

Growing into Yourself

Becoming more of yourself

Reigniting your passion for life

Living in the present for the future

Conversation with Lawunmi Nwaiwu

Something to think about

Growing into Yourself

“The only journey is the journey within”.

- **Rainer Maria Rilke**

Where am I going with my life? Is a question I asked myself some years ago. “I really need to make myself an action plan”, I muttered silently.

Growing up, acceptance was probably the most valuable lesson I learnt. Accepting my mistakes, shortcomings, wrong decisions and failures. No matter how many decisions or actions I made in the past that I am not entirely proud of, I’ve come to realise that everything happens for a reason. Not having that dream job immediately after graduation, there was a reason! Taking a gap year to go on a work internship in a different country, there was a reason! Losing a court case, there was a reason! Why I grew up with a single parent, there was a reason! Why I might have helped the wrong people, there was a reason! In all, I accepted my past, because my past and all the things I have learnt has turned me into a matured woman and also helped to understand, process and move on to live with an empowered mindset, in preparation for whatever hurdle that came by. That is why today, I never regret the decisions I’ve made, no matter what or where they led me to in life. For those who may have hurt me, disappointed me, or didn’t appreciate my efforts, today, I can say I converted the pain into an indomitable spirit that powers the fire inside me each day. I refused to give up on my destiny to succeed in life. I believe that everyone wants to live a fulfilling and great life. Nobody wants to go downhill, feeling depressed or living life feeling constantly stuck. That's why you need to grow continually to live a better life from your present state. It does not stop until you live a fulfilled life.

Every small progress is still a progress

I’ve always embraced change, even when I haven’t thought everything through. In today’s world, things are changing so rapidly that it has become important to stay up-to-date with digital trends and keep improving in every area of our lives. Many times I have taken risks in everyday life, but it was in doing so that I was able to determine what works and what does not. I’ve always had the desire of owning a business. I wasn’t entirely sure what the service or product would be, but I knew within me that I would someday manage my own business. Going on an internship meant experiencing a new environment and a different working culture. Although I never had a clear idea of what I wanted, I had an open mind that I would find the answer there. I came to understand that I needed to rectify my steps in pursuing my dreams and also start setting clear goals. So I went back to university to complete my three-year Bachelor’s Degree course and I also completed a Master’s Degree programme as well. Initially, few friends who we had graduated together thought

that it might be a waste of time acquiring a master's degree without getting practical experience in the real world but I still wanted to do it, to get that real sense of self-fulfilment and self-satisfaction.

When you start comparing your life to others, you may begin to misplace the purpose and direction of just being you. Your friends and yourself may have all started together but you all have different destinies. Don't be discouraged if you see that few of your childhood friends are working in prestigious companies, or successful in their respective businesses and you are not there yet, your own time will come. Just keep pushing forward. This could also happen in your line of work. While working with individuals in leadership positions who were much younger than I was, I started feeling self-doubt at work, assuming that I wasn't good enough for the job. I found myself gradually taking the back seat in responsibilities, losing motivation - thinking my opinion was not worthwhile.

On many occasions, my colleagues would win awards in their respective roles and I'd wonder when my time would come or what was wrong with my performance. By recognising that I was having self-doubt at work, it encouraged me to take actions to fix it. I decided to talk to my supervisor about my concerns and I also made plans to start taking on responsibilities that brought me more satisfaction - whether or not I was recognised for my performance. That bit of self-doubt made the experience much more enlightening and challenging; putting me in a healthier position to assess my career goals and refresh how they align with my strengths. I was motivated to keep learning and continue growing; acquiring the skills that would make me better.

Do you ever feel like you are taking a giant step forward, but suddenly it feels like you've hit a roadblock and back to square one? Question yourself on what you are doing or where you are going? Where will your life be in the next five or ten years if you continue doing what you are doing today?

