

MARCH/APRIL 2018

SOFYA STYLE

MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

**'My name is Melissa
and I am a transgender
female'**

Melissa Griffiths



NEW Local
Magazine
for Women



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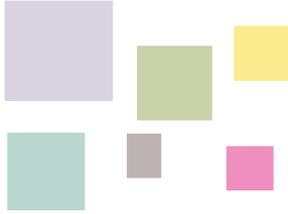
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MARCH/APRIL 2018



Editor's note

There is one thing that is an absolute truth in life:

when one door closes, other doors will open.

Such circumstances force you to look for different ways of doing things, which leads to new doors and new paths.

It got me thinking: when a door closes, how do you make sure that you find those new doors and paths?

First of all, remember that it was meant to close!

When one door closes, we are meant to go in a new direction. We may not see that clearly at the time, but in hindsight, it is crystal clear. Given time, you will see that the first door needed to close, so you can find the way to new, brighter opportunities.

Next important step is to make sure you nail that door shut!

We often try to reopen that door many times throughout our lives. If the situation is negative and hurtful, then nail that door shut behind you and let go of the notion of it ever opening again.

In fact, stop looking at the closed door altogether!

When one door closes, take your attention away from it. If you stay focused on the closed door, then you cannot see the new one that has been opened for you.

My lesson in this 'closed and open doors' analogy is: if you are faced with an open door or an opportunity, just GO FOR IT!

Most importantly, if you have a DREAM, you might need to kick down that door, take some action and make your own path!

Ann
xx



Photo by Blanche Gal
'It's About You Photo'

Ann Pendlebury

Owner & Editor

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'BOXES OF STYLE'

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CURRENT ISSUE OF THE
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My name is Melissa and I am a transgender female

Have you ever felt different to everyone else? I did! I always felt different to the other boys at school but I never quite understood why.

My name is Melissa and I am a transgender female. I live in Melbourne where I have faced quite a few challenges in my journey and I am willing to share some of these experiences and knowledge to help educate others.

I first realised I was different from other boys at school around the age of 10. I was always the awkward, shy one at school who never quite fit in. I was also bullied for being slim. I started feeling like a woman around the age of 15. Around the same time, I started wearing women's clothing. At first, it was something I did privately. I would put my mother's clothes on when she was out, then put them back. I did this for a while then tried to

suppress the urge thinking it was just a phase I was going through. So, I threw myself into playing sport like rugby league and for a while, the female clothes were buried away.

I never wore female clothes out in public in Auckland, but in 1999 I moved to Melbourne. Not long after I relocated, I started going out as a woman. Looking back, some of my female clothing choices were not exactly ideal — like wearing a short tartan mini skirt with red top, fishnets, black boots and red wig. Probably not the best look! However, at the time it was both exciting and nerve-racking going out public as a female.

I decided in 2014 to openly come out and to begin living fully as a woman in the following year. The turning point for me was seeing both my father and cousin in hospital at the same time. They both had terminal cancer. It made me realise that life is very short and very precious. I also realised that I hadn't been true to myself by only living part of my life as a woman outside work and not all of the time. I recognised that to be fully functional in life and society one cannot hide one's true self from others.

When I came out, the reaction of people around me was varied and interesting. Some of my friends were supportive. However, some were not and I haven't seen some of them in a while.



Melissa Griffiths

Whilst a lot of my peers were surprised the overall reaction was good. I did get asked a lot of questions, some of which were rather surprising. In terms of my family the reactions were mixed. They ranged from acceptance and support from most of my family to others that were either indifferent or not wanting to understand. A few say they accept me, but my interactions with them would suggest otherwise! I understand that people who are transgender is something new for everyone, including my family and friends.

Have you ever had second thoughts about starting the transition process?

I have never had second thoughts about transitioning. On occasion I thought it would have been easier not to have started the process and just carry on as I was, especially when people give me a hard time. When those thoughts enter my mind I would remember that I am living true to myself. I knew it would be a tough process, however I would never want to go back.

In society I had people looking at me funny or worse still abusing me at the beach when I wore a bikini or walked down the street. For a lot of people I was either a crossdresser or a drag queen gone wrong.

In terms of my physical transition, I still have not had surgery for either breast implants or gender reassignment surgery to create a vagina. I have been on hormones for nearly two years now and have had a little breast growth. However, it does vary from each transgender person who takes hormones. I have also considered facial feminisation surgery, to make my face more feminine and voice surgery to help with the pitch of my voice. The cost of these medical procedures in Australia for transgender people are quite prohibitive and hence it will be a while before I am able to undergo any surgery.

Would YOU ever accept yourself as a Female? Have you already?

I have accepted myself as a female though I realise that some people may not see me as such. It took a while for me to do so, due to some self-doubts. 'Am I beautiful enough?' Which occasionally still pop up in my mind. There is an element of sadness in me with regards to those who do not understand or accept me, or have closed minds. It takes a long time to come to terms with who we are and find our way in the world and I am no different.

The most difficult thing about transitioning from male to female has been accepting that the majority of society will reject you and see you as some kind of freak. Having to go through a lot of the transition without a lot of support was tough, however it has made me stronger. My recommendation would be to seek good advice and support from your doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist before they come out.

I would also suggest that you have a good counsellor you can talk to. It is important to have this support network in place before you come out. It will help you deal with the challenges you will face living as transgender male or transgender woman.

Throughout this whole journey the most important thing I've learned is that I had to be strong to deal with what life and people throw at me. By finding my inner strength, I've been able to deal with the discrimination I have faced and keep believing in myself. The experiences you have in your life help define who you are. I now have a stronger sense of who I am and my purpose of life. We all have times in lives when we are challenged.

How do you cope with 'tricky' days?

Just remembering to breathe and put a smile on. I keep going, reminding myself that I have accomplished a lot in a short space of time and helped a lot of people in transgender community. I realise that people are still getting used to transgender people and it takes time. Also a nice walk or taking time out for myself helps too.

I had to mentally prepare for the discrimination and untoward behaviour. Getting support from other transgender people in the local area or from a transgender support group is invaluable, this helped me a lot.

Alternatively, if this is not possible then seek support online from other transgender groups or people. It is a sign of strength not weakness to ask for support from others. I know from my experience that if I had more support earlier on, it would have been a far easier journey.

What is the most rewarding thing about helping others?

The most rewarding thing about helping others is that you are making someone else's life better by giving them advice that they need. By helping others I am creating a ripple effect. I hope that they will talk about being transgender or knowing someone who is transgender. This creates more awareness.

As part of my self-discovery, I've realised that my experiences can help future generations. I became a transgender advocate. I wanted to become an influencer in society, rather than just a bystander. I could have a big impact and break down any barriers that exist in society towards transgender people.



