



ECHOES OF WISDOM...

What We Know Now

FOURTEEN INSPIRATIONAL STORIES
OF LEARNED WISDOM!

IN COLLABORATION *with* SUSIE DE GIUSTI
and HEATHER ANDREWS

Echoes of Wisdom.....

What We Know Now

**In Collaboration with
Susie De Giusti and Heather Andrews**

Foreword By Jessica Soodeen
A Special Testimony by Wendy Bélanger

Featuring:

Carmen Davidson
Danielle Shantz
Erica Bearss
Jackie McCoy
Jennifer Gordon
Jessica Lee
Jessica Soodeen
Linh Tran
Lisa Sobry
Melissa Mazurek
Shona Welsh

Echoes of Wisdom

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TGIF- Towards Gainful Infinite Freedom

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Publishing Coach Heather Andrews

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Echoes of wisdom are always being passed down from ancestors. We unconsciously choose to take it or not. Sometimes we are required to understand the wisdom through our own experiences. There are no “bad” decisions in life; there are only wrong decisions that move us along our journey. Paulo Coelho said it brilliantly in his book entitled *Eleven Minutes*:

“Everything tells me that I am about to make a wrong decision, but making mistakes is just part of life. What does the world want of

me? Does it want me to take no risks, to go back where I came from because I didn't have the courage to say 'yes' to life?"

Each of the authors in this book said yes to their life and their way of learning each step of the way.

So, dear reader, I not only thank you for partaking in my and each author's journey, but I also ask you to give yourself the grace to be open to learning from us. Choose wisely as you say "yes" to life by making it the best you possibly can. If you fall, know that we are here to pick you up and cheer you on along your journey.

With love and much gratitude,

Susie De Giusti

Foreword

By Jessica Soodeen



There is a fine line between reflection and regret. The energy around both is quite different, yet we can ruminate on either of them in a journey to find meaning. The analytical side of our brains slices and dices situations into smaller pieces, and our hearts bounce around in the various emotions which bubble to the surface in this process.

This IS life! Regret does not serve, and luckily when we go there, it is possible to acknowledge and pivot. This is the cornerstone of reframing and is paramount in learning to *feel* through the tough times, to recognize the lessons if there are any, and to move on with a deeper sense of understanding.

This type of reframing is where real transformation has space to occur. What does this transformation look like for you? It could show up in your relationship with yourself, it may drive next-level growth in your business, or maybe you've come to a perspective of heightened compassion. Rising through levels of compassion is the difference between saying, "I feel how you feel" and "I appreciate how you feel." It is avoiding potential emotional empathy fatigue and shifting to truly holding space. Realizing that perfection isn't the goal, but instead, it's being able to draw lessons and subsequently support others in their journeys that bring the fulfillment of purpose.

Echoes of Wisdom is a tapestry of insights that exists in the realm of reflection. The subtitle of the book, “What We Know Now” should be viewed through a lens of growth and insight!

Within each chapter, the authors take you on a journey of resilience and courage, rather than down the roads of remorse and guilt. One of the most compelling aspects of these stories is the authors’ ability to delve into deeply relatable life happenings. In this compilation, you will read about facing cancer during a pandemic, immigration narratives, chronicles of working in a man’s world, tales of re-invention after fallout, and much more! Be ready to laugh, cry, be inspired, gain insight, and be amazed. The chapters that follow include lessons and tools to overcome obstacles that life throws at us.

It’s a privilege to write alongside these incredible authors! Each woman demonstrates grit and how to find joy in their life odyssey, regardless of whether their emotions were those of happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, peace, or the like. These women also show how perfection isn’t the goal in this life, nor is being “happy” all the time. The concept of being in a state of JOY in good times and bad has been a game changer for me in so many facets of my life. The women who wrote in this book exemplify a true sense of vulnerability and share their experiences of a plethora of emotions that are presented in their stories. Struggle, grief, sadness... these are places to visit, not in which to stay. And, if you can get to a place of joy, then those visits come with a sense of perspective that facilitates reinvention and renewal.