Over time, I formed a habit of asking myself some of these questions all the time and there is absolutely nothing wrong in doing so. I find it helpful because sometimes we just need to take a break for a minute, to examine the kind of life we are living so that we can unlock our full potential and achieve our greatest dream.

I practised a few steps that have helped me to grow in life, but first I would like you to take a moment to think about how far you have come? Looking back to 5 years ago, do you feel you are reaching your life goals? At present, do you feel you are living your dreams? Once you have thought these through, let's look at the steps that guide you back on the right track of growth. Here are 5 steps you can take to help you grow in life:

1. **Commit to taking baby steps:** Every little step taken brings you closer to living the life you've always wanted. Decide on what you want to improve, whether it is your time management skills, relationships, your lifestyle, your parenting skills, or your business acumen etc. Take things one step at a time. If you try to address everything too fast, they may become overwhelming and frustrating, especially if you are not seeing the

improvements expected. So focus on building your self-confidence. Improve one thing at a time and build your momentum gradually.

2. **Look at how you live your life:** Make a list of things that are preventing you from living the life that you want. Is it your working hours? Is it your responsibility at home? Or do you find yourself worrying a lot about issues you are currently facing that's hindering your growth? You can begin your new journey by writing down 3 or 4 top priority goals in your life and start working towards them.
3. **Create your own opportunities:** You can wait for opportunities to come by or you can get out there and create your own. Be committed to your growth. Take courses. Self-reflect. Build on your strengths. Review your purpose once every 3-6 months or whichever method that works for you, so that you can know you're on the right path.
4. **Learn from criticism:** Be open to critics but don't be affected by it. Criticism is meant to help you be a better person. Asking for feedback gives us an added perspective about ourselves. Some people you could consider approaching are friends, family, colleagues, your boss, or even acquaintances. If you find that you are always wanting things a certain way with other people, and it's affecting or putting a strain on your relationships, then maybe it's time to take some time to reassess and let go of the obsession of having things done in a certain way.
5. **Let go of relationships that do not serve you:** That means negative people, dishonest people, people who don't respect you, people who are overly critical, and relationships that prevent you from growing. Get out there and make new friends — whether at your workplace, online, or in social groups. Surround yourself with people who also want the best in you.

I cultivated the habit of getting tasks done before the deadline. Whenever I have meetings with prospective clients, I prepare notes in advance on any questions that may arise and I remind myself on why my meeting will be a phenomenal success. Some of my friends would say I have a serious and professional approach. Well, I guess so but this is what comes with having an entrepreneurial mindset. You want to win! Especially when you know you are the only one that can drive your passion, and get your business growing to the level you want.

1.1 You are not lost! Bring out the brighter you

1. **Pay more attention to yourself:** Start by finding the right direction in your life - focusing on your greatness. You are the only one who can determine which direction your life is going to take because you will be the one to take the steps to realise your path.
2. **Speak life into your life:** Tell yourself positive things about who you want to be. I gradually became the woman who believed in her right to be here... A woman who feels she can make a difference... A woman who feels bold and courageous to be different... And I would tell myself daily, I am blessed! I will continue to move forward! I am getting stronger and by faith, I will continue to open doors of breakthrough in my life! When you truly believe the good declarations upon your life, it will begin to happen; all in God's time.
3. **Remove the negative thoughts:** We will soon come to realise that the better person that we've always dreamed of has always been in there. The sooner we can remove all the negative voices telling us that we cannot be successful, the easier we will be able to move forward. Being you is a powerful energy force to be the highest possible expression of yourself because when you do, you will attract the right people and the right opportunities that you'd never thought in your wildest dreams were possible. You really have to truly engage with your life in order to get anywhere. When you hit roadblocks, be gentle and remember who you are. There will be moments where you might get disappointed, heartbroken, or make rational decisions that you might regret or be confused about what to do next; but remember, you are not lost! If you're constantly asking yourself where your choices are taking you and if you're making the right ones, you're not alone!