Embrace

You're fat, you're disgusting, you're ugly'...

These are the words that Positive Body Image Activist and founder of 'The Body Image Movement' Taryn Brumfitt said to herself, just a few years ago.

She decided to tackle her demons by training for a body conditioning competition, but afterwards realised whilst standing in her 'perfect body' that her view of herself remained the same.

Taryn slowly began to embrace her body and posted an unconventional 'before and after' photo of herself which was seen by over 100 million people.

The viral response was mixed from admiration to blatant trolling, prompting her to explore body image by making a documentary called 'Embrace'. And the Body Image Movement was born. www.bodyimagemovement.com

As an Image Consultant, Body Image Movement Global Ambassador and Mental Health Trainer for Coventry & Warwickshire Mind, I hear many people describe themselves in negative ways. Heartbreaking. But why?

Always remember... **YOU ARE ENOUGH!**



One woman's journey...

We are exposed to poisonous messages that society and the media send us daily. They tell us that our self-worth should be determined by the way that we look. If we do not conform to their 'ideal' then we often strive towards that illusive image of 'perfection.'

Hence the endless products and services out there from beauty to weight loss that will 'fix' us for the right price.

But what if we EMBRACED our bodies for how amazing they are? For carrying our children, for taking us to amazing places, for hearing, seeing, touching and tasting life's pleasures? How amazing and freeing would that be?!

By changing our mindset, we can prevent these damaging messages from stealing our time, money and self-worth.

Join us on Sunday 1st July with co-hosts Sofya Events for the opportunity to see Taryn's powerful documentary followed by a Confidence workshop. *Certificate 12a.

We will also be joined by a shopping village of local businesses for self-love treats. This is a Fundraiser event for Coventry and Warwickshire Mind www.cwmind.org.uk

See www.theimageangel.co.uk/events for ticket information. Follow us on Facebook: @theimageangelamb Twitter: #EmbraceCov #TheImageAngelUK

Let's stop the global body shaming epidemic and create positive change.

Embrace
One woman's journey to inspire everyBODY

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL 2016

Sunday 1st July 2018
Community Room
Warwickshire Shopping Park
Coventry
CV3 2SB
12-4.30pm

Embrace
THE UNION PROJECT

Inspire!

Greatness



*Mother & Daughter
events to be announced
in 2018!*

We often hear: "Oh, she's just a copy of you, a mini-you really..." The thing is, I don't want my daughter to be a "mini-me". I want her to be herself, to do better, to learn more, to go further, to be *GREAT* and to become the best that she could be! Don't you?...

We hope that our Mother and Daughter events will give you some inspiration for this journey to *GREATNESS!*

Email Sofya Events to find out more: hello@sofyahq.co.uk

Former First Citizen

Cllr Kathryn Lawrence



I changed career direction in 2008 when I was elected as a Borough Councillor to represent Hillmorton Ward and as a Councillor I have served and chaired committees and task groups.

I was privileged and honoured to be chosen by my fellow councillors to be Mayor of Rugby 2012 – 2013 and as Rugby's First Citizen led Rugby Borough in our celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee and helped to welcome the arrival of the Olympic Torch.

"I believe that an active life is essential to successful retirement"

I am a Hillmorton girl having lived in Hillmorton all my life.

I was educated at the local village school and Dunsmore School for Girls (now Ashlawn). I took a gap year, which was spent working at a local accountancy company as a personal secretary.

After training to become a teacher, I taught in Biggleswade and then returned to Rugby to teach at Guilsborough School, a large rural comprehensive, where I taught Humanities and History.

I was a Head of Year, a Co-ordinator for More-Able Students and PSHE & Citizenship Co-ordinator.

The year as Mayor is always very busy and during the year you attend numerous events, meet so many people and find out about the work of local groups and organisations, the majority of which rely on the work and support of volunteers.

I chose the Friends of the Hospital of St Cross as my Mayoral charity and I am now one of the trustees helping to co-ordinate the fundraising activities that are essential as the Friends continue to fund projects to improve patients' welfare and care. We always say that we provide "the icing on the cake" and really appreciate the support of Rugby residents for their local hospital.

At the end of my Mayoral year I was asked to join the Civilian Committee of the 29F (Rugby) Squadron Air Cadets and as their Honorary President am helping plan celebrations for the 80th Anniversary of our founding in 1938.

During the 2015 Enjoy Rugby programme of events for the World Cup, I volunteered to help with the activities and continue to volunteer at Rugby Art Gallery & Museum with events.

In 2011 a steering group was established to plan the first year of the Rugby Festival of Culture.

I am a member of the steering group and we take great pride in showcasing our local culture through events that celebrate the best of Rugby's art, craft, drama, dance, music, heritage, food. There is always a packed programme for the 2 weeks of the Festival and sometimes it is difficult to know which event to choose.

In my spare time I am a volunteer for the National Trust and spend time at Canons Ashby House as a tour and room guide. When there are period events, you will find me in various roles; in Puritan costume as Lady Honor Dryden during the Civil War period, as Lady Elizabeth Dryden at the start of the 1800's and as a Victorian Dryden.

I was also asked to join the Rotary Dunsmore Club and this is a wonderful way to make new friends, engage in lots of social activities.

We believe in "service above self" and organise many events that raise money for local and Rotary charities. Support for the Rotary "Purple for Polio" campaign has resulted in us planting thousands of purple crocuses. The campaign funds the vaccination of children throughout the world against polio.

I believe that an active life is essential to successful retirement.

Pictured: Rotary campaign 'Purple for Polio' and in a role as Victorian Dryden



INTRODUCING A NEW PHOTO STUDIO

A brand new boutique studio has opened in Rugby, Studio YOU run by Blanche Gal, owner of It's About You Photo.

It is a wellbeing centre that focuses on the successes and aspirations of women – from inside and out.

It also gives home to Networking Mummies events in Rugby which offers people the opportunity to network, through monthly child-friendly network sessions and workshops open to anyone.

'The importance of empowering people and helping them accept their capabilities, their body image and caring about self-love is my main core belief' says Blanche.

'If we don't love ourselves no one can truly love us. We must celebrate the bodies that we are born with and to do that we need to put ourselves first, find our values and believe that we are good enough.'

The Studio itself is located in an industrial area close to the station, and when you step in, you enter a different world. The deep blue wall welcomes you with a poem of Derek Walcott, Love After Love, beautiful prints are all over in golden frames. The beauty room has a hair and makeup station, glam and elegant dresses, gowns that are available for clients to wear during the sessions. Everything is very feminine and inspirational.

