did you rise? Write down one lesson from that experience and how it can fuel your next chapter.*

The Encore Promise

This is your moment to prove to yourself, not to others, that you can create something extraordinary from the lessons, scars, and victories of your past.

"I'm Not Done Yet" is more than a mantra; it's a commitment to:

- Live boldly
- Love deeply
- Leave a legacy that is authentically, brilliantly YOU

This is your encore, your second curtain call. You have earned the right to stand center stage, to create, inspire, and shine.

Across the country, women are embracing encore careers and new chapters, not as a retreat from the workforce, but as a bold reinvention. Whether you're seeking fulfillment, a new sense of purpose, or the chance to align your work with your values, your encore is about leveraging your experience to make a meaningful impact.

You are not defined by what you leave behind, but by what you choose to build next. An encore is not just a job change; it's a declaration that your most significant contributions still lie ahead. This is the time to pursue passions, explore new directions, and reconnect with your dreams.

Together, let's build your encore because we are NOT DONE YET!

Before you step into your renaissance, take a moment to reflect: What stage are you leaving behind, and what are you stepping into? Write down three words that define your next act.

As the curtain rises, your renaissance begins. It is a time to reclaim, redefine, and reimagine your bold new chapter. Let's step into it with intention and momentum.

Introduction: Your Renaissance Begins

Welcome to your next chapter, a landscape of purpose, passion, and unlimited possibility.

Whether you are:

- Stepping into retirement
- Transitioning from a long-standing career or business
- Reimagining your role in the world

One truth remains: **YOU ARE NOT DONE YET.**

What You'll Gain

This playbook is your strategic companion, designed for mid-life women who are ready to embrace their most exciting chapters yet. It's not about doing everything at once; it's about taking **one bold step at a time**. Inside, you'll discover practical tools, guiding principles, and flexible exercises you can return to as your needs and goals evolve.

Here's what you'll discover:

1. A personalized roadmap for your transformation
2. Powerful strategies to navigate life's transitions with confidence
3. Tools to overcome obstacles and silence self-doubt
4. Inspiring, authentic stories of women who have embraced their Encore moment, whether in business, life, or both. These are not just highlight reels, but real journeys from "not yet" to "now's my time." As you read their stories, reflect: *What does your encore look like?*

5. Practical worksheets to help you stay focused, motivated, and keep your momentum going

The ENCORE Framework

Throughout this book, you'll be introduced to the ENCORE Framework, your roadmap to redefine your next chapter. Each letter represents a key element of reinvention:

- **E – Exit with Intention: Designing Your Strategic Transition**

Transitions are not endings; they are powerful beginnings. With the right plan, every transition becomes an opportunity for reinvention.

- **N – Navigate the New, After the Crazy: Charting Clarity and Courage in Uncertain Terrain**

Uncertainty is not your enemy; it is fertile ground for possibility. You don't have to control every twist and turn to create something powerful.

- **C – Commitment, Communication & Connection: Building Authentic Relationships**

In your encore season, relationships are your most valuable currency. These connections will support and empower you to reach new heights.

- **O– Opportunities: Creating, Seizing, and Aligning**

Opportunities are not just discovered, they are created. It's not about waiting for the right moment; it's about making the right moment happen.

- **R – Relevance: Setting Resonant, Progressive Goals**

Goal-setting is the art of alignment and intention. Your goals should reflect where you're headed, not where you've been.

- **E – Excellence: Crafting Your Legacy Your Trademark**

Excellence is not a destination; it's a continuous journey of intentional action. It is about the pursuit of something greater, not perfection.

Now is the time to prove to yourself that your most compelling chapter is still being written. Your experiences are not baggage; they are rocket fuel. Your scars are evidence of incredible resilience. Your age is a testament to hard earned wisdom. This playbook isn't a race, but a **journey of discovery and growth at your pace**. Together, we'll transform your encore from a whisper to a thunderous declaration.

What Makes This Playbook Different

This isn't another generic self help guide. It's a strategic blueprint crafted specifically for women who refuse to fade into the background. You'll receive:

- Laser focused personal reflection exercises
- Real world strategies from women who have successfully reinvented themselves
- Practical tools that turn insight into immediate action
- A framework that transforms your life experience into your most powerful asset

You Are Ready Even When Doubt Creeps In

Every challenge you've faced, every role you've mastered, and every obstacle you've overcome has prepared you for this very moment. Let these experiences be your proof: you are ready to move forward.

Your encore is about leveraging everything you've already become, not starting over.

Are you ready to claim your stage?

Let's begin!

Chapter 1: Designing Your Strategic Transition

Close your eyes and picture yourself at the threshold of a new chapter, not with uncertainty, but with clarity and purpose. This is what it means to design your strategic transition.

Transitions aren't just about leaving something behind; they're about stepping boldly into what's next, guided by intention and vision.

What Does Designing with Intention Look Like?

Designing with intention is more than a tactical decision, it's a transformative mindset. It means approaching life's transitions with the same strategic brilliance that fueled your greatest professional wins, and the wisdom gained from your losses. This isn't about having a backup plan; it's about intentionally crafting a bold blueprint for your encore. Goals define what you want to achieve, but intentions shape how you experience the journey.

A strategic exit isn't an ending. It is the deliberate orchestration of your next beginning.

The Awakening: My Transition Story

My understanding of intentional departures emerged from unexpected challenges, a corporate layoff that struck like a thunderbolt, shattering my carefully constructed reality.

In that moment of professional free fall, I discovered something profound: transitions aren't accidents. They are opportunities, meticulously disguised as disruptions.

Key Insights from Life's Unexpected Turns: Resilience is a skill, not a trait: Every unexpected exit is a masterclass in adaptability. The skills that carried you through previous chapters are your most powerful assets.

Your Experience is Your Greatest Currency: Those years of earned wisdom aren't background noise; they're the symphony of your next breakthrough.

Fear is Information, not a Roadblock: When uncertainty whispers, listen closely. Fear often contains the blueprint for your next bold move.

Navigating Transitions Across Life's Dimensions

Exiting with intention isn't limited to career shifts; it's a holistic approach that touches every aspect of your life. Review the following transitions that lead to transformation and realignment:

Professional Transitions:

- Pivoting career paths
- Launching entrepreneurial ventures
- Redefining leadership roles

Personal Transformations:

- Reimagining relationships
- Embracing new life stages
- Reclaiming personal passions

Financial Realignment:

- Strategic financial planning
- Investing in personal growth
- Creating sustainable income streams

The 3-Tier Design Strategy

This strategy helps you navigate your encore with confidence. Consider this three-tiered approach:

- **Clarity:** Define what you genuinely want next.
- **Courage:** Face your fears and take bold action.
- **Consistency:** Commit to daily steps, no matter how small.

Exercise: Pause and Reflect

1. What does clarity look like for you right now?
2. Where do you need to summon more courage?
3. What is one small, consistent step you can take this week?

Challenging the Narrative of Limitation

Even with a solid strategy, common myths can hold us back. Let's challenge them together:

Myth #1: "You're too old to start over."

Truth: You're perfectly positioned to leverage decades of wisdom.

Myth #2: "It's too late to make a meaningful change."

Truth: Every day is a new opportunity to begin again.

Myth #3: "You have to do it alone."

Truth: Community and connection are your greatest assets.

Mindset Shift: Embracing Your Timeline—The Patience Paradox

Life's twists and turns—delays, detours, disruptions—often leave us caught between regret and rush. We procrastinate, then race against invisible clocks and arbitrary milestones. We punish ourselves with "should haves" instead of honoring our journey.

