

FemaleGang



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Living With Lupus

I was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, commonly known as Lupus, at the young age of 23. I had just graduated college and recently started my first “real job”. When you finish college, you have all of these plans, hopes, and dreams for your career and your life. But you can never prepare for an autoimmune disease. My life changed drastically in a matter of months. Lupus is an autoimmune disease in which the body’s immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissue in many parts of the body. Common symptoms include joint pain, fever, chest pain, hair loss, mouth ulcers, fatigue, rashes, and more. I lost the color in my olive skin, my weight started to fluctuate, and I wanted to sleep all of the time. I was in so much pain and I started to lose the me that everyone once knew. The worst part is that there is no cure. How could this happen to a bright-eyed, ambitious 23-year-old? It just did not seem fair.

My life was completely interrupted. It took several years, countless doctor’s visits, and numerous medications for me to start feeling like my old self. Lupus is a devastating, soul-crushing disease. But I am here to tell you that there is hope. Now while there is no cure yet, there are ways to manage the symptoms; and there is a chance of remission, which is a period of time where your symptoms lie dormant. I am beyond delighted to share that at almost 29 years old, I entered remission. I do not know how long I will be in this state, but I can tell you that I do not take it for granted. I have been fighting like hell for my life since I was 23. I know that each person with Lupus is different, but I would like to share with you what worked for me.

My biggest piece of advice is that you have to be selfish; put yourself first! Do not feel guilty when you have to cancel plans with friends or family or have to call in sick to work. Your biggest priority in life is to stay healthy as possible. I’ve lost friends and jobs because of my disease but it all led me to bigger and better jobs, and to real friends. Second, I recommend you find a good exercise routine. I know it is hard when you are in pain but try to do something light and easy. Find something that works for you because exercise really does help you heal. My next piece of advice for you, is to maintain a healthy diet. I am not saying you have to go on an extreme vegan, plant-based diet; do what suits you. For me, I cut out red meat and dairy. I also only buy organic products. I see a huge difference in how I feel when I eat organic and healthy vs. when I eat fast food. Next, you have to de-stress as much as possible! I am a type-A, anxious person, so this was very hard for me. Whether it’s yoga, meditation, or a stroll on the beach, find a way to get rid of any stress you may have. Stress will definitely put you in a full-on flare. Last but not least, create a support system made up of family and friends. When you surround yourself with loving, caring people who help you during your dark times, the dark times are not as bad.

Lupus sucks. But you are strong and powerful, and you will get past your bad days; I promise.

Lauren Misa



The Football Influence

I often get asked, “what was is like growing up in a football family?” My dad has been coaching for as long as I can remember and honestly I couldn’t imagine my life without football. Having a football coach for a dad is kind of like being an army brat. At the end of your childhood many places can be called home. Since I was born my dad has coached for the Clemson Tigers, Ole Miss Rebels, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Dallas Cowboys, San Diego Chargers, and currently the Oakland Raiders.

Moving from Oxford, Mississippi to Tampa, Florida was probably the biggest earth quake in my young life. My parents sat us all down, me and my three siblings, and told us that we would be moving to Florida. Despite how all of us felt it was happening. The first year in Tampa was filled with lots of challenges. We lived in a two-bedroom apartment, my grandfather passed away, and my brother and I were nearly failing out of 2nd and 3rd grade, and my oldest sister was attending her freshman year of college away from us in Arkansas.. Dad’s alarm went off at 4 am every day that season and we often didn’t see him until after 8pm. He was working all of the time. This was also the year the Tampa Bay Buccaneers won the Superbowl under Coach Jon Gruden’s direction. As of today, dad is one of the most respected coaches in the league with a collective 16 years in the NFL. This is not daughterly bias, it is fact; ask anyone who has played for him.

I’m happy to say that the family hurdles of that year were muffled by the winning of games and astrengthened bond. It was because of dad’s work ethic example and mom’s support that I was able to get a handle on school. Eventually, after a lot of studying and some help from friends in the football world, I was accepted into the University of Alabama. My college job was working in the recruiting office. This was a place of comfort since I had been around football my whole life up to that point. My day-to-day was sending out mail to the recruits, Facebook messages, making sure the coaching staff had everything they needed for road trips, and preparing for official visits and game days. Official visits and game days were basically little events I helped plan. From the time they flew into Alabama to what they had for dinner, hotel rooms, tours of the school, stadium, facility- we planned it all. One of my favorite roles was working the youth football camp in the summers. Being around the little ballers was quite rewarding.