'I care about how women feel' she explains. 'They can be sensitive, strong, sexy, they can be whatever they want to be.

It's incredibly powerful and empowering to feel good about yourself.

So many people compare themselves to and are envious of celebrities – they see the glossy magazine covers and think they don't compare. But it's all about good lighting, posing with great styling. We are all the same and even celebrities aren't glamorous 24-7.

I'm here to make you see that you're the cover girl and leading lady in your own life – to give you the self-confidence to achieve your dreams.

This is why I provide an amazing experience for all my clients with a detailed consultation, professional hair and makeup for ladies and professional portrait photography where I style them to their advantage (even down to their fingertips) to look their absolute best, then guide them for a natural expression.





'I create a very safe and relaxing environment at the studio, and all my customers walk away taller, gain a little more confidence in their own body and beauty.'

There are two other rooms with amazing natural light. One is with set up for boudoir photoshoots which include bed and even a bath, everything is very private and intimate. The other large studio area is also available to rent for workshops and events, not only for photography. A place where women can meet professionally, to talk about self-care, gain further skills and education, find support, network and grow their businesses.

'I have three children, one being a toddler so I struggle with childcare and running a business at the same time. Setting up Networking Mummies in Rugby is a great help for everyone having the same issues. You spend your time scheduling your business around school runs, nursery or childminder dates and not all networks are designed for this.'

" I would help you to discover a different reflection of yourself. The one that empowers, inspires or changes your life. "

Blanche Gal

I want to inspire as many women as I can through networking and photography, to show them the real values in life: their own amazing awesomeness. 'The way we see ourselves affects the value we assign to everything we do and how our clients and customers interpret that value,' says Blanche. 'I would help you to discover a different reflection of yourself. The one that empowers, inspires or changes your life. When you're in my studio, it's a journey all about you, helping you to see the best version of yourself.'



Pictured: Cllr Belinda Garcia
Blanche Gal, It's About You Photo
www.itsaboutyouphoto.com
info@itsaboutyouphoto.com

'Keeping It Real' – Parenting In The Modern Age



As a Parenting Blogger I rely heavily on the sharing power of Facebook and Instagram. I am a non-profit 'hobby' blogger so I rely very much on free social media platforms to spread my message. The possibilities that these platforms provide appear limitless, but this may not always be a good thing. Parenting in the 'Modern Age' is hard. There is no Instagram filter available to make those difficult days any easier and we often feel the pressure to perform online. We worry about judgement and often feel guilty when we are not seen to be parenting the 'right' way. The irony is, there is no right way.



With my blog and website A Place For Parents, I hope to provide a 'one stop shop' for real parents, where honesty is definitely the best policy.

Writing for Sofya Style and for local women is an opportunity to share a more positive message, one that highlights that 'it's ok not to be ok'.

Parenting is not always as we see it on social media and we need to say no to 'Mum Guilt'.

My blog is a hobby. I also work part time as a Children's Occupational Therapy Technical Instructor and I am a 'full time' parent. Once you have children, you are never off duty and the juggling act needs to be managed on a daily basis. As a parent you are there for the good and the bad no matter what.

Here at Sofya Style I hope to bring a little of what I offer at A Place For Parents. It is my intention to provide fresh and current content that is relevant to local parents today.

Essentially, it's important to bring something that is real.

It's also important to provide balance and to ensure that everything you read is reliable and helpful. Your feedback is also very important to ensure that what I write about is right for you.

Nothing is off limits and I look forward to sharing some of the trials and tribulations, highs and lows of being a modern parent in 2018.

Rachael
x



Constructive rest for resilience and wellbeing



Caron Lindley
Red Hat Yoga

As a local yoga and meditation teacher, I use Facebook to promote my classes, workshops and retreats. I use it also to keep in touch with the local communities I serve and get a sense of the 'collective mood'.

My work is informed by what I observe. I see people rushing through their lives, overscheduling every waking hour of the day, unable to let go of their anxieties even in sleep.

Why is it that we feel compelled to take on so much?

Whatever the reasons, it seems to me that we have become addicted to being busy, squeezing every bit of juice from the time available. With little or no downtime, non-stop busyness takes its toll on physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Give yourself permission

I have learned from experience that what busy people need most is to give themselves permission to stop and take time for rest. Rest is a skill and a habit that can be learned. Taking time out for yourself in this way isn't self-indulgent, it's essential if we want to stay healthy and be able to bounce back from life's inevitable curved balls.

Emerging themes help me create sessions that are relevant to modern life. People often say to me: "I feel that the class was designed for me today. How did you know that's just what I needed?"

Most yoga classes will include some aspect of rest, usually at the end of the practice. It's the part of the class that people really look forward to and that keeps them returning each week.

The power of rest

My curiosity in the power of rest for resilience and wellbeing led me to study Yoga Nidra with several leading experts. In a nutshell, Yoga Nidra is the practice of conscious rest for the body and mind. It combines relaxation techniques with mindfulness and meditation. It helps you switch off, refresh and experience a deep sense of calm and wellbeing. If you feel anxious, depressed, are overwhelmed by stress or have trouble sleeping, then you might find that a regular Yoga Nidra practice will really help you to rebalance.

Now I specialise in teaching Yoga Nidra to others, I hold workshops and practice classes in the Rugby area. I also run Yoga Nidra sessions in schools and in the workplace, as well as facilitating private sessions for families and groups of friends.

If you'd like to try Yoga Nidra, contact Caron Lindley at Red Hat Yoga on 07786 911593 or email caron@redhatyoga.co.uk www.redhatyoga.co.uk

What happens Backstage at a Fashion Show...

Fashion shows are like one big glamorous extravaganza, right? Well ... not quite.

Front the front row a fashion show seems like an effortless chic way to bring together models, designers, editors and all the latest styles. Have you ever wondered what happens behind the scenes?

Behind the scenes, there's an army of people working day and night to make sure the show goes off without a hitch. It takes months of preparation and tons of hard work. In fact, the planning for the next fashion show begins as soon as the last one ends!

LAST MINUTE CHANGES...