When I decided to start a career as a wedding planner, it seemed I had everything all mapped out but the problem was where do I start from? I've got all these big dreams but how do I start putting the pieces together. So, I started doing more research, that way I could figure out exactly what would make my business different. Knowing a lot of popular names in the wedding industry, I became stuck on why people would patronise my business - a start-up business for that matter.

No matter how scary and competitive the market is; understanding your competitors and what they are offering is a starting point to defining what your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is. It will help you decide on how best to market your product or services. It will enable you to set your prices competitively and help you to respond to rival marketing campaigns with your own initiatives.

1.2 You are not lost! Find your path

Sometimes we doubt the direction we are going or may not realise the changes we need to make within ourselves. Many of us need encouragement to begin that change. Some get side-tracked along the way which makes the whole purpose of change become forgotten. But by encouraging the self-confidence and determination in us, we can get to the root of

the problem and start making impactful decisions. During a difficult time in my life, I felt that things were not progressing as planned. I was feeling further away from my goals, and I no longer knew the next step to take. If you're like me, you might come to a point where you feel like you've tried everything, and nothing seems to be working; but maybe you just need a different approach. When life doesn't turn out the way we'd hoped, planned, or expected, we feel tremendous disappointment and start doubting everything, including ourselves. Maybe you thought you'd be married by now, but you aren't even dating anyone. Maybe you poured your heart into a project or relationship only to get fired or break up. I'll encourage you that whatever the situation may be, always maintain your cool, take a deep breath, and tell yourself everything will be okay.

It's normal to feel lost at some point, but it is important to remember to pull yourself out of that lonely place of self-doubt, sooner rather than later. I believe breaking points, if well managed, can lead you back into the light, where you can refocus and rebuild your confidence. That will be your starting point to taking those very little steps today, then tomorrow and the next. Gradually, you will begin to notice a change in your attitude, a change in your mindset, and the way you approach different situations. Your steps will get bigger and better, and you will be less tolerant of anyone who is telling you any different from what you believe in. When I officially launched my wedding planning business in 2013, I was finally taking the little steps to bring me closer each day to my dream. The self-confidence in me wasn't just about being better or being different but it was more of seeing myself for all that I have and believing in that. Believing that it will be a positive outcome as things progressed. It was difficult and challenging, but with perseverance and consistency, I finally had a breakthrough. The important part is to never lose motivation and trust that whatever you do today will take you a step closer to what you want to become tomorrow. After getting my first client, I realised that I was actually better than I thought... I had more confidence in my skills. It was just a matter of discovering, learning and understanding my strengths, so I could use them in the right way to achieve real goals.

1.3 You are not lost! Progress starts by doing something

Start doing a lot of the "small things" because they lead to bigger things and better results. The doubts that have held you back will gradually begin to disappear, giving room for more clarity and direction.

1. **Start living the way you want to be remembered:** Be authentic by being focused, dependable and trustworthy in the way you live your life. Start making a positive impact on peoples' lives. I hope to have helped inspire other women to find the strength within even during their trials and tribulations. Helping each other understand that we can make it through anything and not give up. With perseverance, we pray for wisdom in dealing with difficult situations and the patience to be able to stand strong. We can be who we want to be and we would only be hurting ourselves by limiting ourselves.
2. **There is power in staying resilient:** Even when everything seems to be knocking you down. I believe that by making time to invest in myself every day, working harder on

myself, I gradually became more skilled and more valuable. When you take time to discover your talents, refine your skills and abilities, you're investing in something that you will always have and nobody can take from you - and as a result, you can add more value to other people.