After graduation, I worked for a start-up company called Rocksolid. This was my first “real” job. To make it simple we sold soft-shell helmets to youth, high school, colleges, and even some professional teams. It was encouraging to help push what started from one idea, one invention to a full-fledged business equipping teams across the country. It was the relationships I formed being a coach’s kid, at BAMA, and working on location at the Star that lead to my current job as an executive assistant for the Dallas Cowboys. Thankfully, I now have the experiences of working with every stage of entrepreneurship. All the while I’ve been taking notes from great female role models such as my first boss, Chief of Staff, Izzy Murdy, to my current boss, Executive Assistant to Jerry Jones Jr., Erin Boyd.

I see my current position as an opportunity to put my skills and experiential knowledge to good use. I basically make someone else’s life easier and business run smoother. Through my journey of jobs and my upbringing around football, I have discovered that this is what I’m good at and what I love to do.



Madeline Bisaccia, 24



You Weren't Born To Just Pay Bills and Die

Growing up I was very fortunate to have experiences in other places. My dad's job had us moving to new places and even gave us the chance to venture out a couple times a year. Whether it was summers in Myrtle Beach, SC, road trips through the Buffalo Hills, ND or skiing in Beaver Creek, CO my parents always seem to save up and allow us to share these amazing experiences together. These childhood memories sparked a love for travel!

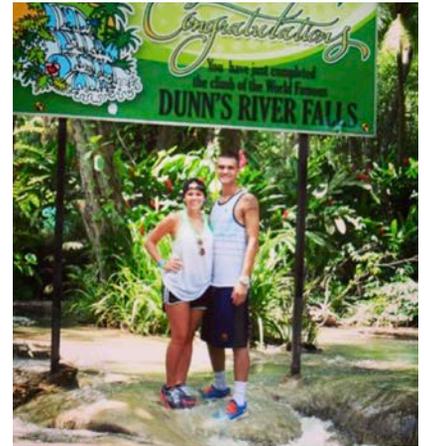
In college, I worked, saved and paid off my first big trip. I traveled for a month in Europe through EF College Break tours. My group traveled to over 5 countries and countless cities in a month time. I experienced mouthwatering meals, views that pictures could never do justice, and diverse culture of religion, living, and music. I knew as an adult I wanted to continue to travel and share experiences with my family and loved ones.



After my husband and I moved in together to our small one bedroom apartment, the traveling itch was in full effect. Getting my hubby on a plane for the first time, we headed to New York City for Christmas! If you look ahead for Christmas you can usually find a good deal on flights to NYC and we stayed with family which helped with the budget.

We enjoyed all the touristy things: lights, food, Central Park, the Rockefeller tree, and even a tour around Harlem (in a blizzard might I add). Next, we were off to Jamaica for our first all inclusive experience! We booked a total package- flights & hotel for under 2k (it can be done people). We stayed in Runaway Bay, Jamaica and baked in the sun with rum punch and Pina colodas. We snorkeled, kayaked, and played beach soccer with locals. And if you ever do Jamaica, Dunn's River Falls is a must! If we aren't posted up on the beach, you can find us in the mountains! We have ventured to Gatlinburg, TN where we hiked the smokies and to the Nantahala, where we camped & white water rafted for the first time! Each experience memorable and pointing us to the next place to go!

In the fall or as we call it- football season, our biggest mission is to get to as many games as we can while seeing new places! We cheered on teams & experienced new stadiums while in Alabama, Miami, Dallas, and even Green Bay! When we aren't catching a game, you can find us in Las Vegas, NV! (shop frontier for as low as 39\$ flights) you won't find us in the luxurious clubs, but enjoying 2\$ beers & 4\$ margaritas at Casino Royale and sweating parley bets in the sports books! In between bets, there is always somewhere to walk to and beautiful hotels to see! Don't miss the Bellagio water show and for the ladies the Cosmopolitan hotel! Note-as soon as you check into your Vegas hotel get a players card and put everything on it. This will get you points and the next time you return your stay can be as cheap as free!



Once we got engaged, our traveling went on hiatus, but not for long. We were saving up and paying off the most epic honeymoon you could imagine! We used a travel agent (at no cost) and planned a two week trip to Europe- Rome, Greece, & the Amalfi Coast. The only thing we paid up front was our plane tickets (that's the big expense), everything else took a deposit, including cruise and hotels and allowed us to pay it over the year! We also did the new trendy honeyfund, which allowed people to help fund our stay & extra excursions. In Rome we toured the Coliseum & Vatican City (viatour.com) and pigged out on gourmet pizza and pasta with wine every night! We trained to Venice, where we caught our week cruise around the Greek Isles. We visited Corfu, Santorini, Mykonos, and Olympia. We swam in crystal clear water, hiked a volcano, lounged in beach cabanas, and stood where the first Olympic Games were held! Once our magical cruise ended, we trained from Venice to Naples where we finished our honeymoon in the most beautiful place on earth- The Amalfi Coast. We stayed in a quaint hotel in Positano looking over the water! Of course we continued to eat and drink our way through town and even took a day trip to the island of Capri. Our honeymoon would be hard to top!