My own motorsports background started with motorcycles in my hometown of Calgary; however, it took me overseas to work with cars. This was a huge shift out of my comfort zone. Not only was I working with vehicles with 4 wheels instead of 2, but I was also far away from family and needed to learn a new language or two! It was

through JOY that I was able to face the loneliness and the longing for familiarity. Touching base with my mom proved to be the grounding I needed!

In closing, Heather Andrews and Susie De Giusti have gathered an incredible group of women to participate in this heartfelt project to share wisdom. I'm humbled to have been able to welcome you, the reader, to this exciting tapestry of adventures. Buckle up and enjoy the ride!

Jessica Soodeen, Speaker and Compassion Architect

Believe by Richard Paul

*I just want to start again and believe..
Believe in a life that has no reasons to grieve.*

*Believe in honesty and trust and everything that is good...
No evil, misfortunes or superstitions: never a reason to knock on wood.*

*Believe in fantasy and all things that are magical and true.....
No atrocities or fear; everything is enchanting and mystical, never blue.*

*Believe in destiny, innocence, religion, faith and hope..
No doubts, misgivings or suspicions; just the ability to pray and cope.*

*Believe in paradise, joy, laughter, happiness, peace of mind.....
No mediocrity or incompetence; nothing is unspeakable and everyone is kind.*

*Believe in true love, there will be no heartache and pain...
No sorrow, sadness, worries or woe; there is nothing to feign.*

*Believe in the unbelievable, a place that will always be safe and secure...
No abuse, foul play or wrongs; all things are equal, marvelous, wonderful
and pure.*

*Believe in tomorrows, new beginnings; discover the wonderment of each
new day..
No judgments, labels or guilt; there are always choices and you do have a say.*

*Believe all things are possible and true, no limitations as to what can be...
No despair or hopelessness; unlimited potential in all that you see.*

*I just want to start again and believe....
I just want to find a way to believe in me.*

Author of Love, Life and In Between

Introduction

Life is a journey of unexpected twists, trials, triumphs, and moments of deep reflection. In *Echoes of Wisdom*, 14 brave and insightful women come together to share their most personal stories of growth, self-discovery, and resilience. Through their diverse experiences—from overcoming failed marriages to navigating immigration, from the highs of financial success to the lessons learned in struggles—they offer a collective voice of wisdom that speaks to the heart of every woman.

This collaboration serves as a beacon of hope for women of all ages, particularly younger women who may be embarking on their own journeys of self-discovery. Too often, society paints a picture of perfection that fails to reflect the complexities of real life. But the authors of *Echoes of Wisdom* offer a candid portrayal of the truth—strength is born through adversity and wisdom is gained through the challenges we sometimes fear the most.

These stories are not simply reflections of personal hardships or victories. They are shared with the purpose of inspiring, uplifting, and reminding every reader that they are not alone in their struggles or uncertainties. Each author brings her own perspective, yet a common thread runs through their narratives: the importance of self-love. Whether through the dissolution of relationships, the uprooting of life through immigration, or the emotional toll of financial hardships, these women have learned to find strength within themselves. In learning to love themselves, they discovered the key to true fulfillment and the resilience to move forward.

The stories in this book will resonate with women from all walks of life. Perhaps you've faced the devastation of coming from a broken

home. Or maybe you've fought the battle with cancer and won. Or, like some, you've had to start fresh by moving to a new city or creating a business from scratch, all the while wondering if success will ever come. Whatever the experience, the women in *Echoes of Wisdom* have been there, and their stories are living proof that healing, growth, and triumph are possible.

More than a collection of stories, *Echoes of Wisdom* is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. These pages are filled with raw honesty and heartfelt truths, but they are also imbued with hope. It is a book that calls upon women to stand tall in the face of adversity, embrace their own journeys with courage, and draw strength from the wisdom that each experience brings.