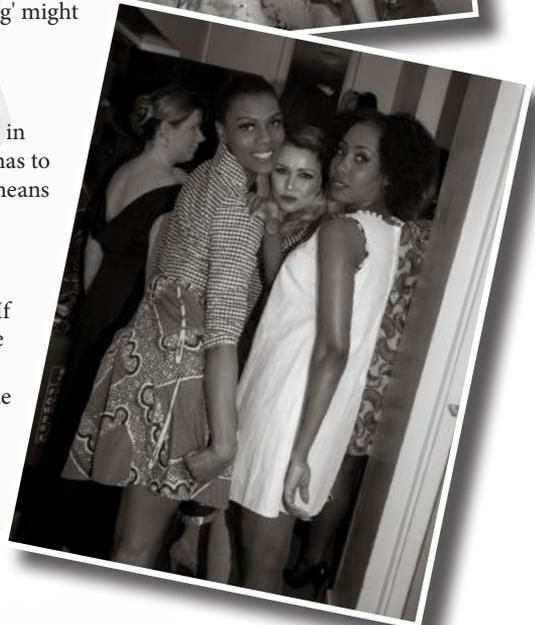
A fashion show is a whole lot of unknowns. Sometimes models are late. Or, they show up late and covered in glitter and hairspray from a previous show and need to be cleaned up and re-done in a matter of minutes. And sometimes, models don't show up at all because they got an offer from a bigger name. This usually means that the planned garments might not fit or have not got a model to wear them, the order of 'walking' might need to change because of it too.

QUICK FIXES...

Even though designers have been preparing for months in advance, there are always last minute fixes. Each outfit has to be perfect as it goes out on to the catwalk, even if that means hemming a skirt moments before the model walks out.

RUNNING AROUND.... A LOT....

When it comes to fashion shows, timing is everything. If that means a model has to sprint to the catwalk to make sure she is in line or she has to run backstage in 5-inch heels to change outfits, well, that's just another day at the office!



Photographs Galore

Backstage is always packed with models, designers, stylists, makeup and hair stylists. Then you also have a few photographers who are there to document the big event. They are there to capture all the action to give us a taste of all that mysterious backstage activity! For me that's probably just as exciting as the show itself!



Despite the madhouse atmosphere, there is always time for a few selfies.

Photos by Kev Wise
www.kevwise.com



MODA 2018

LARGEST FASHION TRADE EVENT

Future fashion of 2018

Be the first to find out Autumn/Winter 2018 trends

Sofya Style will help you plan your wardrobe for any season

Wide-leg trousers
Effortless and chic, wide-leg trousers are an autumn essential



White shirt
Keep it crisp as brands add feminine details to the ultimate versatile basic



Layers
Layer up on striking prints



Leopard print
Follow your instincts to find your perfect prints



Must haves

Five basics that are essential this autumn

Leather jacket
A modern take on a timeless essential





Oxblood

A practical alternative to black, Oxblood is a popular choice for autumn across accessories and outerwear



Petrol

Flattering to most skin tones, deep blue makes its mark on the season with rich petrol shades

Colour Spectrum



Rose gold

As the metallic finish is so pretty, it refuses to drop out of style, rose gold holds its own for the season ahead



Dusky pastels

Pretty pastels take on a more muted identity for autumn as smoky greys, dusky pinks and mink offer a wearable alternative to more classic neutrals



Get the GLAMOUR



Lace overlays and flattering shapes take eveningwear to new heights this season. Tap into grown-up glamour with semi-opaque finishes and make a statement with subtle flutes and drapes



STARTING OVER

From hobby to professional world





I have developed a passion for food only in my mid 20s. It was my husband who introduced me to life as a 'gourmand'.

He is French and, as you might know, in their culture food is everything.

Being a great cook, he exposed me to international flavours and taken me away from the boredom of repeated over-and-over dishes.

Cooking stopped being a routine and became a true delight of our family life.

Our idea of fun was to eat great food and go to Michelin Star restaurants a couple of times a year. When we travelled, everything rotated around where we were going to eat and which cafes we were going to explore. It's a slightly different scenario now that we have a 3 year old, but all in all we still love good food.

At home we prepare a menu for each week (lunches and dinners), have done so for years, and we expose our son to the world's cuisines and good home cooked meals. It's very important to us as a family. Over the years, I have started enjoying cooking too, browsing through the pages of cook books and magazines, being amazed by great pictures that would tempt us try the recipes.

Food photography is very popular now. Dishes are meant to look delicious and beautiful but also connect to the audience, to suggest they can have a go at preparing them too. So we do!

I became interested in styling and food photography several years ago. It was then that I've picked up my camera and began taking photos of food when we were out and about.

Soon I've realised that if I wanted to improve, I had to learn about natural light and basic rules of photography and styling.

Little by little I did, with a couple of workshops in between, but it was still just a hobby.

Who needs another food photographer in this world? -I thought to myself.

I guess I didn't have the courage to let myself be creative and start all over, to learn new skills and to build a new career. It didn't feel like the right time with a young baby to take care of.

Last year, at 35, I have packed up my 11 year career in sales and commercial management and decided to go into the big world of food photography, starting from scratch.

I've 'cooked up' a quick Instagram account, as it's the most visual of all social platforms. This is how Gourmand Pixels was born.

For years my friends have been telling me how creative I was, but I never listened. I never believed that I could be a creative professional.

I practise styling and photography every day and am slowly getting involved in collaborations with other photographers, which is absolutely essential for learning, exchanging ideas, motivation and sharing dreams.

I have also started doing commercial photography for local businesses.

All in all, I am convinced that if I continue to believe in myself and tell myself 'I can', I will make it into magazines and food columns one day.

And won't it be even more special, if I could do that with my beloved husband by my side!

Ekaterina Wlodarczak
Food stylist and Photographer
Gourmand Pixels
IG @gourmandpixels



*"A Daughter is
someone you laugh
with, dream with, and
Love with all your
heart."*

When people ask those cliché questions of who you look up to, aspire to be or who your idol is, I never reply with the current women in the magazines or a person of fame, but with an answer as cliché as the question itself – my mum.

I feel we see each other as not just family but as close friends. To be completely honest, I would choose her to go to lunch, watch movies and go shopping with over most of my own friends, which seems unusual but it shouldn't be.

We are very different people and our personality traits couldn't be further apart but it would be boring and we wouldn't get along as well as we do if they weren't. Despite this we do share the common eye roll with each other over irritating men or people we don't like and the giggle over cat videos on Facebook and a glass of wine watching terrible yet addictive American television.

Though I feel it is refreshing to have different interests.

We can show each other new perspectives to create less of a divide that exists between the generation.

Most of the time, like in every mother and daughter relationship, opinions clash and cause arguments that shake the house and causing cracks in the painted walls decorated in family photos. I find them very valuable though, as they teach me how to handle situations in the real world and become more mature.

All through growing up my mum let me be exactly what I wanted to be. This even included the freedom to choose the clothes I wore.

All of the ridiculous, pantomime like assortments of clothing I would pile onto my body and parade around in. She would embrace and allow me to wear for the whole world to see (even if they didn't want to).

As I had developed my own sense of style, we realised that our tastes in clothes differ.