Fast forward two years, married and expecting the arrival of our son! Don't panic, your dreams of travel don't stop because you have kids, it just means you have more people to share your experiences with! So after a year of the work grind and raising our little boy, my husband came up with our next crazy adventure. By June we had sold our house and by the end of July we were on a plane to Costa Rica to work remotely and to live and travel through Central America for the year!

We started in Manuel Antonio, where we enjoyed beautiful dinner views, the National Park, hidden beaches and great surf! During our two month stay, we did a few weekend trips to Jaco, Dominical, and Uvita. All had wonderful sites to see, such as long rocky beaches, jungles, and waterfalls. We traveled using the local bus which made it super cheap. After Costa, we headed to Panama for the month. We took a roadtrip around the country, staying in Panama City, Santa Catalina, Boca del Toro, and Sante Fe. We enjoyed the city parades, the waves on the west coast to the blue water islands on the east. Once our road trip was over, we flew back to Costa Rica and headed north to cross the border into Nicaragua.

Currently living in San Juan Del Sur, Nicaragua. Home of 20 plus beaches. We spend days with little work and sand between our toes. SJDS gives you cheap living with beautiful views and culture. The town is small and is considered an expat community with many English speakers and as well as helpful Nicas. Spend your days fishing, hiking, swimming, surfing, or simply relaxing with a 1\$ Tona in hand while the sun sets!

Of course they are things we miss from the states, but traveling has given my family lifetime experiences and humbled us as well. I encourage whoever has the itch to travel, to just do it! You are always going to make money and you can't take it with you when you go! So travel the world and see what life has to offer! Next stop Indonesia!



Follow @el_nino_gringo

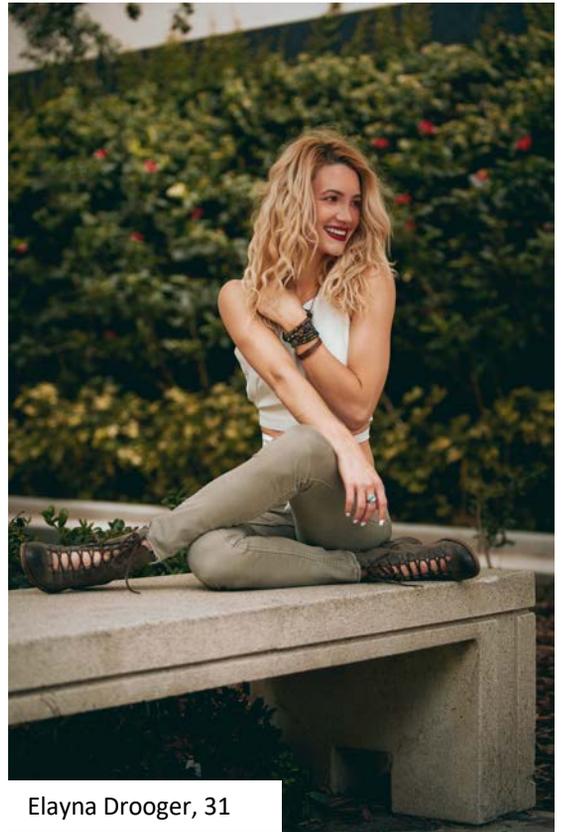
Life as an Artist

Elayna Clair Drooger is a crazy cat lady and health fanatic, there's no denying that; but she has also led a life of which most artists only dream. Throughout the years, she has been signed by a plethora of dance, film, and modeling agencies as well as sold her personal work in various art shows. She is a multi-talented woman who plays a number of instruments and also sings. Despite what may from the outside appear a sparkling life, she has struggled to always see the beauty. However, much like a butterfly, what she once felt was dark, now glistens in the light.

Elayna Clair was born in Houston, TX to Jayne Drooger and Joseph O'Malley. The merging of the names of her grandmother and grandfather derived the name, Elayna, and Clair, inspired by Clair De Lune. As a child, if she wasn't climbing trees or playing with animals, she could be found singing, dancing, or drawing. Her love of art and performance allowed her to escape into a world of her own. This wildly colorful imagination is expressed in her mixed media art, of which she recently presented her 7th showcase, with another right around the corner. She mainly enjoys working with acrylic, ink, and paint pens and finds herself inspired by a few of the greats such as Salvador Dali, H. R. Giger, and Alex Grey. Most of her pieces don't start with a solid plan, as she prefers to let the brush take the lead. Clair has been known to do commission work as well. You can find some of her work on her Instagram, posted below.