As you read these pages, we invite you to reflect on your own life with its challenges and victories. May these stories encourage you to embrace your own wisdom, and to know that no matter where you are on your journey, you are never alone.

Come on the journey with us!

Susie and Heather

A Special Testimony to Perseverance

There is Always a Choice!

By Wendy Bélanger, Celebrity Stylist

Over the years, I have delivered speeches at leadership conferences, hair shows, and other audiences about how I grew my business to what it is today. The journey may have looked easy; however, there is always the background that no one ever sees.

I was asked to write an expert opinion and share my echoes of wisdom; this is what I know.

I am a hairdresser who travels the world doing hair. I have done hair for the Oscars, Emmys, MTV Music Awards, Fashion Week, and well-known celebrities. I own two salons, and the real estate they are located in. I am a mom to a beautiful boy who is 26 years old and is a successful music producer. I am more than lips and lashes. Yes, that is cheeky. I smile as I write this.

This story is about a journey of getting from A to B. We know what “B” looks like so let’s talk about “A”. I have many of what I call “excuses”, not reasons, to not be where I am right now. Often, I hear people say, “The reason I did not achieve this or that is because this happened or that.” I have had many life experiences that I could have let define my future, but I did not. I could have stayed where I was and let the reasons be my barricade.

To name a few, my sister died when I was 20; she was my best friend. I was in a car accident that could have taken my career away. The message here is every time something happened, I decided not to let the experience define me. I made a choice. I would not have the

success I do if I had let life occurrences be my reasons and define me. They would have been my excuses. The bottom line is you can really overcome anything. All you have to do is choose.

As a celebrity hair stylist, and owner of the award-winning hair salon, Influence, the road may have looked easy from an outside perspective. But that couldn't be further from the truth, though I can tell you it has been worth it. Along the path, there were things I might have changed and others that could not be changed as it was the journey of learning that I needed for me to achieve the success I have now.

All day long, I listen to stories of trials and tribulations from guests sitting in my salon chair. Some have traumatic experiences, and it hurts my heart to know that they are debilitated by this. Sometimes I wish the hair appointments were hours longer so I could help them. I have learned that when you put one foot forward, there will be an answer or opportunity that moves you along your path. You just have to trust there is more for you.

Growing up in Saskatchewan, my dad had a very successful career. He wanted the same for me; to attend university after high school. In my heart, I knew this was not what I wanted, and was unsure of my career path. Since I was always doing my friends' hair, my dad suggested I go to hair school. To me, it sounded like a good plan.

Within the month, I was accepted and off I went as a young woman to Saskatoon to begin my new career. Needless to say, it was my first time away from home and I spent more time going out at night with girlfriends and I missed more school than I care to admit. It was a nine-month program. I was allowed to miss one day per month, and if I missed more than that, I would owe \$25.00 per day. I

had two months of school left and I owed \$1,000.00. I was suspended from school for a week. My father told me that I would have to support myself and get a job. I did not learn anything from this suspension as I spent my week going out to the club.

I did not listen to the universe's lesson, so it decided to hit me harder. On the last day of my suspension, I was driving to my first day of work. I came around the corner, and up ahead I noticed a car come into my lane. We were about to have a head-on collision! I waited till the final second; I swerved left into oncoming traffic. I remember feeling the swoosh in my hair as I missed the oncoming car, and the Jeep began to spin. Then the back of the Jeep hit the curb, went up, hit a tree, and then the back seat, because it wasn't bolted in properly, came out and hit us from behind. Essentially, we were rear-ended three times in the same accident. I remember my sister coming to visit me in the hospital. We were so close. She sat on the edge of my bed and said to me, "Don't you die on me; we have so much life left to live."