But I wouldn't have my mum dress any other way because it's her. It would be very peculiar if she chose the outfits many other average mums go for. She's very used to my curled lip towards her loud patterned shirts and endless teal items in her wardrobe.

But her confidence and carefree attitude is what I admire the most.

I value her opinion immensely though I know I am still free to express myself and I know it also works the other way.

The changing rooms at a clothing shop is usually where most 'debates' happen. My mum bluntly tells me that what I've dressed myself in is something that the world should never see and I would tell her the exact same.

We support each other's styles although they are very different. I admire how my mum tries to keep up with the trends and how she has the most open mind when I pull unusual and bizarre items out of my white plastic Topshop bag.

You've all experienced a time of a mini skirt ensemble when your mother has given you the 'look'. However, if she hadn't said anything you'd have 'pranced' around with shocked stares from people and you would be revealing more than a young woman should.

I would always sigh with temper yet I'm secretly thankful when I get the signal that my outfit is not suitable.

She looks out for me style wise and I do the same for her. We'll always be there to give each other valuable advice when it comes to looking our best.

My mother always says she views the world with rose tinted spectacles and I

strongly agree.

It is a personality trait that I will never possess, but I see her attitude as a big beam of light into my monotone outlook on life and I would probably be the most miserable being without her.

I feel the key to a strong mother-daughter relationship is the sharing of individuality but also the mutual respect and support.

We should value the similarities that unite us through the DNA but also the differences, using them to make each other better women.

You'll be
Her first role model
Her first friend
Her first love
She is Your
Little girl

Lily Taylor

Instagram: @lily.alice_



INTRODUCING LE ROSE BEAUTY

Tranquil, rejuvenating and relaxing experience

The average mum gets just 17 minutes 'me time' to herself a day!

Jam-packed schedules, running around after the kids, managing work and doing the lion's share of the housework means the average mum gets less than an hour and a half all to herself each week.

Mums' 'me time' and those rare moments of peace are usually spent catching up on the latest soaps, watching TV in bed, reading or enjoying a well-earned HOT cup of tea.

I remember when I got my first full time job, I said to myself "Now that I am earning some reasonable money, I will try and go to a beauty salon for a relaxing massage every month". Fifteen years later and I am still 'trying'

Our hectic lives as mums and wives take over and our priorities change. We invest all our time and money into our family and home.

What if, each month we 'announced' that for one morning we invest in ourselves? I am willing to try it if you are.

I don't know about you, but I can never fully relax at home if I know there are chores still outstanding. So I would love to either go out on a mini shopping trip, book a beauty treatment at a salon, or even visit the gym.

My most recent relaxation was at Le Rose Beauty and it was exactly what I needed.

This hidden gem belongs to Kim, who is the owner of this little retreat, located right here in Rugby.

Le Rose Beauty offers all of the traditional beauty treatments in the comfort of your own home or you can pop over to Kim's home based beauty room.

From the moment you enter, you are made to feel at ease and welcomed in a comfortable setting.

I let out a little giggle when Kim offered me a pair of comfy sleepers to walk up the stairs in, to get to the treatment room. Any reservations you may feel about it not being a typical salon setting soon melt away when you enter the room, smelling the most amazing oils and hearing the relaxing music.

Le Rose Beauty treatments are done using products from the Tropic range and I was delighted with my back massage, drifting off to a relaxing sleep, completed with a little snore at the end.

Contact Kim at Le Rose Beauty

Call: 07551 405677

Facebook: @LeRoseBeautySalon

*Promote your business
as a Feature article or as an Advert*

Book your space for May & July 2018 NOW!
to advertise email: hello@sofyahq.co.uk

WEARABLE NAIL POLISH BOTTLE HOLDER

What is it?

Tweexy is the original wearable nail polish bottle holder. It simplifies the polishing process by eliminating the need for a flat surface to place your polish on and stops drips, spills and smudges.

Will it really hold all size bottles?

Yees, it really will. I tried most bottles I had and the only time it failed my bottle test was when I tried to use mini sample bottles. I found that lifting up some of the petals gives you even more extra support for round, tapered, and odd-sized bottles.

Nail polish is used by a whopping 71% of females: even more than lipstick!

Will it ruin my Mani when I take it off?

Nope! It doesn't go on and off like a ring. It has two little flaps on the side that open it up. When you squeeze the flaps, it opens up the finger holes, so you put it on and take it off from the top, and not from the front.

Will it fit my fingers?

"one size fits all" with Tweexy. It really fits any size as the bottoms of the finger holes are open, not closed.



Does it get in the way?

No, not at all. You might have to bring your hand closer to the body and lean forward a little to get to your little pinky. But it's not a big deal. It wouldn't put you in an uncomfortable position. You can also move Tweexy to other fingers, then move it back.

Where can you get one?

Tweexy sells through Amazon, so yay!

Give Tweexy a try with 'Boxes of Style'

Our friends at Blinka Distribution offering all Sofya Style 'Boxes of Style' subscribers their own Tweexy Nail Polish Bottle Holder!

Subscribe to 'Boxes of Style' to received more amazing products in our May 2018 issue

tweexy

The Original Wearable Nail Polish Holder

Please mention 'Sofya Style' when replying to adverts

From Coventry to Hollywood ...

CHAPTER TWO

I knew how drama had helped give me confidence as a child so, I applied to university to teach Theatre in Education. There was a slight snag in being accepted at university because I didn't have any qualifications - no 'O' or 'A' levels. But because I was 26 and a 'mature' student, and because I gave a convincing and passionate presentation about the need for self-expression in children, I was accepted for the following academic year. I had a year 'to kill' so I got a job as an au pair in Switzerland.

I was in charge of three children aged, 3, 6 and 8 and 'au pair' translated into parent/teacher/nanny/domestic servant! The parents actually treated me like a servant and did not include me as part of the family. From the window seat of my room in the attic, I had a wonderful view of Lake Zurich and the beautiful alps, and yet I was very miserable.

I made friends with a Canadian au pair, who was a nurse. Even though she worked for a lovely family we both realised that we needed to move on from cleaning floors and making cookies. So, we put on our backpacks and hit the road.

We got a ride with a couple of GIs who were stationed at a U.S. army hospital in Stuttgart. They said we could get work there.

They needed nurses so my friend was definitely in. "What do you do, ma'am?" the personnel lady at the hospital asked me. "I'm a secretary", I replied. "Great! We need a secretary on the drug abuse programme".

I spent the next six months working with drug-addicted American Vietnam war veterans - and never once typed a letter.

My first day on the job, a GI in army fatigues came into my office with a big, heavy plastic bag slung over his shoulder. "Are you the drug lady, ma'am?" I might have nodded. He dumped the bag on my desk and little plastic bottles filled with different shades of urine rolled out. The bottles were labeled with the names of soldiers from US army bases in the area.