Her burning desire to perform was recognized early by her mother who encouraged her to attend theatre and chorus lessons. This eventually led to her capturing parts in local plays and two prominent theater companies as she reached her teens. Finding herself more entrenched in the scene, more people suggested she begin modeling. Clair, in spite of her "supermodel looks", felt intimidated and had no eagerness to be sucked into what she felt was a materialistic world. Her mother finally convinced her to visit an agency at 15, where her catwalk proved she was a natural. Although she did not sign right away and struggled to find confidence in herself, she did audition and worked with multiple agencies starting in her twenties. Since then she has worked as a hair, fitness, body-paint, runway, high-fashion, commercial, and promotional model.

In her adolescence, Clair also trained in ballet, which was fueled by her fiery passion for music. During her teens, she discovered music festivals, which gave her the freedom to dance and move without judgment. As she would bare her heart in front of others, she felt emboldened to try it professionally. Supported by friends in her twenties, she auditioned for various clubs and venues before being signed to Platinum Entertainment and later, Forte Entertainment. She has displayed her prowess regularly since 2012 as a Go-Go dancer, a festival character performer and Vegas-Style Showgirl for corporate events and private parties.



Elayna Drooger, 31



Although her love for dance remains strong, these days Clair has chosen to focus more of her energy into acting. Clair has participated in a number of local productions and is currently wrapping up her first feature film. Her favorite character she has played so far is Punk Rock Girl because she was given the freedom to create her character's entire wardrobe from head to toe and personify the words of wisdom throughout the film. However, she is greatly looking forward to playing more fierce and audacious kind of roles, similar to the style of Uma Thurman's character in Kill Bill. In 2018, she signed with her first film agency, Brevard Talent where she hopes to continue gaining knowledge of the industry and pursue her newest career.

What seems like a picture-perfect life in the spotlight, did not always glitter like gold. Clair did face extreme difficulties in her career and personal life, which have greatly molded her into the strong woman she is now. Through many dark moments and tribulations, she was forced to fight for the life she knew she deserved. Her friends and family refer to her as a free spirit, "a butterfly that could not be caught", but self-doubt truly weighed her down. She is a classic reminder that even the most beautiful people can have despair.

Just five years ago, Clair finally found herself caught...in the arms of a good man. He is the kind of man who when she felt like nothing, opened her eyes to the beauty in her everything. Rather than believing her worth was small, she was reintroduced to her big soul. With time, she welcomed the sun again and found solace in her art. She started to once again feel the freedom and joy of when she danced as a child. Like so many of us, she allowed societal expectations and childhood trauma to hinder her, but she finally said, "No more." Clair remembered that in order to be that dazzling butterfly, she must break free of her cocoon.

This revelation has been the inspiration behind her butterfly logo, which she signs on each piece of art. She thrives and shines today in Tampa, FL with her wonderful boyfriend and their three cats. Clair has started a new journey where she embraces the beauty of nature, of her work, but most importantly, the beauty within herself.

In order to follow more of her story and where she'll be performing, check out her social media pages:

INSTAGRAM: @elaynaclair
@elaynaclaircreations

PATREON: <https://www.patreon.com/elaynaclair>

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/elaynaclair/>

Written By: Emily Beck



Saving Memories



MOM.
BOSS.

Remember the days when you had a camera with a roll of film? You had exactly 36 pictures for that roll of film. The excitement of picking up your envelope of pictures was second to none. As technology has evolved we are now able to take thousands of pictures and have access to all of them in just seconds. Not only can we take as many pictures as we want we can edit and filter them and upload them onto a social media platform and share it with so many people at once. While this is great, we are losing out on some of my favorite childhood pastimes; looking through photo albums. There is nothing quite like holding a picture in your hand and remembering when and where you were when that photo was taken. Many of us have thousands of pictures on our phones, computers and even more stored in a cloud somewhere. But how often do we actually open those files and relive the memories we have saved? How many of us have taken a lavish vacation and have no physical pictures from the trip?

I want to encourage everyone to continue to print these memories and cherish them as a keepsake. One day our kids and grandkids will want to see our prom pictures, our wedding pictures and our vacations. What better way to bond than over a family album?

Personally I make a family yearbook every year. Throughout the year I upload pictures straight from my phone to Shutterfly. I work on it a little each month and at the end of the year I print out a 12 x12 family photo album filled with our adventures, birthdays and memories.

Gabby Arbelaez

Frickin Fabulous Business

My name is Emily Frick, I am a wife, mom, Jesus lover, coffee enthusiast, thrifty chic and the owner of Frickin Fab Furniture and Décor. I am the one who turns your outdated, unwanted or slightly damaged furniture and home décor into CASH. Sounds great, right? It truly is! I love the life I have built. However, it wasn't always like this and the path to get here was not covered with roses and daisies.