The emergency room doctor told me I was very lucky to be alive. I was encouraged to take time off work to heal. I asked about going back to school, he said that was fine. He then asked what I was taking. I said, "I am going to be a hairdresser." He said, "Oh baby girl, you may have to reconsider that. You were rear-ended three times in this accident and you injured the exact muscles you will need for your career." That's when I realized I wanted to be a hairdresser. Quitting was not going to be my destiny. After being off for two months, I joined a gym to rehabilitate my back. I went back to school and became a prize student in the program.

I knew this was my second chance. I got my first job in a salon, and I figured I was on my way.

As the year passed, my sister got pregnant, and I was so excited to be an auntie.

Who knew what would happen next?

My sister went into labor and her baby was on the way. I went to meet her at the hospital for what was supposed to be an amazing experience for us. It did not turn out that way. There were complications during her caesarean and she died after my niece was born. It was one year from the day of my accident where she sat on my hospital bed.

I can't even tell you the grief I felt. This was my sister. Her life was taken too soon. We had memories and experiences to make, and she was my best friend.

I sat in the dark for many days thinking about how I didn't want to be here or wondering how I would do life on my own.

To go through this pain, seemed unbearable. As the days passed, I realized my sister would not want me to give up. She would want me to live my life. My family had lost one person, and my sister would be disappointed if I hurt myself. I knew I had to find the strength to carry on.

Quitting would not be my story. Excuses are not reasons to quit.

Day by day, I moved forward. I got married and had a baby of my own. When my son was two years old, I worked part-time at a hair salon; it was three weeks till our possession of our new home. Life seemed to be on track until one Friday night my husband made a choice which showed me, he no longer wanted to be married to me. Devastation filled my heart. Once again, I had to make a choice; roll over in my grief or move forward. I waited a week, came down the stairs, and said, "It's over. I will move into the house, and I will take

all of our debt with me so if we settled this in court, it would be fair. I don't want any child support. I don't want any alimony; all I ever want and will ever ask of you is that you be a good dad because we ruined us but we created our son and we are responsible for him having a good life regardless of our situation." We decided to divorce and mutually reached an agreement, we created a win-win situation to provide our child with a good life. We've only had three disagreements in the 24 years of being divorced. Our child would not be a statistic. My son has grown to be a good man with a great career in the music industry. I am so proud. He is a wise kid. He once said, "When breaking up, parents should never involve the kids. Don't bad mouth the other parent as the kids are half of each of you. If you bad mouth the parent, you are badmouthing your child." I realized in that moment that I would never be able to change the fact that Jonah would one day tell the story about me. But I knew what I could do was change the story that he told. I went back to work full-time and started my life over.

I didn't want to let what happened change the fact that I had the following goals:

1. I wanted to work for a manufacturer.
2. I wanted to teach salon professionals.
3. I wanted to have my own salon, all before I was 30.

One month before my 30th birthday, I opened Influence Salon.

I remember feeling helpless many times growing my business. My friend once asked me, "What are you worried about?" I told her I was afraid, and asked "What if I can't do this?" She said, "Go there, play it out in your mind; what you are afraid of? Fear is of the

unknown. Figure out what you would do and then you won't be afraid anymore."

So, I played it out, found a solution, and the anxiety went away. I use this practice to this day.

Influence Salon has a deeply respected mentorship program to help hairdressers thrive. It means I can pay it forward.

We believe in client service which makes us unique for so many reasons.

Once Influence was running itself with a great team in place, I'd become artistic director of a multi-million-dollar company. I had a visa to travel to the U.S. to do celebrities' hair at events like the Oscars, Emmys, and MTV Music Awards. I had my dream job.

Yet, I was away the majority of the time. My salon was operated by managers. Before COVID-19, I was doing famous people's hair, attending conferences, and was on 90 flights a year. Some would say I was living the dream.

When the pandemic happened, I could no longer travel and therefore it felt like I was no longer a famous hairdresser. I realized I had made that my identity and did not know who I was at home. I had to start over again. This is one of my biggest life lessons. Who am I? It took some time, but I realized is what truly matters to me is my company, being at home, and creating a personal life for myself. It's not often that you get to rewrite who you are, but the opportunity presented itself and I took it.

