

Stepping Into the Frame

"You don't have to know exactly where you're going to take the next step."

For much of her marketing and communications career, Candace Johnson has been the person behind the work. She has built campaigns, shaped stories, and helped organizations communicate with the communities they serve. She has spent years helping organizations find their voice, never imagining she would one day be searching for her own.

For years, she was content helping others tell their stories.

Eventually, she realized her own was changing too.

"I've always been behind the scenes," she says. "I feel like I'm ready to be in the forefront. I want to be leading people."

For Candace, stepping forward isn't about visibility for its own sake. It's about recognizing that the role she'd outgrown wasn't her job. It was the version of herself that had become comfortable staying behind it. Whether that next chapter leads her to building her own marketing agency or stepping into a future leadership role within a corporate or nonprofit organization, she's realized the common thread isn't the title. It's the opportunity to lead with intention, curiosity, and purpose.

That realization didn't arrive overnight. It was shaped by years of proving herself, working in spaces where younger professionals were often underestimated and where marketing was reduced to "just posting on social media," despite the strategy, creativity, and responsibility the work actually demands. It grew stronger as she began noticing how often women convince themselves they need one more credential, one more year of experience, or one more person's approval before believing they belong at the table.

Candace knows that feeling well.

"I question myself all the time," she admits. "I question my path in life all the time."



She decided to go back to school at a time when the world had suddenly stopped.

The job market was uncertain. The future she'd spent years preparing for no longer looked the way she'd imagined.

She remembers asking herself a question she never expected to ask.

"Should I even have gone back to school?"

Today, she can look back on that season with a different perspective.

"I'm learning to just cancel the noise," she says.

It's a lesson she's still practicing. The woman who once questioned whether she'd chosen the right path is now preparing to lead others through theirs. Not because she has every answer, but because she's no longer waiting to feel completely ready before taking the next step.

Today, that lesson is shaping far more than her career.

Motherhood has changed the way she defines success. Therapy has challenged her to examine old patterns. She's intentionally making room for the parts of herself that existed before expectations took over—trying new things, spending time alone, reconnecting with simple joys, and giving herself permission to imagine a future that isn't defined only by productivity.

"I'm finding this new version of myself," she says.

Then she talks about her daughter.

She hopes she'll grow up believing she can explore every part of who she is. That she won't be afraid to try something new, change directions, or discover a path that looks different from the one she first imagined.

She isn't only creating that future for her daughter.

She's creating it for herself.

Before our conversation ends, I ask Candace what she hopes another woman gives herself permission to do after reading her story.

She doesn't hesitate.

"Just go for it," she says. "Even if you don't feel qualified... you just never know what kind of doors can open for you."

Then she leaves one final thought.

"Take up space."

Watching her describe the future she wants for her daughter, it's hard not to notice she's describing the future she's beginning to imagine for herself.

One where she keeps exploring.

Keeps choosing curiosity.

Keeps saying yes to the parts of herself she hasn't met yet.

What part of your life is asking you to step into the frame?

This is Candace. This is SAR.