Emily Frick, 30

I got married naively at the age of 21...what can I say? Young dumb love got the best of me. I wanted the perfect life and family and decided I was going to put all of my goals and aspirations to the side and work towards building a home and starting a family. Those dreams ended quickly with a divorce after a little over a year. I found myself at almost 23...lost, confused and finally realizing I hadn't done anything to set myself up to succeed.

Now, before you throw me a pity party, here is what is different about me. Even though I had no stability, no career, no goals, no dream....yet....I knew that no matter what I was going to be the boss. I was going to run something, somewhere and I was going to run it well! My mother always told me I should be a lawyer because I had a stubborn and determined personality and she knows me very well. When I set my mind on something, come hell or high water I am going to do it.

One thing I was determined to do was have the flexibility and freedom to pursue whatever this "something" was. So that meant I didn't have time for a full time job. I had to figure this out. So I worked 5 part-time jobs. Sometimes in order to be successful you have to own your flaws and I knew mine: I am hard headed and don't like to be told what to do. I know who I am and unfortunately I have to own that one.

As crazy as this may sound, at one point, after my divorce, I found myself living with my parents and working 5 part time oddball jobs to make ends meet while trying to figure out what my future was going to look like. I was working at a law office, a real estate office, and a church, pressure washing driveways and painting furniture.

While juggling my 5 jobs I reconnected with my childhood friend, Adam (who is now my husband of 5 years). Adam was a dreamer and had lots of ideas and dreams about future businesses and one of those innovative minds. (Super attractive quality...wink wink) One night while at dinner we were dreaming about what was next and I told him I loved all of my jobs for different reasons but wasn't sure which direction to go. So after a long discussion we pulled out the white board from the garage and wrote it all out...I am a super visual person. So we listed the pros and cons of each job as well as the potential with each job.

I bet you are one of those people that stay awake at night analyzing and wondering what your niche should be. But if you think you are struggling...I need you to know I was the definition of confused and unsure. I had 5 part time jobs and loved different things about each one but I had no idea which one was the rest of my life. I was bouncing back and forth and was literally a hot mess!

So we weighed and analyzed the pros and cons on the white board and it came out looking like this...

Most Potential: Law office, maybe going back to school to become a paralegal

Most Exhausting: Pressure Washing...we live in Florida and its hot and hard work

Most Predictable: Church...not a lot of

opportunity to be the boss unless you are a Pastor or Jesus..., which I am not...obviously

Most Unpredictable: Real Estate...the market dictates the industry...it is great or not

Most Unlikely: Painting furniture could never be a full time job or so it seemed

So based on these conclusions we narrowed it down to two things. I liked Real Estate and worked hard to study and get my license. It was something I could do part-time for friends and family and make decent income. And I loved painting furniture and staging with home décor so I was going to keep doing that...somehow...not sure how that was going to play out.

So that is what I started working towards. I knew with those two things I would have freedom and money and it would work out perfect. I know I know you are thinking what the heck??? How do you think this is actually going to work...

Wait for it... So Adam and I finally did it...we got married and we did what every young married couple dreams of...we bought a house! I don't know if you have ever been married but we were newly weds on a budget. So when we purchased our home obviously the only thing on my mind was furniture and home décor and setting it all up. Nesting and shopping and putting together my dream home. I took my husband to pottery barn and restoration hardware and showed him all of the things I wanted and needed and you know what he said...there is no way we can afford any of this. SO in my stubbornness and my well you just wait attitude, I found a way. I went to the estate sales, garage sales, thrift stores, parents garages and even some consignment stores and found piece by piece all of the things to furnish my home. My husband was very concerned when I started bringing home all of this ugly furniture and putting it in our garage. I knew how to strip and paint and roped in my mom and mother in law to help.



So I put my skills to the test and went to work. Since our house had no furniture in it I decided to strip and sand the pieces down in the house (remember we live in Florida and it is hot and muggy in the garage) After lots of long nights lying on the floor with a sander, these pieces started to look like my dream pieces. Once our house was complete, I wasn't ready to be done because I was addicted. Addicted to the inspiration, addicted to visiting these small local furniture stores and addicted to turning unwanted stuff into treasure.

This stuff was fun, so I kept going to these local stores even after I was done. Adam and I would spend our Saturday afternoon walking these shops and admiring all of the amazing creativity...I would say we could do that and maybe one day we could do this. Adam was a trooper.

So one day while we were making our rounds through the small furniture shops, coffee in hand of course, I started talking with the girl behind the counter and asked the question...so where does all of this furniture and décor come from and she said this store consisted of many different vendors who rented booth spaces. What? Booth spaces? For real?