Quitting was not going to be my story.

I have taken the time to reflect on the lessons I've learned and applied them to the choices I've made. This is what I've accomplished, and continue to work and focus on:

- I have become a priority in my life. I choose Wendy.
- I am building my business, and I get to help people create the life they want. I share the lessons that I've learned with them.
- I bought another space and put in a salon concept that was a dream of mine for many years.
- I am building the Influence Salon and Identity Express Bar.
- I mentor our team of young professionals to do, have, and be anything they want.
- Our brand's motto is, "Experience the difference."
- Passion creates purpose.
- It's important to make mental health and self-care a priority while creating healthy experiences, so you can finish strong and proudly stand tall.

Whatever your story is, you are not alone. There is a way through the challenges you might face. Solutions can be found. You may not see it right away, but it is there. I have learned that the more you pay attention to negative things, the more negativity will come your way. Adopt a positive mindset. If you can find your inner motivation, and mix it with vulnerability and active choices, then you can make it through.

You are your choices, not your excuses. You get to rewrite your story. You get to Do, Have and, Be anything you want in your life.

Wendy Bélanger

Celebrity Hair Stylist and CEO of Influence the Salon and Identity the Express Bar

Connect with Wendy:

https://linktr.ee/wendybelanger?utm_source=qr_code



Walking the Talk



Jennifer Gordon



Jennifer Gordon is a breast cancer survivor and advocate whose journey is one of resilience, self-love, and empowerment. Diagnosed during the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic, she faced her battle head-on, combining a double mastectomy with reconstruction in a single 15-hour surgery. Alongside her healing, Jennifer embarked on a transformative path, exploring tantra and sexual wellness, and discovering the power of pleasure and self-care in recovery. As a confidence and sexual wellness coach, she's passionate about helping others reconnect with their bodies, and treat them as beloved companions.

Jennifer is also an accomplished dragon boater who has won numerous gold medals, finding strength in the camaraderie of fellow survivors. Her journey from the depths of trauma to a place of profound self-respect and joy inspires others to embrace their own healing with courage and humor.

Connect with Jennifer:

<https://linktr.ee/TheBlissPoint>



Chapter 6

A Survivor's Journey Through Self-Love and Healing

By Jennifer Gordon

It was November 2020, and the world was deep in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was packing up my desk to work from home when I noticed a mammogram requisition pinned to my bulletin board. I'm a procrastinator's procrastinator and that little slip of paper had been there for two years. My ADHD brain knew that if I packed it away in my briefcase, it would disappear into the void, like a sock in the dryer. So, instead of ignoring it for another day, I did something out of character—I booked the appointment right then and there, expecting it might take a year to get in due to the pandemic. But the universe had other plans. There was a cancellation, and within four days, I found myself going for a biopsy. Four days after that, I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

To say that week was a whirlwind would be an understatement. I signed my separation papers, COVID-19 lockdown 2.0 hit, and I was handed a cancer diagnosis all at once. The stress was monumental—more than I ever imagined I could endure. But humans are resilient, aren't we? We push through, even when it feels impossible. My medical team and I quickly devised a surgical plan. Given the state of the world, I was terrified of being in the hospital while immune-compromised, risking exposure to COVID-19. However, I couldn't bear the thought of putting my family members at risk by having them shuttle me to and from treatment. So, I

decided to take cancer down in one blow—a double mastectomy and reconstruction, all in one 15-hour surgery.

Never in my life had I experienced so much physical and emotional pain simultaneously. It felt as though a chunk had been torn from my body, and the surgeons somehow pieced me back together. Even though my new breasts were made from my own abdominal tissue, they didn't feel like mine. I was constantly afraid they would crack like glass, or that they'd fall off my body like something out of a cartoon. It took months before I felt safe walking around, unafraid of bumping into something and experiencing unbearable pain.