I sent the samples off to an independent German lab for drug testing and when there were positive results, the soldiers were hospitalized. Then, every day heroin addicted soldiers came into the lab and peed in a bottle, supervised by the sergeant in charge. But because the sergeant was too embarrassed to do this, he looked away and the soldiers substituted someone else's urine.



Consequently, the drug abuse programme was a complete farce, as was the therapy group I was part of. I was appalled at the inhuman way the army psychiatrists dealt with the drug addicts, who were fresh out of Vietnam and traumatised from the horrors of war. I challenged the therapists method of below-the-belt therapy

Now here I was, a civilian, and speaking up against the 'system'. I did it because I cared about these young men and I thought of all the times I never spoke up because I didn't feel good enough. I was championing the underdog. But what gave me the courage to do that? Facing up to twelve so-called 'professionals in their field'? I simply listened to my gut instinct...my inner voice. I knew what I felt was right and I didn't care about the consequences for myself.

That was a turning point for me in my character development.

Being immersed in situations beyond my imagination gave me a thirst for discovering more. So, I gave up my position at Uni because it felt right to continue traveling.

There were more countries, jobs, and amazing experiences, including living with Palestinian Arabs in Israel. I was actually given hospitality by both Israelis and Arabs. Even though there was conflict in that country and I saw first-hand how the Arabs were being threatened on a daily basis, both cultures were nonetheless kind and gave me shelter. They didn't judge me.

We may not have spoken the same language, but because I was open, trusting and respectful of the people I met, they treated me the same way.

I was experiencing real life dramas on every level, so when I eventually made it to Hollywood, I was pretty much ready for anything!

HOLLYWOOD HERE I COME.....

Marie Rowe- Public Speaker
Email: mrowe97@gmail.com
www.marierowe.com



To feature your Inspiring story email: hello@safyahq.co.uk

A Change of Lifestyle

At the end of 2016 John told me, “We can't go on like this, Caroline.”

What did he mean? Did he want to break up after forty years?

I knew he'd been feeling down for many months. He'd been made redundant in May and spent every day since diligently looking for work. Although up-beat at first he became more and more disillusioned.

“Money's running out. We can't afford to keep paying this rent. We'll have to go and live in France,” he announced.

“And what are we going to live on out there?” I asked. “Sell the little house.”

The little house, was really little, which was why we were renting a larger house as I needed a workroom for my sewing business and John needed a study for his work. I really didn't want to sell it but I could not come up with a better suggestion.

We had sunk all our savings in 2004 into a property in the Ariège region of France. It consisted of two houses, two large barns and two acres of land. We had lots of stuff, clutter and furniture there which, if we were to put the French property on the market, would all have to be sold. Also we would need to renew the planning permission on the barns which had expired a few years previously. All this would take months, if not years and would need us to be there in France to arrange it.

Both houses were let to long term tenants and we soon discovered we couldn't get them out until their contracts were up, which was at least twelve months away. So what now?

Then one of those perhaps-it's-meant-to-be things occurred; I saw an advert for a house-sitter wanted, in the Ariège, for a year. We made contact with Colin, a semi-retired head teacher, who was going off to work in Africa to set up a new school.

He had a house, a gîte, and two cats to be cared for. So within three weeks we were on our way.

The biggest wrench for me was leaving our daughters and the grandchildren. I was also going to miss many good friends and the work I loved. The compensation was having the time to pursue other activities and hobbies.

I decided to start writing a regular blog, I made a good start on a novel, I found more time to paint, changing my medium from large acrylics to more manageable watercolours, and I began to take lots of photos of all the wonderful things around us. The scenery in the foothills of the Pyrenees was majestic.

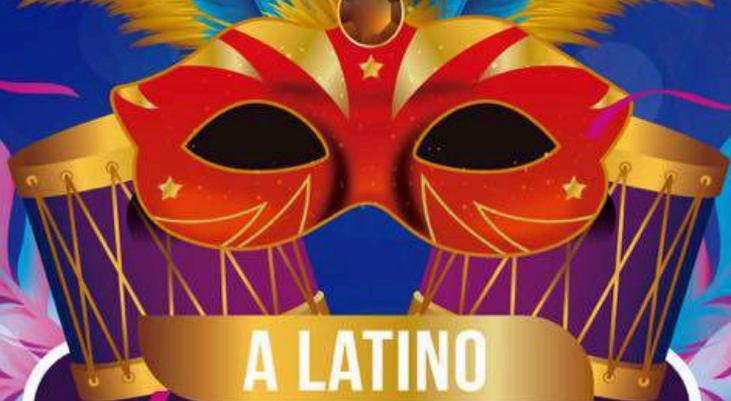
Ironically, although John has always been more eager than me to go to live in France, I believe I was the one who was the more contented for the year of 2017. I made a couple of good friends, and I kept myself very busy. John was simply biding his time until he could get into our own place and he could begin to work on the houses, the barns or the land.

We did however enjoy some wonderful days out at Toulouse, Carcassonne, Foix and the Mediterranean, as well as the fabulous Fêtes which occurred in a nearby town or village almost every weekend throughout the summer. All of this gave me oodles of pictures and copy for my blogs.

For anyone interested in seeing those photos or reading the varied experiences of Caroline and John, visit www.ariegeadventure.wordpress.com

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13 APRIL 2018

PRESENTING

VIRAMUNDO



FROM IDEA TO BUSINESS...

Katherine, what was your 'day job' before Panache Gift Baskets began?

Actually I still have a day job while running my own business. I am a Graphic Designer for a local business in Long Island, NY. It is a challenge to juggle both and I try my best to be able to focus on my business as much as I can, hence my sleepless nights.

How did Panache Gift Baskets idea start, what was the turning point?

The idea started thanks to my husband Al, he is the reason why I started Panache Gift Baskets.

Wait a minute, that was not your idea? Yup, that was not my idea at all! He knows that I love being creative and that I have always dreamt about having my own business. I remember telling him about how much time I have spent in a store, with no luck whatsoever, trying to find the perfect gift. I didn't want to settle with just a boring gift card. I wanted this gift to be meaningful and to show the love and appreciation I had for this person. I remember coming home really disappointed and frustrated that nothing met my expectations. He told me, "Instead of looking for one gift, why don't you gather some of the items you think she will like but also items that she will never get for herself?" that was my Aha moment.

I decided to search for handmade products and ended up putting together a basket with these items. I, of course, fell in love with the whole process. From carefully choosing each item, to finding items with the right color scheme; every single detail that adds up in order to create The Perfect Gift is what makes me happy. This is when, my husband encourage me to use the love and passion I have in designing gifts, to risk it all and create this small business of mine.