True power comes from recognizing that your timeline is uniquely yours. The wisdom you've gathered through each role wasn't wasted time. It was necessary preparation. You did the best you could with what you knew then.

Now, in your 60s or beyond, you may be wondering if it's too late. It's not. These aren't the years when opportunity has passed, they are exactly when your symphony was meant to crescendo. Release the regrets. This moment, with all your accumulated wisdom, is precisely when you were meant to pivot. Your hard-earned insights aren't a consolation prize. They're your secret sauce, your competitive advantage. This is your moment to use them unapologetically.

Encore in Action

Let's look at real women who have designed their strategic transitions:

- Maria: After thirty years in education, Maria launched a consulting business, blending her expertise with her passion for mentorship.
- Linda: When her children left home, she reignited her dream of painting, turning her art into a thriving side business.
- Sharon: After divorce, Sharon rebuilt her finances, learned new skills, and created a stable, independent future.

Case Study: From Setback to Encore

One client lost her job unexpectedly in her fifties, and fear threatened to overwhelm her. But she remembered how the women who came before her persevered. They faced even greater obstacles and still found a way forward. She allowed herself to grieve, and together, we mapped out her next steps. Her new plan included seeking mentors in her desired business field, taking a certification course to enhance her skills, and eventually launching her own business. Along the way, she realized her encore was about reclaiming wholeness and hope, not just achieving outward success.

Reflection: Which of these stories resonates most with you, and why?

Call to Courage

You have earned the right to stand center stage in your own life. Turn the page, your transformation begins now. Create a blueprint that is unmistakably yours.

Chapter 2: E.N.C.O.R.E. - Your Blueprint for Transformative Life Design

Now let's build on the foundation that was laid in the previous chapter. It's time to put those insights into practice. Life is not a linear journey, but a series of remarkable reinventions. The ENCORE Framework is your comprehensive guide to designing a life of purpose, passion, and profound personal impact. This is not just another self-help tool. It is a transformative roadmap that empowers you to break free from limitations, embrace your potential, and craft a next act that resonates with your deepest aspirations.

The Six Pillars of Intentional Reinvention			
Pillar	Focus Area	Key Actions & Insights	Guiding Principle/ Approach
E – Exit with Intention	Strategic Transitions	Develop a proactive mindset; create holistic plans for career, finances, and personal growth; see every exit as a new beginning.	Your ability to navigate transitions determines the quality of your next chapter.

The Six Pillars of Intentional Reinvention			
Pillar	Focus Area	Key Actions & Insights	Guiding Principle/ Approach
N – Navigate the New	Embracing Uncertainty	Cultivate clarity and courage; master resilience; embrace change and decade mapping.	Clarity is not about eliminating uncertainty. It is about developing resilience to move forward confidently.
C – Commitment, Communication & Connection	Building Relationships	Deepen personal and professional ties; practice authentic communication; grow supportive networks.	Authentic connections are the catalyst for extraordinary growth.
O – Opportunities	Creating & Aligning Opportunities	Adopt a proactive mindset; recognize and create opportunities; practice flexibility; use time mastery tools.	Opportunities are conversations waiting to happen. Be ready to listen and act.

The Six Pillars of Intentional Reinvention			
Pillar	Focus Area	Key Actions & Insights	Guiding Principle/ Approach
R – Relevance	Setting Resonant, Progressive Goals	Align goals with your current stage; use strategic tools (like DMAIC); focus on transformative, meaningful aspirations.	Relevant goals are bridges between your present potential and future achievements.
E – Excellence	Crafting Your Legacy	Define excellence for yourself; practice daily intentional action; build a personal trademark and legacy.	Your legacy is written not in grand gestures, but in daily, intentional excellence.

The Six Pillars of Intentional Reinvention

E – Exit with Intention: Designing Your Transition

Transitions are not endings; they are powerful beginnings. Exiting with intention means:

- Developing a strategic mindset that transforms change from a challenge into an opportunity
- Creating holistic transition plans that encompass:
 - Career realignment
 - Financial restructuring

- Personal growth strategies
- Emotional and psychological preparation
- Understanding that every exit is an invitation to something more meaningful

Key Insight: Your ability to navigate transitions determines the quality of your next chapter.

N – Navigate the New: Charting Clarity in Uncertain Terrain

Uncertainty is not your enemy; it is the fertile ground of possibility. Learn to:

- Cultivate unwavering clarity amidst complexity
- Develop courage as your primary navigation tool
- Embrace technological and personal transformations
- Master the art of Decade Mapping: a revolutionary approach to strategic life planning

Breakthrough Concept: Clarity is not about eliminating uncertainty but about developing the resilience to move forward confidently.

C – Commitment, Communication & Connection: Building Authentic Relationships

In your encore season, relationships are your most valuable currency. Focus on:

- Deepening commitment to personal and professional relationships
- Mastering communication that is both powerful and genuine
- Creating networks that inspire, support, and propel you forward

- Embracing the Leadership Mastery Challenge: a transformative approach to interpersonal dynamics

Powerful Principle: Authentic connections are the catalyst for extraordinary personal and professional growth.

O – Opportunities: Creating, Seizing, and Aligning

Opportunities are not discovered; they are created. Learn to:

- Develop a proactive opportunity mindset
- Understand strategic timing for entrepreneurs and career professionals
- Cultivate radical flexibility
- Implement the Time Mastery Exercise to optimize your potential

Strategic Approach: Opportunities are conversations waiting to happen. Be ready to listen and act.

R – Relevance: Setting Resonant, Progressive Goals

Goal-setting is an art of alignment and intention. Discover how to:

- Craft goals that genuinely reflect your current life stage
- Utilize the Lean Six Sigma DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) methodology
- Create goals that are not just achievable, but transformative
- Align aspirations with your evolving personal and professional identity

Transformative Insight: Relevant goals are bridges between your present potential and future achievements.

E – Excellence: Crafting Your Legacy Through Personal Trademark

Excellence is a continuous journey of intentional action, not a destination. In this pillar, you will:

- Define excellence on your terms
- Understand how consistent excellence shapes your personal and professional legacy
- Learn practical strategies for applying excellence in every domain of life
- Create a personal trademark that speaks to your unique value proposition

Empowering Principle: Your legacy is written not in grand gestures, but in daily, intentional excellence.

The ENCORE Framework is more than a methodology; it's a declaration of your unlimited potential. This is your invitation to step into a life designed with purpose, powered by intention, and celebrated through continuous growth.

Your ENCORE Awaits!

Your next chapter is not just waiting to be written. It's eager to be authored by you.

Are you ready to begin?

Chapter 3: Exiting with Intention - Preparing and Planning for Life's Transitions

In the first chapter, we explored how designing your strategic transition begins with mindset: embracing intention, resilience, and self-belief. Now, let's move from intention to action. This chapter will help you prepare and plan for life's transitions with clarity, confidence, and practical tools.

Exiting with intention is more than having a backup plan. It is a strategic mindset for navigating transitions in every area of life, from career changes to personal milestones. My own challenging experiences inspired the concept for my Encore program.

While conventional wisdom suggests preparing a backup, I discovered that applying a strategic framework, like those used in business, empowers us to approach transitions with foresight and resilience. Each decade brings new challenges and opportunities. By planning intentional exits, we can embrace both endings and new beginnings while celebrating past successes.

Now more than ever, anticipating transitions early is crucial. In today's shifting political and economic climate, being ready to make pivotal decisions quickly can make all the difference.

Self-Reflection Tools: What Do You Want for Your Encore?