To truly understand the depth of this experience, let me rewind a bit. Back in 2019, I was studying Tantra and sexuality in a last-ditch effort to save my failing marriage. I had also begun a bariatric weight loss program, tipping the scales at 350 pounds. Food has always been my refuge, the only place I allowed myself joy. But as I started to confront my food addiction, I realized I needed to find other sources of joy. That's when my journey with Tantra truly began. At the age of 45, I started to discover all the different ways my body could experience pleasure—ways I had never known before. The most surprising discovery was that I could orgasm through nipple stimulation. This revelation came just six months before my cancer diagnosis, and I was furious. It felt like I was about to lose two extra clitorises.

Determined not to let cancer rob me of my newfound sensuality, I began a daily ritual of Tantric breast massages in the 30 days leading up to my surgery. Every morning and evening, I would talk to my breasts, thanking them, telling them how beautiful they were, and soaking up all the joy they could give me. Then, I'd rub my abdominal area—the tissue that would soon become my new

breasts—and tell it to remember the pleasure, to remember that this was going to be its new job. My goal was to teach my neuromuscular pathways an alternate route to breast pleasure, even without nipples.

A part of me was consumed with self-pity during this time. I was newly single and living in isolation because of COVID-19. I couldn't risk being intimate with anyone for fear of jeopardizing my surgery if I got sick. That's when I realized I had to become my own epic lover. I had to take responsibility for my own pleasure and be my own partner; so began my love affair with my breasts. Every morning, I'd start with my breast massage, followed by meditation. Then, I would schedule grief time—I'd cry, sometimes on camera, so that I wouldn't feel alone. I'd even watch the videos back and cry some more, so I felt like I was crying with someone. To ensure my mood rebounded from these depths of despair, I'd put on my favorite dance videos and dance. On weekends, I dressed up, put on high heels and makeup, and hung up a disco ball, then danced all night as if I were at the bar. It was as if I was playing with myself—breast cancer Barbie in full swing.

One of the most transformative experiences during this time was a “Bye-Bye Booby” boudoir shoot. A photographer came and captured my original breasts in a series of intimate, emotional photos. By then, I had lost about 125 pounds, and seeing my transformed body in these portraits was empowering and heartbreaking. The photographer caught moments of me crying, lovingly touching my breasts, and saying goodbye. I wholeheartedly recommend this experience to any breast cancer patient. It's a beautiful way to honor and memorialize a part of yourself that you're about to lose.

After the boudoir shoot, I often took pictures of myself. It became a significant part of my healing journey, watching how my body

healed itself after surgery and gradually returned to a new normal. I was in awe of my body's ability to knit itself back together after the surgeons had done their work. It made me wonder—what other body wisdom had I been completely oblivious to? My respect and relationship with my body changed forever.

Anyone who has suffered a loss like a mastectomy will understand how it can shatter your sense of womanhood. But I was so committed to being alive that I felt an intense need to be intimate with my lover shortly after my surgery—just six days after, to be exact. I had six drains hanging from my body, looking like grenades filled with disgusting fluid, and I was still in an epic amount of pain. But I pinned those drains to the back of my lingerie and had sex anyway. It was almost like I needed to feel alive again. I wouldn't recommend this to anyone, and my partner at the time was probably terrified of hurting me. But it was necessary for me, at that moment. In the aftermath, he would tease me about making him have sex with me while I was on "life support," and it would make me giggle.

After the surgery, I couldn't bring myself to continue with the Tantric breast massages. I was too squeamish to touch my scars, and the pain and numbness brought back a lot of trauma and fear. It took me a long time to feel comfortable with my new breasts. But I maintained a routine of self-pleasure almost daily, incorporating a Tantric jade egg practice. Looking back, I realize that I was using my sexual energy to heal. With so much pain—both emotional and physical—pleasuring myself gently and with respect was like giving myself healing medicine. Our sexual energy is powerful. It's the same energy that creates life. I used that energy to circulate through my body and heal during my cancer journey.