Have you ever heard of booth spaces in a store?

Never did I ever realize all these stores were a bunch of different businesses with their own stuff just collaborating. Booth space in boutique stores that allowed little people (maybe even me) who had hobbies or addictions like rehabbing furniture the opportunity to showcase and sell. This was PERFECT. This was finally it! This was the opportunity I had been waiting and searching for. It all made perfect sense. And you know how passionate and excited we women get when we feel like we found something that is more than just a passion project!



So I got in the car with Adam and unloaded all of my joy and excitement on him. I found my dream, I knew exactly what I wanted to do! I wanted to rehab furniture and resell it through a booth space in one of my favorite stores! My husband and I stayed up all night coming up with silly names and drawing logos and we could see it! I was going to wake up super early, grab coffee, and go down and find out which booth space was going to be mine.

I pulled into the parking lot 15 minutes before they opened and was waiting when the front door got unlocked. I said to the lady working, Hi! This is my favorite store and I paint furniture and want to rent a space! Do I need a license? I redid all of the furniture in my house and I am ready to do this! She smiled and said that's great, but we have a long waiting list and spaces almost never open up. So I will add your name to the list but you should check back in 6 months.

I went home feeling discouraged and defeated. I was so sad. The kind of sad you get when you feel like you have found your passion and purpose and the perfect opportunity and God slams the door and says nope, not now. It is so easy to throw in the towel at this point but I am so thankful that I have a God that speaks to me and tells me to slow down. We can all get excited and jump at the first opportunity that comes to us and I can be impulsive and God was speaking to me and telling me NOT NOW but maybe in 6 months. This was so cool that God was leading me in this moment. I was sad but excited...I don't know what I was...just a hot mess of emotions. So I continued to work my odd jobs and wait for the phone to ring. I knew I was going to be waiting for a while so I just kept dreaming and planning. Within a week, the shop owner called! And of course I said YES!

It was move in day! I loaded up my car and went to set up my booth space. After 8 hours of work I took a step back and was not feeling it at all. Month 1 was mediocre and didn't even come close to covering my expenses. Great dream but no money so far.

I couldn't figure out why my stuff wasn't selling. So I started looking at the other booths in the shop and emulated their styles and their staging. They were selling...no need to reinvent the wheel...maybe it was really that simple. This was just a starting point to help me discover my style.

And you know what...it totally worked! I started selling...

It is so important to observe success. It is a humbling process but I was not an expert...I had no idea what I was doing. All of the girls in the shop were so nice and they were happy to offer advice on staging and pricing. And the more I did it and the more I asked questions, the more I learned and soaked up from these seasoned vendors.



After 6 months of running my booth space, I was ready for more space. I had mastered this little 10 x 10 room and was ready for more. I went to Jennifer and told her I think I am ready for a bigger space. Is there anything available? She said yes! Again, totally caught me off guard...I was thinking that this would just be a little seed planted and maybe in a few months something might open up. She said do you want it? And I immediately said Absolutely! On my drive home...I started to think about a space 3 times the size of the one I had. Can I afford this? What if I don't sell? What if this doesn't work? I was still learning and was I ready for this? Would I take on this huge space and then fail? I just pictured myself swimming in a deep deep hole of debt hoping this would maybe work. Ugh...

I went home and slept on it, prayed about it and woke up feeling very at peace. You will never know until you try! God has got this! There is nowhere to go but up and I was loving every second of this adventure. The worst thing that could happen is I move into this new big space realize I am in over my head and ask if I can have a smaller space. This was an opportunity to triple my sales, perfect my craft, make a name for my business and it was time to take a leap of faith.

After settling into my larger space I sat back and watched the dollars roll in. Sale after sale after sale, I couldn't keep furniture in my space. It was so excited to have my phone ring multiple times a day as the store called to tell me I sold another piece.

Wow, I actually think I know what I am doing. And I want more! I want more space and more sales. I could actually be not only profitable but start to build wealth and financial security for my family. I decided I needed to immerse myself in everything going on at the shop. I wanted to add shop girl to my list of part time jobs. I didn't want to do this for the money, but for the ability to do market research and learn what customers are looking for...what they spend time looking at when they walk through the shop. What makes them decide to buy that piece. What keeps them from buying a piece. I wanted to become an expert stylist and merchandiser for furniture and home décor. When you walked into this store I wanted you to feel like you were walking into your favorite home magazine.

Being a shop girl was the best! I came in with a smile on my face and talked to people all day long about their home and furniture and projects they were working on...it was so great! Retail was fun and retail in a furniture store was even more fun! The owner quickly started to realize that I brought a fresh energy and bright light to the shop and it was leading to more and more sales.