At this stage, it is natural to ask what now, especially after unexpected life changes. Whether you are facing an empty nest, caregiving responsibilities, financial uncertainty, health concerns, or starting over after loss or divorce, the key is to lean

into your wisdom. Every challenge you have faced has prepared you for this next chapter with courage and confidence.

Studies show that regular self-reflection increases life satisfaction and reduces anxiety. Betting on yourself is not gambling, it is a wise investment. Fears about retirement, technology, or re-entering the workforce become steppingstones to your next success.

Overcoming Biases and Rejection with Confidence

Ageism and overqualification may seem like obstacles, but they do not define your worth. Instead, they are opportunities to showcase your unique strengths. Rejection is simply redirection toward something greater. When you bet on yourself, you cultivate resilience and self-trust. The question is no longer, “Will I win?” but “How will I win this time?”

Embracing Technology and Transitions

The rapidly evolving workplace and technological landscape can feel intimidating, but they offer opportunities for growth and reinvention. The World Economic Forum reports that by 2025, an estimated 50% of all employees will require significant reskilling due to technological advancements. Re-entering the workforce may mean presenting your skills differently or taking on a new role. With clarity and focus, you have the edge. Decades of experience make you not just knowledgeable, but strategic and adaptable.

You now have the power to choose how much time, energy, and responsibility you want to give. Your encore years are about winning on your terms. Lifelong learning is your greatest advantage. Your best years are still ahead!

Decade Mapping: A Transformative Tool for Reflection and Planning

Decade Mapping became especially meaningful during my time as a caregiver for my mother until her passing in 2020. Previously, I helped my mom care for my dad and grandparents. Caregiving changes a person in profound ways, but that story is for another time. That period of profound loss, when multiple matriarchs and patriarchs in my family passed within six months, ages 89 to 97, deepened my understanding of legacy, mortality, and intentional preparation.

Recognizing that we are living longer and that navigating this next chapter requires new strategies, I developed the Decade Mapping framework. I created it first for myself in my 40s, then shared it with clients as a valuable tool for navigating transitions. Many have continually expressed gratitude for how Decade Mapping has helped them embrace their “next” with confidence and clarity.

Have you ever been at a crossroads that made you reflect and think, I am it. I’ve got to get it together and move beyond this?

These experiences are not unique to me. Research on the aging U.S. population shows that while caregiving can bring emotional and physical challenges, including increased stress and declines in well-being, it can also foster personal growth, a deeper appreciation of life, and a stronger sense of legacy and self-efficacy. As our population ages, with Americans 65 and older projected to increase from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050, these transitions are becoming more common, highlighting the need for intentional strategies and mentorship.

Decade Mapping helps you reflect on your life’s journey, embrace your present, and intentionally prepare for the future by:

- Reflecting on where you have been
- Embracing where you are
- Preparing for what's next

How Decade Mapping Works:

For each decade of your life (20s through 90s), assess:

- Wins: Significant achievements, successes, and moments of joy
- Losses: Challenges, setbacks, and disappointments
- Lessons Learned: Key insights, wisdom, and knowledge gained

This assessment provides a clear picture of your life's trajectory, helps you remember valuable experiences, and builds confidence in your accomplishments. It then guides you in aligning these reflections with a strategic vision for your future decades, focusing on:

1. How do you want to show up?
2. What do you want to achieve?
3. How do you want to be remembered?
4. What have the years behind taught you, and how will you use that wisdom to shape what's next?



Action Steps to Betting on Yourself

Now that you’ve walked through the Decade Mapping phase, here are action steps to help you align the outcomes with your goals:

Step 1: Focus Eliminate distractions and identify what’s holding you back. Ask, “Is this fear rooted in reality or mindset?”
Step 2: Assess Evaluate what you need at this moment: financial strategies, new skills, or rest and recovery.
Step 3: Celebrate Honor your smallest daily wins, which build momentum and confidence.
Step 4: Learn Reframe rejections or failures as data points guiding your next move.
Step 5: Adapt See challenges as opportunities for course correction and growth.

Case Study: When Strategy Meets Life, an 18-Month Exit with Intention

One of my clients wanted to leave her job and asked me to assist her. We worked on an 18-month strategy for her transition and to start her firm. Unexpectedly, her company announced the closure of two divisions, including hers. Drawing from our plan, she successfully negotiated a package that supported her original goals. After leaving, she became a caregiver for a family member. Thanks to her exit strategy, she was able to take on this

role, confident in her next steps, while working on her plan in small increments until she was ready to launch.

As we know, life isn't a straight line. However, having an Exit Strategy Mindset makes it easier to navigate changes and turn potential setbacks into opportunities for growth and new beginnings.

Remember: You don't have to control every twist and turn of life to create something powerful. With clarity, focus, preparation, and belief in yourself, you can shape a future that honors where you've been and, most of all, where you're boldly headed. Your encore isn't delayed; it's being designed. One courageous step at a time.

My Wellness Reset Strategy

Prioritizing well-being has given me the strength to move forward, and now I help clients build sustainable routines that support their health without guilt. Whether balancing caregiving, family, or work, managing your wellness is the foundation for lasting success

My Wellness Reset Strategy includes:

- **Reclaim Time:** Set boundaries and schedule non-negotiable "me time."
- **Listen to Your Body:** Prioritize regular checkups and mindfulness to address stress before it becomes overwhelming. Pay attention to your energy levels and what your body is telling you.
- **Invest in Health:** Exercise, nutrition, and rest are not luxuries; they are essential.
- **Family Planning:** Preparing for Life's Unexpected Turns; When my father appointed me power of attorney for my parents' long-term care and end of life decisions,

I was overwhelmed. But that experience taught me the value of proactive family planning, not just financially, but emotionally and logistically.

Lessons from My Journey:

- **Communicate:** Have open discussions with family about expectations and responsibilities before a crisis arises.
- **Plan Beyond Finances:** Caregiving, emotional support, and health management require as much foresight as financial security.
- **Build a Support System:** Whether through family, friends, or professionals, don't go it alone.

These experiences shaped my perspective on what true family planning entails. Now, I guide clients in creating actionable plans for caregiving, finances, and legacy building, so they can move forward with confidence, knowing they have laid the foundation for their future.

Your Next Chapter

Your next chapter is about thriving, not just surviving. With intention, strategy, and self-trust, you have the power to make this your renaissance, redefining success on your terms!

Chapter 4: Navigate the New After the Crazy

You’ve weathered the storm—and let’s be honest, some of that chaos we created ourselves (I laugh at my own crazy all the time), while some just showed up uninvited. Either way, it’s done. Time to move on.

Now that the dust is settling, this isn’t about pretending the chaos never happened. It did, and you’re still here. Stronger, Wiser, Funnier, too; because let’s be real, some of that mess is hilarious in hindsight. From here forward, you’ll tap into the wisdom you’ve gained, the intuition you’ve sharpened, and the experience that’s now your secret sauce. More than that, you’re choosing your “new” on purpose: your next easy wins. The moves that feel aligned and the decisions that come from clarity, not chaos.

Remember: Choices are only wise when their outcomes reflect wisdom.

This is your moment to bet on yourself and walk boldly into what’s next. Start stacking those easy wins with joy and intention.

Client Spotlight: The Power of Positioning for the Next Easy Win

One client came to me who wanted help to land her dream job.

- Year One: We focused on positioning her for promotion and expanding her leadership skills.
- Year Two: She was elevated to middle management, gaining visibility and confidence.

- Year Three: Dream job and dream salary secured!

And then?