One of the most remarkable moments in my recovery happened during a surgery I had where I was awake. My surgeon was

removing patches of skin over my nipples from the tissue transplant, which had, unbelievably, started to grow pubic hair because it came from my abdominal area. He injected freezing into my breasts, but as he worked, I could still feel everything. He was surprised because patients are usually told not to expect much sensation for at least a year, if ever. We were only six weeks post-op, and yet here I was, feeling everything. I told him about my meditative practice, about how I had talked to my abdominal tissue and told it that it was going to be my new breasts. He was astonished, saying he'd never seen anyone with this much sensitivity after surgery.

To my amazement, I still experience a lot of pleasure from my breasts. I can even orgasm as if I still have nipples. It's nothing short of miraculous, and I strut around like the miracle that I am. Some people get mad when they hear this. They have nipples and don't know how to orgasm with them; and here I am, nipple-less and still able to experience that pleasure. It's one of the reasons I've changed careers to become a sex coach. I want to help people connect with their bodies and treat them like beloved pets. Your body is your best friend. It's the only thing that's with you from your first breath to your last. Why on earth are we taught to hate our bodies? It's beyond me.

Cancer has changed me in so many ways, both for better and for worse. One of the most positive changes has been my introduction to dragon boating. This sport, which I started as part of my recovery, has been instrumental in reducing my risk of cancer recurrence and gaining psychosocial support from other breast cancer survivors. In three years, I've earned many gold medals. Dragon boating is gruelling, but it's incredibly beneficial for a survivor. One of the greatest benefits is being surrounded by other women who've been through what you've been through. When you're spat out of the

medical system after surgery and treatment, you're left with a terrible hangover—trauma, emotional wounds, physical deficiencies, and the challenge of finding your place in the world again.

Competing with other survivors is inspiring. You can see people who are further along in their survivorship journey, and you can follow their pace. We train almost year-round—indoors in the gym and on ice during the winter and then on the water as soon as the ice melts. There's something profoundly healing about learning to paddle in sync with others. After cancer, it helps you sync back up to the pace of the world. It's a safe space to regain your strength. For the first few years, it's about rebuilding your body and feeling normal again. Later, it's about training for any future fights with cancer. I'm preparing myself to be "strong as f**k," so if cancer ever comes back, I'll be ready to win the fight a second time.

The journey through cancer has been one of the most intense, transformative experiences of my life. It's taught me the depth of my own resilience, the importance of self-love, and the incredible power of sexual energy as a healing force. I've learned to cherish my body as my closest companion, to treat it with the love and respect it deserves, and to use pleasure as a way to nourish and heal myself.

If I could teach anything to my younger self, it would be this: Pleasure is your birthright, a gift as natural as the breath in your lungs or the beat of your heart. It's not something you need to earn or justify. The world will tell you that pleasure is indulgence, that it's selfish or frivolous, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Pleasure is nourishment for the soul, a vital part of what makes us human. It connects us to our most authentic selves, grounding us in the present moment and reminding us of the beauty of life, even amidst its challenges.

As you move through life, you'll come to realize that your body is the nightclub of the soul. It's the place where your spirit dances, where joy and pain, love and loss all come together in a beautiful, chaotic rhythm. Your body isn't just a vessel carrying you from one day to the next—it's a living, breathing extension of who you are. Every experience and every emotion are etched into your muscles, bones, and skin. It's your history, your story, written in your flesh.

Make peace with your body early on because you don't just have a body—you *are* your body. This might sound like a subtle difference, but it's profound. We're often taught to think of our bodies as separate from ourselves, something to be controlled, improved, or even fought against. But the truth is, your body and soul are one. When you reject your body, you're rejecting a part of yourself. When you embrace your body, flaws and all, you're embracing the whole of who you are.