What was the first gift basket when you knew you wanted to do this forever? Your most memorable gift basket?

My most memorable gift basket was for a birthday and right after, a gift basket for a baby Christening. I then, started to create my own gift baskets for every special occasion.



What will be your 'Build-your-own' Panache Gift Baskets?

If I had to choose, I would build a pampering gift box for myself. I am obsessed with a rosé cider from Wölffer Estate located in The Hamptons, NY.

I will pair this rosé cider with one of our luxe flute glasses along with two bars of Milk Chocolate by Mast Brothers located in Brooklyn, NY. I will also add a sleep silk mask by ElizabethW and a light up a rose botanica gold tin candle by Brooklyn Candle Studio also located in Brooklyn, NY. Every woman needs to be pampered once in a while, and this selection does just that.

How do you balance work and home life? What is your secret?

To be honest, I am still figuring all out! It is not easy at all. There are definitely some days when I ask myself, "what did you get yourself into?" but I think because I love what I do, that makes it easier. The only thing that I noticed that works for me is whenever I am doing something, whether is working as a graphic designer, setting up gifts or playing with my two year old son, I make sure I give my full attention. Otherwise I get to be distracted and end up not doing anything instead of trying to do everything.

Please share your biggest challenge in running your own business?

My biggest challenge is having to wear different hats. What I mean by this, is that I have to be the photographer in my business. I am also the marketing person, the designer for the website, the salesperson, the bookkeeper, and most importantly the gift wrapper! It is really hard when you start your own business and have no clue how things are supposed to be. It takes a person who is committed to succeed in order to figure it all out.

What is the most rewarding thing about being a business woman?

The most rewarding thing for me is to have a sense of accomplishment. I love when I reminiscence about the past and remember thinking that one day I will have my own business and now, it is real. I personally think that being able to do what you love and what you are passionate about is what pushes you to achieve your goals.

Please tell us about your typical day at Panache Gift Baskets' HQ?

I don't have a typical day but I always start my day with a cup of fresh brewed coffee while reading and answering emails. I make a list of all the to-dos for the day, just because I like to cross them off my list whenever I do them (sense of accomplishment right here). I will then hand pack each order and ensure they are ready to ship. In my spare time, that is, if I do get to have one, I will check my website and do an inventory check and also create marketing materials for the month.

How do you cope with the 'tricky' days at work?

I have noticed that whenever I am frustrated with something, I take a step back and if my son is around, which is mostly all the time, I start playing with him. He makes me forget about how frustrating I am by just being himself. When I feel better, I take a deep breath, go back and think about different ways to resolve it. Every problem has a solution. What matters is how you choose to face them.

What would you tell now to yourself as a 2015-self business starter?

Work hard, I know it is not easy, but it will get better. Don't give up, keep going until you reach what you want to reach. Don't worry, things will turn out how they are supposed to and at the end you will end up exactly where you are meant to be.



Katherine Faraday

www.panachegiftbaskets.com

hello@panachegiftbaskets.com

INSIDE A SHOWHOME...

About Crest Nicholson

Crest Nicholson is firmly established as a leading developer with a passion for not only building homes, but also for creating vibrant sustainable communities.

With a southern-based bias, the group has a track record spanning more than 50 years and a broad portfolio of developments which range in size and scale, from contemporary, large scale mixed-use developments to smaller, more traditional housing schemes.

As a pioneer of its own Garden Village principles, the Company advocates a holistic approach to development embracing social, environmental and economic factors to create homes for all segments of the community. These developments are founded on good design, high-quality green spaces, and the greater involvement of local people in both vision and longterm management.

What's behind door Number One?

Following the colour inspiration from Houlton Rugby development of oranges and blues, this striking 3-bed showhome is bursting with interesting features.

Front room's main attraction is the stunning bright orange sofa times two. Being a feature wall lover myself, it's great to see not one but two walls highlighted with the textured grey paper, as if framing each of the sofas.

Kitchen's interesting feature is the 'random number' clock with just a hint of 'colour pop' in all of the kitchen accessories.

Upstairs the stylish look continues. Three beautiful bedrooms are a perfect escape.

The main bedroom is luxurious, using softer version of the colour theme. Bright orange becomes goldie brown and blue turns into grey. The main feature is the most stunning exaggerated headboard.

Guest bedroom is both chic and versatile, it includes a slim-line glass top desk for any of your hardworking visitors.



What's behind door Number Two?

You will love the modern feel of this home. Calming tones of greys and cream with just a hint of bright green are great in the front room. The combination of a large sofa and two chairs is both stylish and practical.

The days of boring bookcases are long gone!

Try a sleek art-deco metal shelving unit which truly stands out.

Talking of 'no longer boring', hallway is not just a walk through and a utility room has a feature wall of its own!

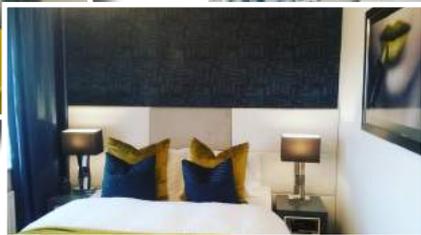
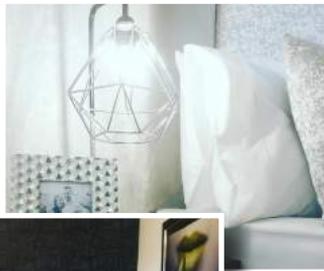
Don't be afraid to use statement wallpaper on your landing or in smaller spaces.

The trick is to pick the right size pattern appropriate to the size of the room- smaller rooms need medium to small pattern.



What's behind door Number Three?

This little gem is all about pushing boundaries! A wardrobe without doors, lampshade without a shade, full wall headboard and clashes of patterns and colours. See for yourself!





Shhhh.....

In this section of our magazine any topic is allowed.

So come on, Ladies, what would you like to discuss?

It could be a little bit of innocent gossip or a discussion on a current news topic. Perhaps a Q&A feature?

Please feel free to contact us by email on hello@sofyahq.co.uk to bring any suggestions and ideas.



"Everybody farts. It's a truth of life that society, for some weird reason, tries to get us to hide."

Well worry no more! My Shreddies has got you covered.

How do they work?

Shreddies flatulence filtering garments feature an activated carbon back panel that absorbs all flatulence odours. Due to its highly porous nature, the odour vapours become trapped and neutralised by the cloth, which is then reactivated by simply washing the garment. The Shreddies motto is 'Fart with confidence' and our garments ensure just that.