Plot twist: her division shut down after the consulting firm lost a federal contract. Was she devastated? Briefly. But she recovered fast because she had already positioned herself for her next easy win. Behind the scenes, she'd been building her own consulting business. She pivoted seamlessly to serving private clients.

Lesson: When you build with intention, an unexpected loss becomes your launchpad.

That's what navigating the "new" looks like: gracefully flipping the script when life hands you a plot twist. But before we sprint toward the next win, let's pause. Even with clarity and confidence, the aftermath of "crazy" leaves its residue. What just happened? Some of it's funny, some of it stings and some of it changed us. That's why acceptance is so vital—not denial or dismissal. It's a deep exhale and a knowing smile that whispers, I am still standing, smiling through my tears.

The Challenge of Change

Yes, as we accept every challenge, expected and unexpected, it's not easy. It's tough, and everything in us wants to shut down and walk away. As we navigate life's chapters, we all need improvement. I finally recognized my own role in my chaos, turns out I was often the one setting the frying pan ablaze. (lol) Blame it on immaturity and other shortcomings, I'll confess later.

Mini Challenge: Take five minutes and jot down three times in your life when chaos led you to clarity. How did those moments prepare you for the chapter ahead?

Life's Transitions

From single to married, relationships change with ourselves and others. Then add divorce, job loss, career shifts, business stagnation, financial loss, health issues, menopause, or caring for children or parents while trying to keep all the other balls in the air. Single moms with no one to help carry the burdens; empty nesters where everyone has moved away, leaving you saying, "Now what?"

Wisdom from Experience

I have worked with and interviewed hundreds of women, especially those midlife and beyond, as well as my mom's friends (ages 70-90), and they shared incredible life lessons. Throughout our programs and masterclasses, I will share more of their wisdom with you.

Finding Peace with Change

One thing I learned is that I had to make peace with change. That's when I began decade mapping to help me manage it. Over the years, I also sought counseling, leaned on mentors and coaches, and, like many, sometimes listened, and sometimes thought I knew better. Of course, those moments didn't always end well. I can laugh now as I tell the stories, and I want you to be able to do the same. No shame, guilt, or regret; we have overcome so much to live this long, and we're preparing to live another 30 to 40 years. We deserve an Oscar for our performance!

Reflection Exercises: Embracing Your Journey

Exercise 1: Smiling Through Your Tears

Take a quiet moment and ask yourself:

- What's one chapter of my life that used to bring me pain...now brings me wisdom or laughter?
- What did I learn from it?
- Who have I become because of it?

Write it out. Be honest. You don't have to have all the answers, just start with your truth. This is how healing begins.

Think back to a time when life caught you off guard and you didn't think you'd make it through, but you did.

- What got you through? Was it faith, humor, stubbornness, or someone's love?
- If you could speak to yourself back then, what would you say?
- What did that version of you teach the woman you are today?

Write as if you're talking to your best friend. No filter, no fluff. This is about reclaiming the hard parts of your story as your strength.

Clarity and Focus: Your Greatest Assets

You may wonder about your clarity and focus, especially if the vision you once had seems clouded by life's transitions. Many women in their encore years find themselves questioning: "What was my true passion again? What is my purpose now?" It's common at this stage to feel the need to clear away mental cobwebs that have gathered over decades of putting others first.

As we move through these exercises together, you'll find your vision restored. Simply get quiet, listen to what your heart tells you, and let forgotten joys resurface, whether it's cooking, designing, painting, or writing. Your authentic vision will flow once you create space for it.

In your 50s and beyond, clarity and focus become your superpowers. According to an AARP study, 72% of women over 50 say they feel more confident in their decision making now than ever before. This isn't a second act, it's a power move. You've got receipts! You have overcome what most only talk about, not from Google, not from a book, but from living it:

• We know what not to do.
• We understand when to act and when to pause.
• We recognize who belongs in our lives and who doesn't.
• We discern which relationships add value personally, professionally, spiritually, and socially.

Now that there are fewer distractions, fewer people pulling at you, and a sharper lens to see what counts, you can finally prioritize what truly matters. You've lived enough to master the art of recovery, recharge, and reinvention.

Beginning again? It's not a burden, it's an opportunity.

More at Stake: Facing the Fear of the Unknown Yet Familiar

The past isn't just something to overcome, it's the blueprint for what's next. But looking ahead can still feel uncertain, like trying to read fine print without glasses (lol). I often think, "If that's what I accomplished when I didn't know what I was doing." Wow, what can I do now, with wisdom, confidence, experience, and expertise? That's not hype. That's history.

Girl, guess what? History is about to repeat itself...this time on your terms.

Now ask yourself:

- Where do I want to be?
- What do I genuinely want to do?
- What will it take financially to do less and enjoy more?

Longevity is more than added years; it's about making them count. That means:

- Having honest, meaningful conversations
- Building strong support systems
- Creating flexible plans that evolve with you at 60, 70, and 80+

Prepare now so your goals remain in reach, and your future stays vibrant and joy-filled.

Navigating the New with Leadership Mastery

To move forward with intention and resilience, embrace leadership mastery by leading yourself with clarity and purpose.

Leadership Mastery Challenge:

1. **Acknowledge Your Strengths:** Identify what makes you a trusted leader, personally or professionally.
2. **Set a Leadership Goal:** Choose one leadership skill to enhance this quarter.
3. **Commit to Consistent Action:** Daily or weekly, just keep moving.
4. **Refine Your Communication:** Ensure your voice reflects your values, adjust as needed.
5. **Strengthen Your Network:** Connect with three people who align with your vision for collaboration or support.

Leadership Mastery Reflection Chart

Leadership Skill	Current Level (1-5)	Desired Level (1-5)	Action Plan to Improve	Timeline for Growth
Visionary Thinking	3	5	Attend a leadership seminar	3 months
Effective Communication	4	5	Practice active listening	1 month
Empathy & Emotional Intelligence	2	4	Read books on emotional intelligence	6 months
Decision Making	3	4	Seek mentorship	2 months
Inspiring Others	4	5	Lead a team project	3 months

Congratulations!

Every step you’ve taken so far has deepened your leadership mastery and resilience. Through consistency and focus, you’re building a sustainable legacy of growth and impact for the next generation to carry forward.

Now, with renewed clarity and confidence, it’s time to communicate your vision, and build the meaningful connections that will shape your next chapter.

Chapter 5: Communicate, Commit, and Connect

Now that your clarity and confidence has been renewed in the previous chapter, you're ready for the next step: communicating your vision and building the connections that will support your goals. Clarity in communication accelerates results. When your messaging is focused and intentional, others know how to support you and what you stand for.

Ask yourself:

1. Is my message aligned with my purpose and vision?
2. Am I getting the results I expect?

Tips to tighten your communication:

- Align your message with your mission
- Regularly evaluate your outcomes
- Speak with intention, whether in boardrooms or personal spaces

Connections: Build Authentically

In this season, it's all about quality over quantity. Nourish relationships that support who you are becoming.

- Cultivate trust, transparency, and respect.
- Reflect on your trustworthiness and openness.
- Let go of the weight of "performing" in relationships, show up as you.

Clear communication is the foundation of progress. When your message is intentional, focused, and aligned with your vision,

people can understand your goals and support you more effectively. In both business and personal relationships, clarity removes barriers, fosters trust, and drives meaningful results.

We often chase connections in our careers, relationships, or purposes, but the truth is: Connection isn't the starting point. It's the result.

And it's built on two powerful foundations: Communication and Commitment.