Imagine yourself as the computer, and your body as the droid. You've been paired together for life until death do you part. This partnership is the most intimate relationship you'll ever have, more enduring than any other. The sooner you start working together, the better. It's not just about making peace with your body, it's about forming a deep, loving relationship with it. Listen to it, learn from it, and honor it. Your body has its own wisdom, a kind of intelligence that's different from your mind but just as powerful. It knows when to rest, when to move, and when to heal. Trust it.

This journey is like a three-legged race where you, your body, and your spirit are bound together. You can only move as fast as the slowest one. If you're constantly at war with your body, or if you ignore your spirit, you'll find yourself stumbling and struggling to move forward. But when all three run together in harmony, you're

as fast as lightning. You become a force of nature, unstoppable and free.

Working together doesn't mean everything will be easy. There will be times when your body falters because it feels like a burden rather than a blessing. There will be moments when your spirit feels heavy, weighed down by the trials of life. But these are the times when it's most important to be gentle with yourself and to remember that you're in this race together. When one part of you struggles, the others can help carry the load—your mind can offer encouragement, your spirit can provide hope, and your body can remind you of your strength.

In this race, it's not about who's the fastest or the most perfect. It's about moving forward, step by step, with grace and compassion. It's about understanding that the journey is as important as the destination and that every stumble is an opportunity to learn, grow, and become more fully yourself.

If I could go back in time and speak to my younger self, I would tell her to stop worrying so much about what her body looks like and start focusing on how it feels. I'd tell her to dance, move, and revel in the joy of being alive. I'd tell her to listen to the whispers of her body, to heed its needs and honor its desires. I'd tell her to make pleasure a priority, not just as an act of self-care, but as a way of life.

Pleasure isn't just about physical sensation—it's about emotional and spiritual fulfillment too. It's about finding joy in the little things, like the warmth of the sun on your skin, the sound of laughter, or the taste of your favorite food. It's about savoring each moment, even the difficult ones because they're all part of the rich tapestry of life.

Your body is the vehicle through which you experience all of this. It's your dance partner in the nightclub of the soul, and together, you

create the rhythm of your life. When you're in sync, when you move together with love and respect, the dance becomes effortless, and life becomes a celebration.

So, to my younger self, and anyone reading this: Embrace your body. Love it fiercely. Cherish every moment you have with it. Make peace with it early on because it's not just your body—it's you. And when you run this race together, mind, body, and spirit, you'll discover that you're capable of more than you ever imagined. You'll find that you're as fast as lightning and that the journey, with all its ups and downs, is a beautiful, miraculous dance worth celebrating every step of the way.

A powerful collection of voices, **ECHOES OF WISDOM** brings together a diverse group of women from different walks of life—finance, coaching, speaking, entrepreneurship, trailblazing, and survivors of domestic abuse and cancer. Each woman shares her unique journey, filled with trials, triumphs, and the invaluable lessons she’s learned along the way.

These stories depict resilience, transformation, and liberation. We have come together with one goal: to pass on **our** hard-earned insights to the next generation.

This book is for women who are at the start of their own journeys, offering guidance, mentorship, and inspiration. We hope by sharing our stories, young women today can have increased awareness to some of the related experiences the authors faced, find courage in their own paths, and step confidently into their futures.

Through this collective wisdom, the authors aim to create a legacy of support, empowering young women to navigate life with the knowledge and strength that they, too, can overcome any challenge and achieve greatness. This is more than a book; it’s a sisterhood, a call to action, and a testament to the power of shared stories and **ECHOES OF WISDOM... What We Know Now**

In Collaboration with *Susie De Giusti* and *Heather Andrews*

Foreword by *Jessica Soodeen*

A Special Testimony By *Wendy Bélanger*

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

- Carmen Davidson • Danielle Shantz • Erica Bearss
- Jackie McCoy • Jennifer Gordon • Jessica Lee • Jessica Soodeen
- Linh Tran • Lisa Sobry • Melissa Mazurek • Shona Welsh