Now the store was on a block in South Tampa with 2 other furniture and home décor stores and from a business perspective I assumed being next door to the competition was the worst thing ever but I couldn't have been more wrong. Come to find out these other businesses were my friends and having all three stores together created a destination for furniture and home décor. You thrived off of each other's marketing tactics and everyone parked their cars and walked through all 3 stores. Collaboration is way better than competition! If one store had a sale, we all had a sale! There is plenty of people and plenty of business for everyone.

At this point I was a year in and had built a great relationship with the owner and spent a lot of time at the shop even when I was not working because I just loved being there! I was constantly looking for ways to help and grow the business because I was an excited fiery ball of passion. This store was unique and had character and all I wanted to do was be a part of it.



In talks one day with the owner, I mentioned wanting a larger space. That's when she let me down hard. She said Emily, I have to be honest with you. The only larger space I have is in my other store and as much as I want you to thrive I am looking at letting that store go. It has spread me too thin and is no longer what it used to be. There just aren't enough hours in the day to keep up with it all. So I can't make any promises...I just don't know what I am going to do yet.

I swear to you, I could have cried. I went home that night and whined to my husband about how I wanted more space and wanted to help Jennifer so bad. I hated that she was struggling with this and went in to fix it mode trying to figure out what I could do. As I rambled on and on...I do this a lot...pray for my husband...Adam looked at me with a straight face and said why don't you just ask her if we can take over the store?

My jaw dropped and I LIT UP with excitement! Why didn't I think of that? All of a sudden I was dreaming of signs and marketing campaigns, ways to brighten the store and what this conversation would look like. How do I even ask that question? Well I am not exactly a wait and see kind of gal. I texted her that night, way past the time anyone should contact someone...but I couldn't help myself. After an hour of texting back and forth it seemed like it was pretty much a GO! Who would have thought? I went from booth space to shop girl, to shop owner! This is insane!

Fast forward almost 5 years...I feel like I have perfected the blueprint because I am the happy owner of two popular brick and mortar furniture stores that do over a quarter of a million dollars in sales a year.

I have made several mistakes along the way.... I have spent more than I should on items I never sold...Hired and fired multiple vendors, navigated the waters of bad reviews and unhappy customers...I have gotten it right and gotten it wrong. But at the end of the day it makes more money than it makes sense and I can tell you why! Which is why I am in the process of building an online course to take you step by step through all of the nitty gritty details. For more information check out my website

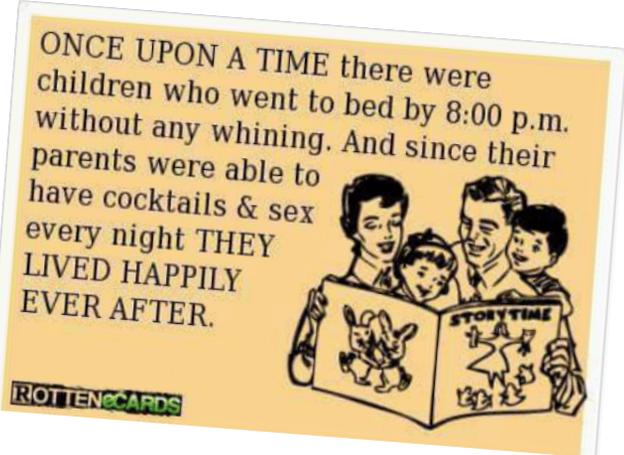


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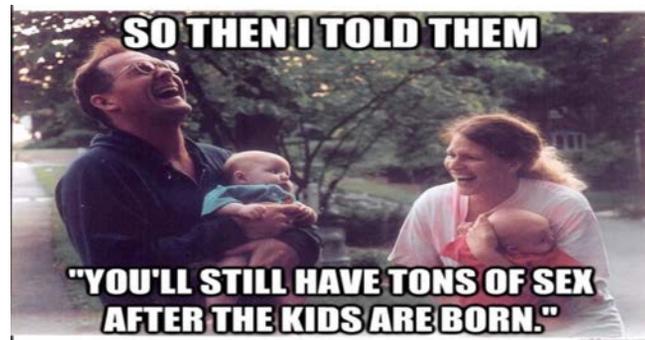
Sex After Kids

Candles are lit, sexy over priced lingerie and heels are on, lights are dim, mood music playing, and all the time in the night to practice all the bases and go all the way double time! At least this was your sex life before kids.... sex after kids- that's where the real creativity comes into play. Let's start with early after baby... you finally get the green light after 6 weeks and your partner is waiting at the end of the bed drooling and you are wishing the doctor didn't clear you at all! Your baby weight is still stuck to you, you probably have spit up in your hair, your breast are tender, your horny level is 0 and you haven't looked at your under carriage in months. The truth is after a baby, sex is awkward and a struggle, but don't lose hope! Struggle through the awkward time together, use lube and a couple of tries later you've snapped back!