Communication + Commitment = Authentic Connections

1. Communicate with Clarity, Lead with Purpose

One of the biggest eye-openers for me, moving from the corporate world to entrepreneurship, was realizing how differently you need to communicate. I used to notice people just weren't quite following what I was trying to explain, and honestly, I'd end up talking way too much. It was exhausting for me, and I'm sure it left everyone else feeling drained or overwhelmed.

Knowing how much I enjoy teaching, I knew I had to make a change. That corporate lingo was so ingrained that it took a conscious effort to shift that habit. Thankfully, with some guidance from a coach, I learned to speak much more clearly and directly. It hits home that your voice is such a powerful tool! When what you say truly reflects what you believe and the direction you're heading, it can create some amazing momentum.

Whether you're building a brand, navigating change, or leading others, what you say and how you say it, can shape everything.

Ask Yourself:

- Am I clear about what I want to express?
- Does my message reflect my values and goals?

- Am I listening to understand or just waiting to speak?
- Clarity isn't perfection. It's alignment.

2. Commit to What Truly Matters

Connection isn't built through sporadic effort; it blossoms from consistent, intentional action.

Trust deepens over time through reliable follow-through, something I experienced firsthand transitioning into entrepreneurship. Having spent 20 years in the corporate world, and thanks to the way I was raised, a strong work ethic was ingrained in me. So, even when the phone wasn't ringing and there were no immediate signs of business, I followed my routine every day. Whether I was speaking to five people in a seminar or working with individual clients, I gave the same level of dedication and the best service I could offer.

That time taught me that while business has cycles and seasons, personal character and integrity are all about commitment and consistency, showing up even when it's tough and following through when no one's watching. I learned to trust the process because that's what builds confidence, credibility, and over time, it becomes an undeniable part of your brand.

Interestingly, a study found that people who write down their goals and share their progress with a friend are a remarkable 76% more likely to achieve them. That highlights the power of putting commitment into action!

Stanford's Social Psychology Lab reported that people who demonstrate consistent behavior over six months are rated three times more trustworthy than those with sporadic engagement. Meanwhile, MIT research reveals that when verbal commitments align with actions, relationship satisfaction nearly doubles. This

isn't just theory, its proven science supporting what many of us know intuitively: authenticity creates connection.

Ask Yourself:

- Where have I been consistent, and where have I wavered?
- Do my actions reflect what I say, matter most?
- Am I honoring the commitments I make to myself?

Consistency builds trust. Trust builds connection.

Encore Clarity Challenge: 7 Days to Realign and Reconnect

This isn't about hustle. It's about alignment.

Pick a 7-day window and try this:

1. **Clarity Moment:** Each morning, set a 2-minute intention.
2. **Daily Focus:** What's one thing I want to communicate today?
3. **Intentional Outreach:** Reconnect with one person per day. No agenda, just authenticity.
4. **One Bold Ask:** Make a courageous request that aligns with your next move.
5. **Follow Through Focus:** Choose one goal or promise you've avoided. Take the first step.
6. **Track Your Energy:** End each day by asking: "Did today reflect my values and goals?"

Reflection Grid: Communicate, Commit, Connect

Focus Area	What's Working?	What Needs Work?	Action You Can Take
Communication	I share ideas with confidence	I need to improve my listening skills	Practice active listening daily
Commitment	I follow through at work	I ignore personal goals	Block time for self-priority
Connection	My network is strong professionally	Personal relationships feel distant	Schedule meaningful meetups

3. Connection: Let It Find You

When you lead with clarity and commit with intention, connection becomes effortless. You don't need to force relationships, overextend yourself, chase recognition, or buy your way in. People are drawn to authenticity. When they feel your presence and trust your follow-through, they engage.

Whether mentoring others, building your brand, or deepening personal bonds, the formula always works: Clarity in what you say + consistency in what you do = connections you can trust.

Encore Insight: Let Your Experience Do the Talking

At this stage of life, **your wisdom is your superpower**. Use your voice to share your story. Use your consistency to build momentum.

According to McKinsey’s 2024 Women in the Workplace report, 85% of senior professional women credit strategic networking and sharing their expertise as the driving forces behind securing

board positions and advancing to C-suite roles. Furthermore, three out of four women surveyed said that building authentic relationships was instrumental in winning new business and leading high impact projects.

Ask Yourself:

- How can I use my experience to lead and mentor others?
- What do I want to be known for in this next chapter?
- What new opportunities can I create by sharing what I know?

"I realized my most authentic contribution is in teaching, training, and nurturing the potential in others. This powerful realignment brought a profound sense of satisfaction and fulfillment."

Wisdom at Work: Navigating Age, Experience & Opportunity

Downsizing and layoffs have pushed many seasoned professionals out of traditional career paths, creating an unexpected opportunity. These aren't just headlines; they're real barriers that many experienced individuals face.

Several of my clients are high performing and energized, yet they struggle to land their next role due to age-related bias. So, they create their own. According to the Kauffman Foundation, people aged 55–64 now account for a quarter of all new entrepreneurs. This proves it's never too late to create your next opportunity.

Your ENCORE can be your boldest act yet.

Pause & Reflect

1. What unique skill set sets me apart?

2. Which industries or clients need what I bring?
3. Could independent contracting or entrepreneurship be a path forward?
4. Do I need certification, mentorship, or a new network?

Your Connection Is Your Relational Currency

You don't need to beg for attention or force relationships. Just focus on what you *can* control: how you **communicate** and what you're **committed** to. When you speak with clarity and follow through with action, the right people will hear you and want to connect.

That's the power of your ENCORE. You're not done yet, you're just getting started, and connection is the stage where you *shine*.

- **Clarity isn't perfection; it's alignment**
- **Consistency builds trust. Trust builds connection**
- **Communication + Commitment = Authentic Connection**

The journey to authentic connections begins with an honest look within. By embracing your truth, letting go of old habits that no longer serve you, and committing to showing up 100% for yourself, you establish the groundwork for recognizing and seizing opportunities that align with your authentic power.

Your inner clarity and unwavering commitment become your foundation, preparing you to step boldly into the realm of Opportunity.

Chapter 6: Opportunity – Seize, Create, and Align

Opportunities are everywhere, yet distractions, stress, and unsupportive environments can make them easy to miss. The key to unlocking opportunity is awareness and confidence. When you align your energy, focus, and actions, opportunities don't just happen to you, you shape them.

The Key to Opportunity: Alignment

Opportunities flow more easily when the core areas of your life: personal, professional, physical, and social, are aligned. Creating synergy between these areas positions you for long term success and fulfillment. When your personal aspirations and professional ambitions support each other, you unlock holistic growth and sustainable achievement.

Life Areas & Focus

Area	Focus	Examples of Opportunities
Personal	Spiritual growth, self-care	Mindfulness, exploring passions, and improving balance
Professional	Career, business, finances	Launching a business, taking leadership roles
Physical	Health, fitness, energy	Starting a fitness routine, regular health checkups
Social	Relationships, networking	Building connections, volunteering

The Power of Intentionality

At this stage of life, one of the most important questions is: **How will you spend your 1,440 minutes each day?** Intentionality is everything. Making conscious choices about where to invest your time and energy is crucial for aligning your values with your professional goals.

- **Energy & Time:** How much energy will you dedicate to your next chapter? What truly matters?
- **Finances:** Are you ready to invest in your growth and dreams?
- **Personal & Professional:** How do your passions shape your life and career?
- **Family & Social:** How will you nurture relationships while maintaining healthy boundaries?