3. **Don't be afraid to fail:** Despite my new responsibilities as a wife and mother, I still try to create time for myself - to keep working on projects I enjoy doing. I've had failed ideas in the past, but I have learnt some important lessons from them because when we fail, we learn, grow in maturity, and achieve new perspectives on life, love, business, money and relationships. Through each failure in my life, my values were reshaped. What I valued 10 years ago doesn't have the same values today. The values I had in business, finance and relationships are totally different today because I needed to learn to value the right things. When it comes to relationships, I have a smaller circle of friends now but back in high school or university, I had a wider group of friends and would find myself wanting to fit in to please their way of lifestyle. There are still a few I keep in touch with, while there are others who have in one way or the other inspired me in different areas in my life.
4. **Know who you are:** When you lose a sense of who you are; sometimes it can lead to anger or frustration. Do you know why you might be feeling lost? Sometimes it happens if you are letting yourself be controlled by the opinions of others, society, or family on what you are supposed to be doing rather than what you want to be doing. What do you truly desire? If you want to do something great in life, you shouldn't be living under someone else's expectations. It is important to find yourself by figuring out what truly makes you happy. What truly makes you happy will be the drive to open up your potentials to accomplish anything you set your mind to.

Other people may not understand or care about the new path you are on; they may not believe in your ambitions or the life-changing decisions you are about to make; but if you can feel true happiness brewing within and also feel the positive energy it brings, continue believing in yourself. People will begin to believe in you as time goes on. Do more of what you love. Don't hang on to that job that does not fulfil you in any passionate way. I was dedicating 8 hours every day of my time to a company that was not fulfilling my career dream. That doesn't mean I left the job. I simply started running a business so that I could get a real sense of fulfilment, doing what I love and enjoy most.

Whether you have lost yourself in your relationship, job, your health, as a parent, or in anything generally, you are not alone. For some of us, we have been there and it doesn't mean that your life is doomed or that you will never find yourself again; because you will.

Conversation with Lawunmi Nwaiwu

Q. 1 You wrote about your inner struggle with self-confidence and discovering your true identity. How did you know when you found yourself?

A. 1 You will begin to feel a real sense of fulfilment with your passion in life. When you find yourself listening to your gut instincts, believing in yourself, and paying closer attention to your feelings, you'll become a different and better person than who you used to be, and start doing things for yourself instead of for others.

Q. 2 What is different about growing up today from when you were growing up?

A. 2 For one to be mature and wise, you must first have done some young or stupid things at some point in life. The responsibilities that come with being an adult, paying bills, making independent decisions, and taking responsibility for your actions. I've become more matured and responsible in my approach to certain situations. My inner strength which developed throughout my journey via the trials and lessons experienced.

Q. 3 You wrote about going on an internship, a different environment to explore your career. What advice can you give young aspiring individuals who are yet to discover their career path?

A. 3 Have an open mind to change and try new things but you need to start the work first. Take some time to explore careers and see which one you feel most connected with. I did various jobs in retail, clinic, restaurant, customer services, and sales in my early years before I discovered my true passion. It starts by networking and establishing relationships with working professionals which will prepare you for what to expect in your field and increase confidence in your work.

Q. 4 At a point in your life, you needed clarity on your true calling and passion. How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life? How do you feel about that choice?

A. 4 Working in various jobs that I didn't enjoy made me realise my true calling as a wedding planner - not that I regret doing any of these jobs because they also contributed to the skills I have today. There's no certain age to have figured out your passion and there's no protocol on how to but by trying out different things you gain more experience and it makes you understand what you like and don't like. I was inspired by a few business leaders in the industry and watching some real-life business TV shows helped me refocus on my strengths to making small decisions and taking action on my passion without the fear of failing. You wouldn't really know what works best for you not until you have a taste of the experience, and today, these are lessons life has taught me on the journey to discovering my purpose in life.



~ Something to think about ~

Let's see how you get on with few steps to guide you to knowing and loving yourself every day:

1. Love yourself - look at the mirror and tell yourself nice things about you
2. Treat yourself - take a break or a day off and focus on doing a hobby you love, something relaxing or fun
3. Find a comfortable space and start having a growth mindset
4. What areas in your life do you need to change?
5. Decide on how you want to track your progress