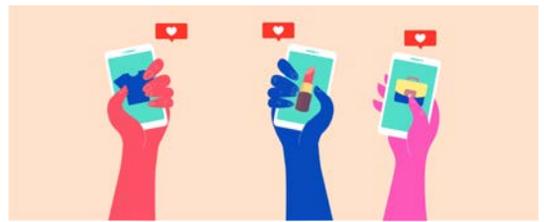
Next comes sex with toddler to teenager...you now must become a secret spy. This doesn't mean romance goes out the window, but think of it more as a game. You and your partner are on the same team and you have to score with 3.5 seconds left on the clock and without the other team noticing! (Totally easy- right!) Another part of the game is location... your bed would be nice and comfortable, but no think hormone-driven teenager: closet, garage, car..anything out of sight of the bossy three-nager you have on your hands! This can sometimes feel like another chore to get done for the day, but try to make it fun! Otherwise the fun doesn't happen until after kids are asleep, which 90% of the time you will be too tired to even function or put in the work....so get it in while you have energy and make it quick, quiet, sneaky and loving of course! Side note: don't leave anyone behind- everyone deserves the big finish! & a tip... lube is not only for the old & toys are not only for solo use!



You gotta marry someone you know you'd still be down to have sex with in the laundry room while the kids are downstairs watching Lion King and 10 minutes left till the dinosaur nuggets come out of the oven.



Why You Need to be Using Instagram to Grow Your Business in 2019



Instagram is a powerful tool to increase brand awareness and market your products and services. There are currently 1 BILLION monthly active users on IG - if you're not going all-in on Instagram, you're leaving money and opportunity on the table.



Establish Yourself as an Expert

Every post on Instagram is an opportunity to showcase your knowledge and brand yourself. Use your Instagram captions as a miniature blog. People want to know where you've been, how you've gotten to where you are now, and how you can help them make that transformation.

Communicate Directly with Your Ideal Client

No other social media platform has the search capabilities and engagement opportunities that Instagram has to connect directly with your ideal client. Features like hashtags and geotagging allow others to find you and your business, but they also allow you to find people that need your product or service. The more you comment and build relationships with these people, the more likely they are to buy what you're selling when the time comes.

Endless Pitch Opportunities

Instagram drastically increases the opportunities you have to pitch directly to your ideal clientele. People typically need around 8 touch points before they take the plunge and make a purchase. From posts, IG Stories, IGTV, and sliding into the DMs, you can easily hit these 8 touch points and, if done properly, you'll have people begging to work with you in no time.

Cross-Promote

The relationship building doesn't have to stop with your Instagram profile. You're likely using other marketing tactics to grow your business. Use Instagram to funnel your loyal following to your e-mail list, website, or Facebook group.

To learn more about Instagram & how to use it to build your personal brand and business, follow [@alexajhehl](#)



Killer workout for Your Next Booty Day

Lean Back Sumo Squats
4X12

Banded Step Squats
4X20

Ham Curl
4X12

Smith Donkey Kicks
3X10 Each Leg

Hip Thrust
4X12

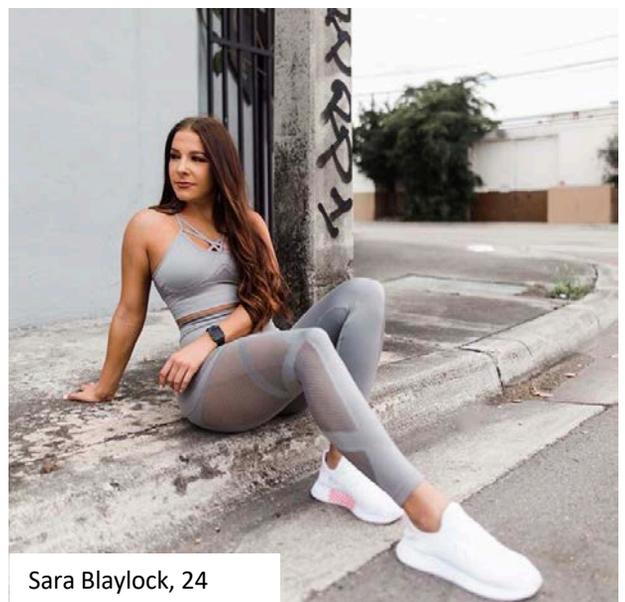
Bulgarian Squats
3X10 Each Leg

Straight Leg Dead Lift
4X12

Cable Pull Through
4X12

Cable Kick Backs
3X12 Each Leg

Abductors
3X12



Sara Blaylock, 24



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