***Reminder:** Taking care of yourself isn't selfish, it's essential. You can only pour into others when your cup is full.*

The 5 F's Framework

Balance may be a myth, but centering yourself is key. The 5 Fs offer a practical guide to help you focus and set boundaries in your Encore years:

1. **Faith:** Build a strong spiritual foundation through prayer, meditation, or gratitude.
2. **Finance:** Invest in your financial health and plan for growth.
3. **Fitness:** Prioritize your physical well-being—hydrate, rest, and move your body.
4. **Family:** Nurture relationships by being present and communicating openly.
5. **Friends:** Surround yourself with uplifting, inspiring people.

True fulfillment comes from making space for what matters most, including rest, fun, and lots of laughter.

Reclaiming Your Time & Energy

One of the most powerful shifts in your Encore years is learning to put yourself first without guilt. By being intentional with your time and selective with your attention, you create clarity, peace, and freedom.

Your needs matter. You matter.

Pause & Reflect

Take a moment now: Think of one opportunity, big or small, that you've overlooked or hesitated to pursue. What's one small action you can take today to move closer to it? Write it down and commit to taking that step before the day ends.

For too long, women have been conditioned to prioritize everyone else. Now, it's time to reverse that order. Your Encore is the season to honor your voice, your well-being, and your desires, unapologetically.

What's Your Next Step?

Assess whether your energy and time align with your goals for this next season of life. Use the 5 Fs (Faith, Finance, Fitness, Family, Friends) as your compass. Every decision you make can be intentional and true to your legacy.

The Power of Flexibility

There is great power in flexibility. Staying open to unexpected opportunities allows you to adapt and grow. Instead of rigid planning, use flexible outlines to structure your time; this

removes pressure and fuels creativity. Over time, these habits will lead you to the right people, ideas, and opportunities.

Case Study: From Burnout to Breakthrough—The Encore of a True Entrepreneur

A decade ago, one of my students entered our program feeling burnt out and drained of the energy that once fueled her. Through our program, her spark returned, and she won a business plan competition judged by a major bank. She went on to secure licenses in the finance industry, own a franchise, and become a VP of Investments at a major bank.

Fast forward to 2025: after selling her franchise, the business plan she wrote in our program attracted seven-figure investment capital. She and her business partner launched an entertainment incubator that now employs people and mentor's other creatives.

While this is a success story, it's important to note that women of color often face systemic barriers in accessing funding. In 2022, women of color received only 0.39% of venture capital funding, a glaring disparity that persists. Despite these challenges, my client's journey exemplifies how strategic planning, resilience, and the right support system can overcome even the toughest obstacles.

Was the journey easy? (No) Was it worth it? Absolutely. This is the power of an Encore life: reinvention, resilience, and rising again with greater impact.

Understanding Timing for Entrepreneurs

Timing is everything in business. Many new entrepreneurs feel impatient, thinking success should happen overnight. But each stage of business growth presents different opportunities:

- **New Business (0-5 years):** Build a strong foundation without overextending.
- **Established Business (7-10 years):** Focus on scalability and growth.

Sometimes, opportunities come before you're ready. Early in my business, I accepted a contract that wasn't aligned with my team's capacity. It resulted in a financial loss. But two years later, the same company returned with a much bigger opportunity. Integrity and timing mattered.

Case Study: Melanie Perkins – Persistence Meets Intention

Melanie Perkins, co-founder and CEO of Canva, transformed repeated rejection into a billion-dollar success. Her journey exemplifies persistence, resilience, and the power of a clear, compelling message. After facing more than 100 investor rejections, Perkins remained focused on her vision. She recognized the need to refine her pitch, making it more personal and relatable, ultimately helping investors see the true potential of her idea. Her story is a testament to how timing, perseverance, and a well written message can turn setbacks into turning points.

Like Melanie, many entrepreneurs learn that growth happens by choice and consistent action, not by chance. The next exercise helps you identify how to use your time with intention, so you're ready when the right opportunities appear.

Time Mastery Exercise: Aligning Opportunities

Use this exercise to focus your time and energy in a way that supports your vision:

1. **Reflect on Missed Opportunities:** What key moments did you overlook, and why?

2. **Define Focus Areas:** Choose 1–2 goals in each category (Personal, Professional, Physical, Social).
3. **Design a Weekly Framework:** Create a flexible plan that supports those goals.
4. **Monitor Your Progress:** Regularly check if your actions reflect your priorities and adjust as needed.
5. **Evaluate & Celebrate:** After 21 days, assess your growth and celebrate even the small wins to build momentum.

Case Study: From Overwhelmed to Optimized

A small business owner came to me feeling stuck and spread too thin. Through time mastery tools and operational streamlining, we simplified her systems and empowered her team for higher performance. One year later, she crossed the seven-figure revenue mark.

“Working with Paula was a game changer. I got my time back, my business back, and now I’m thriving instead of surviving.”

Your Encore Awaits, Step into It with Confidence

Every opportunity you seize brings you closer to the life you envision.

Celebrate each milestone, no matter how small. You are building something extraordinary.

I challenge you: What’s one bold step you can take today to align your time and energy with your Encore?

Step into it boldly!

Chapter 7: Relevance — Setting Realistic Objectives That Resonate!

Relevance starts with setting realistic objectives that truly align with your current life stage and future aspirations. When your goals resonate with where you are and where you're headed, success becomes more attainable.

Risk is an expected part of entrepreneurship and life transitions. Acknowledging it and planning accordingly make all the difference. Just as life has different ages and stages, so do careers, businesses, and personal growth journeys. Recognizing where you are and aligning your efforts with relevant objectives builds momentum and fosters lasting success.

When Realignment Became My Strategy

Over the years, I've learned the powerful difference between wants and needs. When I transitioned from corporate life to entrepreneurship, I was eager to seize every opportunity. That initial excitement quickly turned into cycles of burnout, starting and stopping without gaining sustainable traction. Ambition kept me going in circles, constantly chasing the next latest and greatest, which only led to exhaustion. I had to quiet the noise, stop comparing, and trust myself. That meant tuning in to my voice, honoring my pace, and believing in my intrinsic genius.

Intrinsic genius is the divine spark within our natural brilliance, creative intuition, and unshakable confidence that doesn't need outside validation.

The shift happened when I began aligning my actions with relevant, realistic goals. I factored in risk, my true priorities, and what was achievable in my current season. That's when clarity

and purpose became my focus, and real alignment became my strategy. Not only did I progress, but everything I pursued prospered.

Key Takeaways on Alignment:

- **Takeaway 1:** Alignment isn't about doing more; it's doing what truly matters, in the season you're in.
- **Takeaway 2:** Real growth begins when you stop seeking validation and start trusting your brilliance.
- **Takeaway 3:** Burnout is often the result of chasing everything. Clarity comes when you choose what to or not to carry.

Reflect on Your Alignment: Take a few minutes to consider the following:

- Where in your life or business do you need to stop chasing and start aligning?
- What would change if you fully trusted your intrinsic genius?
- What goals are rooted in alignment, and which ones are just distractions?

*Building on this understanding, we now see how relevance
fuels momentum...*

Relevance Fuels Momentum

Momentum doesn't come from doing more, it comes from doing what matters most. Relevant goals align with your mission, your energy, and your resources. They're not reactive. They're resonant.