THE ORIGINAL

Shreddies

FLATULENCE FILTERING
UNDERWEAR

Can Shreddies stop the noise?

Shreddies are designed to absorb odours, not to muffle the sound. Most flatulence sufferers are able to control the noise by altering their body position.

Why are they called Shreddies?

Shreddies is a colloquial term for underwear originating in the British Forces and is well known throughout the Commonwealth. During long repeated marches and drills the underwear fibers would break down and 'shred' leaving them unusable.

Do you sell children's underwear?

Yes, we are happy to make bespoke underwear for children.

Find out more www.myshreddies.com

Email: enquiries@myshreddies.com

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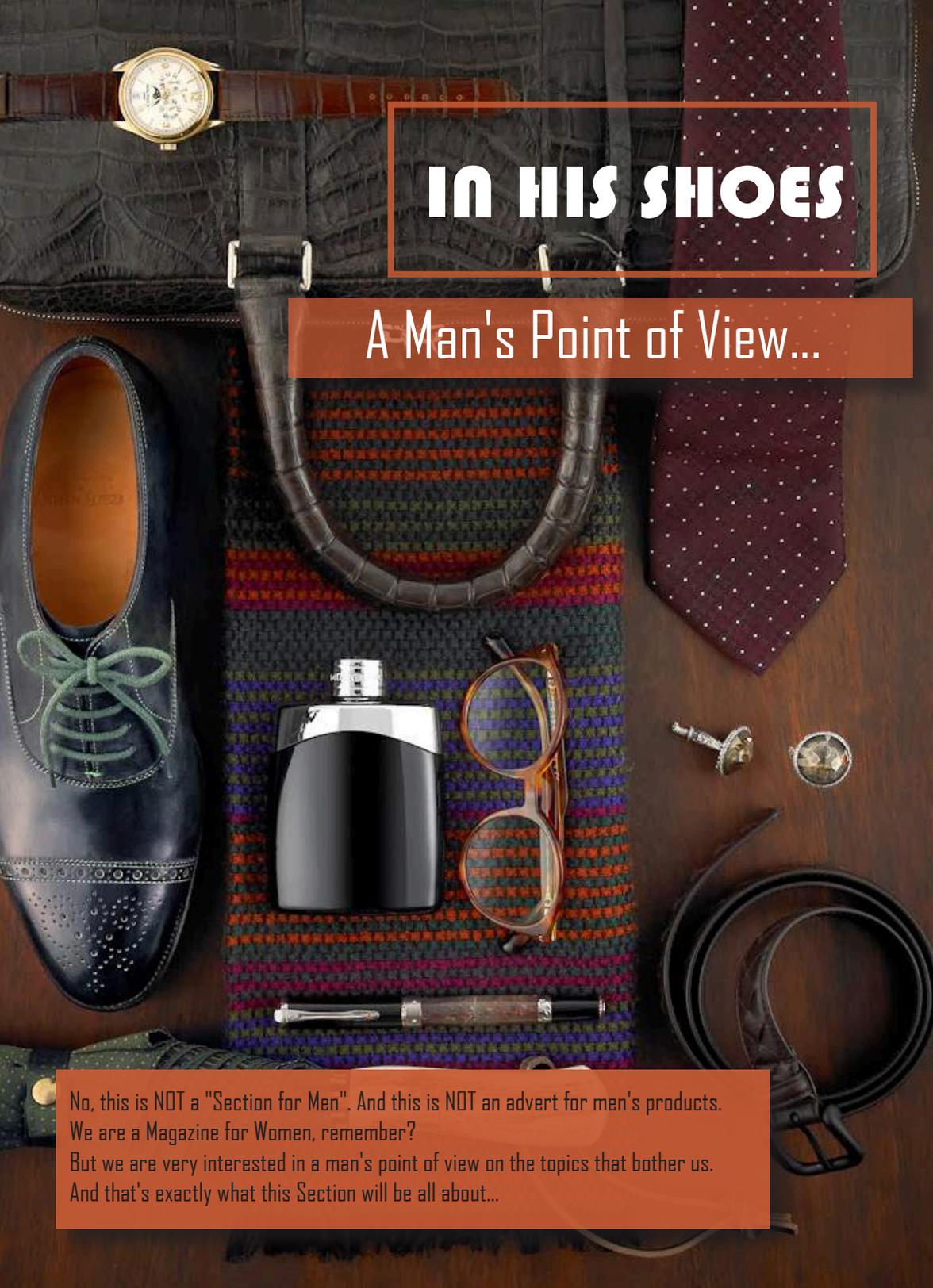
Shreddies

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...

Please mention 'Sofya Style' when replying to adverts

A top-down view of various men's accessories arranged on a dark wooden surface. At the top, a gold watch with a white dial and brown leather strap lies horizontally. Below it, a dark crocodile-patterned bag is partially visible. To the left, a dark blue leather oxford shoe with light green laces is shown. In the center, a black and silver perfume bottle sits on a colorful, multi-colored striped fabric. To its right are a pair of brown-rimmed glasses. Further right, a dark purple tie with white polka dots is folded. At the bottom right, a black leather belt is coiled. A fountain pen with a wooden barrel and silver accents lies horizontally at the bottom center. Two cufflinks are also visible near the glasses.

IN HIS SHOES

A Man's Point of View...

No, this is NOT a "Section for Men". And this is NOT an advert for men's products. We are a Magazine for Women, remember? But we are very interested in a man's point of view on the topics that bother us. And that's exactly what this Section will be all about...



Networking Mummies UK Ltd

Networking Mummies UK Ltd was founded in Dorset eight years ago with their headquarters now being based in Warwickshire. They have branches popping up all across the UK, connecting families in business with FREE networking events and affordable workshops and other events giving mums and the dads in business to ability to connect face to face and online.

This really is an amazing resource that enables small business owners to reach their potential by tapping into a network of local people facing similar challenges.

Networking Mummies 5th National Recognition Business Awards 2018



'Sofya Style' magazine is proud to play a part in supporting this amazing network of small businesses and business owners.

This year we will be sponsoring

'Business Mum of the Year'

Macdonald Burlington Hotel
Burlington Arcade, 126 New Street
B2 4JQ
Birmingham
19 May, Saturday 7pm

Raising funds for The Brain Tumour Charity (www.thebraintumourcharity.org)

WHAT'S INSIDE MAY 2018 EDITION?



May 2018

"Getting married in the morning"

"Keep calm I'm getting married"

Unknown

Our May issue will be devoted to real weddings, brides, Mother of the Bride and Groom, fashion and beauty for the Big day AND
If we were invited to the Royal Wedding, WHAT WOULD WE WEAR?