Case Study Spotlight: Kathy Hughes – The Power of Relevant Vision

To see this principle in action, let's look at the inspiring story of Kathy Hughes. Kathy Hughes didn't just chase success; she aligned with purpose. Her story reminds us that relevance isn't just a buzzword; it's a strategy for lasting impact. Today, Urban One (formerly Radio One), the media company she founded, reaches millions across radio, television, and digital platforms. Hughes' commitment to relevant, mission driven goals not only created generational wealth for her family but also amplified the voices of an entire community. Her story is a living testament to what can happen when purpose and strategy align. As a single mom navigating the male dominated media industry in the 1980s, Hughes could have pursued any number of flashy ventures. But she knew her audience: underserved Black listeners who needed a voice. Her goal wasn't to impress; it was to impact.

After facing rejection from over 30 banks, Hughes mortgaged her home to buy her first radio station, WOL-AM, in Washington, D.C. She lived at the station with her son, sleeping on the floor. Her vision wasn't just ambitious, it was aligned with her mission, her values, and her season of life. She focused on what was relevant, creating space for authentic Black voices in the media and building a legacy her son could inherit.

"I refused to believe that being a single mother would keep me from succeeding. I just had to be strategic and stay true to the mission." Kathy Hughes.

Relevance in Action: Notice how Kathy's focused approach, her trust in her vision, and her clear priorities all contributed to her success:

- She didn't chase every media trend; she created space for her community.
- She set realistic, high impact goals based on what mattered most in her life.
- She honored her season balancing motherhood and entrepreneurship with aligned decisions, not performative hustle.

Encore Reflection:

- How does Kathy's story inspire you to realign your goals with your purpose and values?
- What bold, relevant choice are you ready to make, even if it's unconventional?

"A choice is only wise when the outcome reflects wisdom."

The Importance of Your Inner "Why": According to Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci), motivation thrives when goals align with our values. When a goal resonates with your inner "why," you're more likely to follow through with energy and intention.

Key Questions to Ask Yourself: As you consider your own goals, take a moment to reflect on these key questions:

- Is this goal realistic for my current season and resources?
- Does it align with my mission, values, and who I serve?
- Who or what do I need to make this happen?
- When is the best time to move forward?

Moving from Relevance to Results: The Lean Sigma DMAIC Framework

Structure creates freedom. That's why I love the DMAIC framework from Lean Six Sigma. Originally designed for

process improvement in business, it’s now widely adapted for goal setting and personal development because it’s simple, structured, and focused on sustainable progress. This framework can help you translate your relevant goals into tangible outcomes.

How to Apply DMAIC to Your Goals:

Step	What to Do	Example
Define	What do you want to accomplish?	“I want to move from corporate to consulting with growth.”
Measure	Set measurable milestones.	“Gain 3 new clients in 90 days through outreach.”
Analyze	Identify your gaps, skills, tools, and support.	“What knowledge or contacts do I need to succeed?”
Improve	Create a targeted action plan.	Two hours/day on business development. Weekly follow-ups.
Control	Track progress. Refine. Stay consistent.	“Quarterly review to assess and adjust strategy.”

Consider This Now: Your Momentum Strategy (10 Minutes)

Take ten minutes to focus on setting some relevant goals for yourself:

1. Set one realistic goal in each area of life:
 - Personal
 - Financial
 - Professional
 - Physical
 - Social

2. Why does this goal matter **now**? Connect each goal to your current season and values.
3. What's one small, concrete step you can take this week for each goal?

Tying It All Together

When I stopped chasing and started aligning, everything shifted. The pressure lifted. My decisions felt lighter, I had 100% peace and confidence. And my progress became steady and sustainable. Research shows that specific, challenging (yet realistic) goals significantly improve performance and motivation. It's not about having more goals. It's about having the right ones.

Forbes' 100 Most Powerful Women List reveals that most women reach their career peak after 50—80% are over 50, and half are over 60. Despite outdated stereotypes, women in their 50s to 70s are thriving, leading, and redefining power in the prime of their lives.

Final Reflection

Now that you are clear and building on the foundation of relevance, understanding your 'why,' and aligning with your truth, you can explore how that internal clarity manifests externally through your trademark of excellence. This unique quality emerges when you operate from a place of deep alignment.

Your next chapter reveals how excellence, rooted in authenticity, becomes the trademark you leave on the world.

Chapter 8: Excellence Is Your Trademark

As we explored in the previous chapter's discussion of resilience, your capacity to overcome challenges provides the foundation for excellence. Now, we build upon that foundation by defining the unique signature of excellence that will distinguish your encore chapter. This standard will inform you how you approach the opportunities and choices.

Excellence is your signature, your trademark, not just a goal. It is the standard you set, the impact you make, and the way you consistently show up in your life and work. Excellence is not about being perfect; it is about being intentional, delivering value, and holding yourself to the highest standard that aligns with your purpose and potential.

Defining Your Standard of Excellence

To understand and elevate your standard of excellence, take a moment to reflect:

1. What skills, talents, or expertise make you stand out?
2. Why do people repeatedly rely on you?
3. How do your actions reflect your core values?
4. What does integrity mean in your daily decisions?
5. How do you create value or solve problems in ways others do not expect?
6. What lasting results do people associate with you?

To translate these reflections into your personal excellence philosophy:

1. Identify patterns in your answers. What core values consistently emerge?
2. Consider where you've made the most meaningful impact. What specific approaches or strengths were you employing?
3. Draft an excellence statement that captures your unique contribution and standard.

For example:

- My excellence is defined by bringing analytical clarity to complex problems while ensuring everyone's voice is heard,
- I create excellence through meticulous attention to detail combined with empathetic understanding of other's needs.

Excellence in Action: Living Your Legacy

Excellence is a way of life, not an end goal. It fuels clarity, builds confidence, and gives you the courage to take bold action. When you embody excellence, you are not just meeting expectations, you are exceeding them, inspiring others, and leaving a legacy that speaks long after you have moved on.

Research shows that people who use their strengths daily are six times more likely to be engaged and three times more likely to enjoy an excellent quality of life. Your excellence is more than what you do; it is about why you do it and the lasting impact it creates. This is the gift you give yourself and the contribution you make to the world.

Your Next Steps

Now that your standard of excellence is defined, take these specific actions:

1. Select one area of your life this week where you'll consciously apply your excellent standard. Document the difference in outcomes and how it feels.
2. Create a 15-minute daily practice to connect with your intuition, whether through journaling, meditation, or reflection to access your intrinsic genius.
3. Identify one relationship and one work project where applying your excellence standard would create the most significant impact. List three specific ways you'll elevate your approach in each.
4. Share your excellence standard with a trusted friend or mentor and ask them to hold you accountable to it.

As you implement these steps, draw inspiration from those who exemplify excellence in their encore chapters.

Real Women, Real Talk: Excellence is not a destination. It involves continuous practice, a commitment to growth, and the foundation of your ENCORE. This fuels transformation and positions you for the next chapter of success.

Encore Excellence: Bold Women Thriving

Excellence knows no age limit. These women embody passion, resilience, and reinvention, proving that the pursuit of excellence is a lifelong journey. From culinary entrepreneurs to industry pioneers, they show that it is never too late to make an impact:

- **Jaswant Kular:** Launched Jaswant's Kitchen to offer authentic Indian spices and recipe kits, now sold in over one hundred stores.
- **Maye Musk:** Became a global model, author, and spokesperson, gracing the cover of Sports Illustrated at 74. Her mantra: "I do not do age. I do excellence."

- **Cheryl Boone Isaacs:** Became the first African American president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
- **Sonia Sotomayor:** Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court since 2009, the first Hispanic and the third woman to serve. Bestselling author of *My Beloved World*.
- **Dr. Hadiyah-Nicole Green:** Physicist, cancer researcher, and founder of the Ora Lee Smith Cancer Research Foundation. One of the first African American women to earn a PhD in physics, Dr. Green is pioneering laser technology for cancer treatment and is a passionate advocate for STEM education and health equity.
- **Sheila Lirio Marcelo:** Filipino American entrepreneur and founder of Care.com, the world's largest online platform for family care, and now CEO of Ohai.ai. Marcelo's journey from immigrant to tech leader, recognized by Forbes and Fortune, shows how vision and resilience can transform industries and empower millions of women and families.
- **Meryanne Loum-Martin:** Owner of Jnane Tamsna in Morocco, the only hotel in the region owned and operated by a Black woman.

These women took bold steps, transforming their expertise into lasting legacies. They prove that excellence is not defined by age, but by action.

Financial Planning: Building Resilience Through Strategy

Your standard of excellence isn't just reflected in your career or relationships; it's embodied in how you manage your resources.

When your financial decisions align with your values and long-term vision, they become another powerful expression of your trademark excellence. As a single mom in my thirties, I learned firsthand that financial independence was not just a desire, it was a necessity. Early on, I fell into habits like retail therapy, but I knew those choices would not create the future I envisioned.

That realization led me to develop a three-tier financial framework that transformed my approach:

1. Stabilize: Establish a disciplined budget to meet immediate needs and reduce debt.
2. Security: Develop consistent savings and investment habits, no matter how small.
3. Legacy: Build a long-term financial strategy aligned with your vision for stability and growth.

This method provided clarity and control over my financial future. Today, I coach clients on shifting from emotional spending to strategic financial planning, helping them survive and build lasting wealth and security.

This reality is more common than many realize. Countless women in their late 50s and 60s don't have a 401k or pension and now need to rebuild their financial status. Whether due to caregiving responsibilities, career interruptions, health challenges, or working in positions without benefits, women face the challenge of creating financial security with a shorter timeline. According to the National Institute on Retirement Security, women are eighty percent more likely to be impoverished in retirement than men, but those who engage in long-term financial planning increase their net worth by up to four hundred percent.

Case Study: Encore Reinvention – From Grief to Growth to Excellence

A client, recently widowed, found herself at a crossroads after her husband's passing. They had just retired, and she was unsure how to move forward without him. One bright spot was her achievement of earning a PhD and publishing two books. Over time, we worked together to rebuild her vision and confidence, beginning with grief counseling. Seven years later, in her sixties, she is preparing to launch her fourth book and is traveling as a speaker and trainer, drawing from her background as a retired military captain and former school principal. I also recommended her to a financial planner specializing in supporting widows and helped her set up her oldest son as her power of attorney to bring structure to her finances. Eventually, love returned, and she has been happily remarried for three years, with her husband fully supporting her goals. Now, she is financially independent, investing in herself and her business, thriving with confidence, and living proof that she is not done yet.

Her story is not unique. Many women find themselves navigating finances on their own, often unexpectedly. With women outliving men, this reality is becoming increasingly common. According to the CDC, women can expect to live an average of six years longer than men. That means we need more than just a nest egg; we need a strategy. Financial independence is not just about security; it is about freedom, options, and peace of mind. Whether you are managing wealth, rebuilding after loss, or just getting started, excellence in this season means making bold, educated, and future focused decisions with your money.

Your Encore Awaits

The life you are creating starts with objectives that align with your vision and strategies that drive results. Every step you take toward excellence is a celebration of progress. As you move forward, embrace your unique path with confidence and purpose.

Remember: Your greatest chapters are yet to be written; your previous journey was just preparation.

BRAVO! YOUR CURTAIN IS RISING. STEP INTO YOUR SPOTLIGHT AND SHINE!

Closing Reflection

As you embrace excellence as your trademark, pause to honor every lesson, bold step, and reclaimed dream that has shaped your unique standard. Your excellence isn't something you achieve and complete; it's the signature you leave on every interaction, decision, and creation moving forward. Your encore isn't just another chapter; it's the moment when your excellence shines brightest, declaring to the world that your most significant contributions and your most authentic self are now taking center stage. This is the power of making excellence your trademark: it transforms every moment into an opportunity to **create your legacy**.

Turn the page for a final love letter from me to you as a celebration of all you are, and all you are becoming.

Conclusion: My Love Letter to YOU!

Dear Radiant Women,

My hope for you is that you free your mind and envision a future beyond anything you have ever known. Take the ENCORE framework and design the life you genuinely want for the days and decades ahead, leaving a legacy that reflects your unique brilliance. We have all faced profound losses and triumphs, and it is time to no longer remain the best kept secret.

Create your platform and share your intrinsic genius with the world. No more hiding behind perfection, the feeling of not being enough, and fear. You have earned the right to stand tall and embrace who you are. You deserve every bit of it. It is not enough to settle, become complacent, or lose hope after setbacks or a loss of confidence. Yes, fear and procrastination might show up, but do not let them control your narrative. Obstacles are a clear indication you are on the right path, so do it anyway.

I understand. I have faced my challenges, from business deals gone awry to caregiving, overcoming health hurdles, and navigating relationships. Yet, I am still here, driven by the fire inside me to bet on myself. God is not finished with us. We have a magnificent life to live, unapologetically, unstoppably, thriving, not just striving, choosing excellence over mediocrity. Joy, fulfillment, health, intentionality, mindfulness, fit, fine, foxy ladies, classy, chic, and everything else you desire.

Free from past expectations, we are stepping into the best phase of our lives with clarity, focus, and intention, putting ourselves first. We create our own tables, break through ceilings, and rewrite the rules on our terms.

Because we are, and will always be, **WOMEN**, fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of greatness. As explorers, adventurers, creators, innovators, teachers, collaborators, givers of life, and speakers of wisdom and truth, we have earned our place through experience and time. Educated, gifted, and talented, no longer a hidden gem, because we are JUST GETTING STARTED!

This playbook is just the beginning of your incredible journey. As you continue to elevate your life, I have planned powerful programs and events designed to support you every step of the way. You do not have to walk this path alone. We are in this together.

Encore Challenge to Action:

- Now it is your turn.
- Open your journal. Revisit the exercises. Choose one bold action you can take this week to honor your Encore vision.
- Say yes to the opportunity you have been putting off.
- Reach out to a mentor or become one.
- Start the business, draft the book, and make the move.
- Visit the website to join our email list and get notifications for upcoming events and programs: paulawashington.com
- Drop me an email to let me know your progress.
- Do not just close this book. Live it!

Now it's time to write your next chapter, and this time, the pen is in your hand.

May God's blessings overflow in your life.

With love and expectation,

Paula

About the Author



Paula Washington, MBA, MS brings both professional expertise and deeply personal experience to her work helping women navigate life's major transitions. She has weathered her own upheavals, including business and career reinventions, single parenthood after divorce, health crises, and caregiving responsibilities. As a result, she understands what it truly takes to rebuild with both grace and grit.

With a background in corporate training and entrepreneurship, Paula has guided hundreds of women through transformative life changes. Her clients range from corporate executives launching dream businesses to empty nesters rediscovering their passions. Under her guidance, they do not just survive transitions; they emerge stronger and more fulfilled than they ever imagined possible.

Paula's guiding philosophy is simple yet powerful: *"Transformation begins when we stop waiting for perfect conditions and start moving with what we have."* This belief shapes every strategy in **The Encore Playbook**, her comprehensive guide for women ready to step into their most powerful chapter.

When she is not orchestrating life transformations, Paula embraces joy through salsa dancing, jazz, travel, and quality time with family. She is living proof that reinvention includes rediscovering what makes life worth living.

Please visit our website at <https://www.paulawashington.com/>