

peanut x nuna®

Baby



REAL WOMEN

REAL STORIES

Steps

Eight women on motherhood,
and what it set in motion.



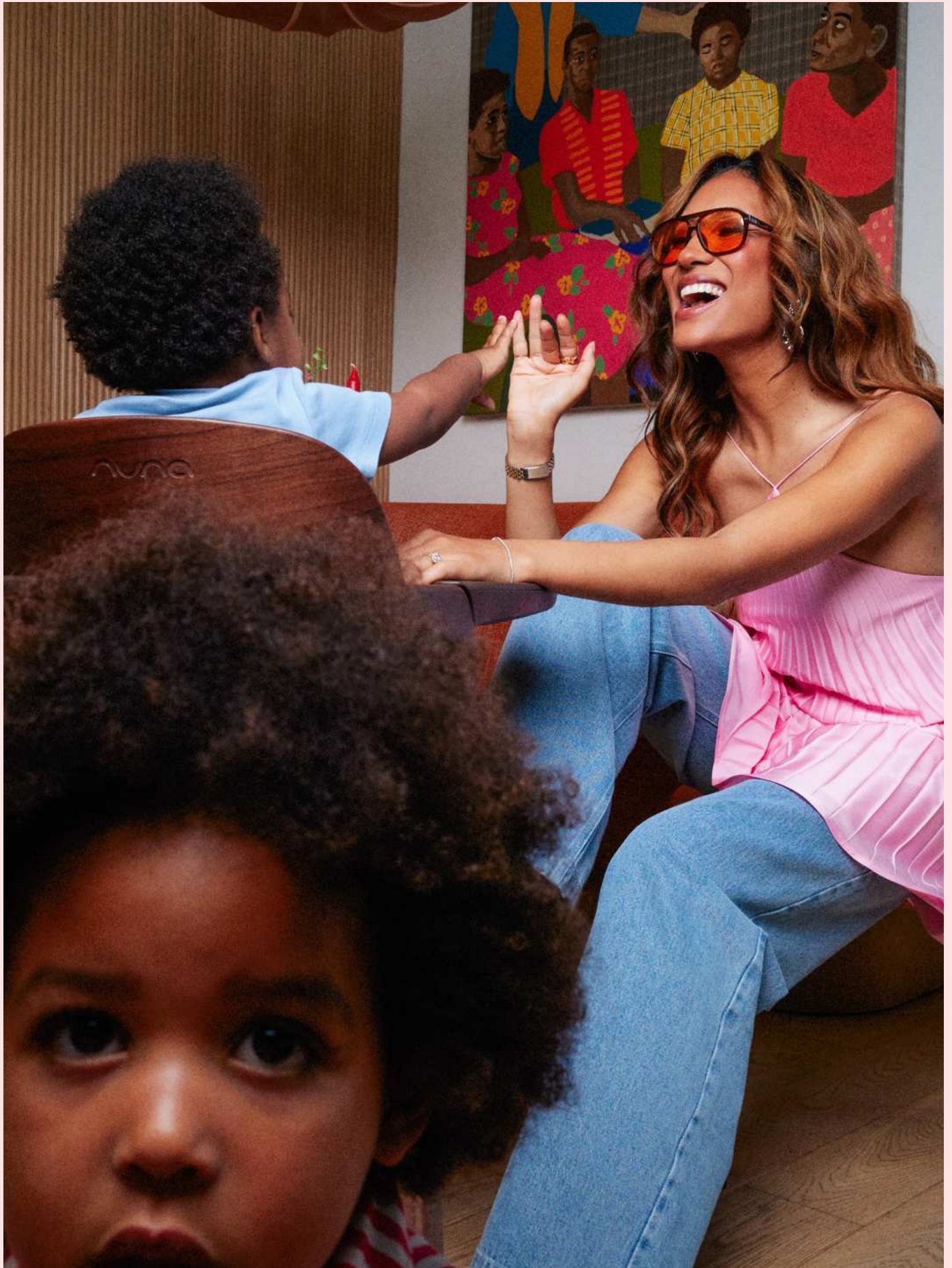
Meet the Changemakers.

Eight women across the world, building, disrupting and leading, across birth, work, sport and culture. We sat down with the 2026 Peanut x Nuna Changemakers - and their little ones - for an intimate conversation about motherhood, ambition and change. Here's what they had to say.

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Eight honest conversations
about support, career and
motherhood.



Elaine Welteroth



on motherhood, midwifery, and
why every mother deserves more

Elaine Welteroth has worn a lot of hats - former Teen Vogue editor, author, TV judge. But the work she calls her life's work is BirthFUND: the nonprofit she founded to put direct grants into the hands of families and midwives, and to close the gap in

birth equity across America. In this conversation, she opens up about the support she wished she'd had the first time around, the midwife that moved her to tears, and why every mother should get to be a little selfish about what she needs.



"I've never
identified with the
self-sacrificial version
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"Babies bring blessings"

What is your name and where would people know you from?

I'm Elaine Welteroth. My life's work has been becoming the founder of BirthFUND, which is a maternal health organization that my son inspired when I was pregnant with him. I gave birth to him at home, at nine pounds. He's my greatest accomplishment, truly.

You're also a mom of two. Did anything feel different about motherhood the second time around?

These are two completely different souls that chose me. I feel so lucky that they chose me, and they are already teaching me so many things about myself, the world. They've introduced me to the most tender, soft version of myself that I literally did not know existed until I met them.

The second time felt really different in that he's just so different from the first - they're opposites in so many ways. My firstborn is the most gregarious, life-of-the-party, outspoken, could make friends with a pole. Could talk to anybody. The other one's skeptical of you. He will look at you like you owe him money until you really win him over. I think they balance each other out so well, and they have become the best of friends every single day. It's amazing watching them bond and learning how to nurture them both

individually for who they are.

What would your message be to ambitious women preparing to step into motherhood?

The advice that I would give any ambitious, accomplished career woman who is entering her motherhood era is what my midwife told me when I was freaking out about it - babies bring blessings.

There's this idea that when you bring a baby into the world, you lose so much of yourself and your life, and you have to give up so much. But I just have never identified with the self-sacrificial version of motherhood; I don't think that is aspirational. What I've learned is that we get to define what motherhood looks like and how it aligns with and expands our life. Having babies has expanded my life, my purpose, my work. I see the world completely differently. I have a new perspective on things; I have a deeper well of empathy.

Every child is my child, every mother is my girl, every family feels like part of my village. And as a result, I feel responsible for supporting them, protecting them, making sure that they have what they need when they go through pregnancy and birth and motherhood and this massive identity transition.

What do you wish someone

had told you before becoming a mom?

Having a support system is everything. Coming through motherhood the first time not having the support system that I needed during pregnancy was debilitating, isolating, and really depressing in a way that I really wasn't prepared for.

For me, finding midwifery care was just such a transformational experience, and I found them at the very last minute. I didn't even think that I could be the kind of mom who does a home birth and does it unmedicated - it wasn't even on my radar. But finding midwives and feeling that sense of holistic support really changed what I realized I was capable of - trusting my body, trusting my instincts, having a sense of peace and joy that replaced that paralyzing fear that I felt not only about birth, but also about motherhood.

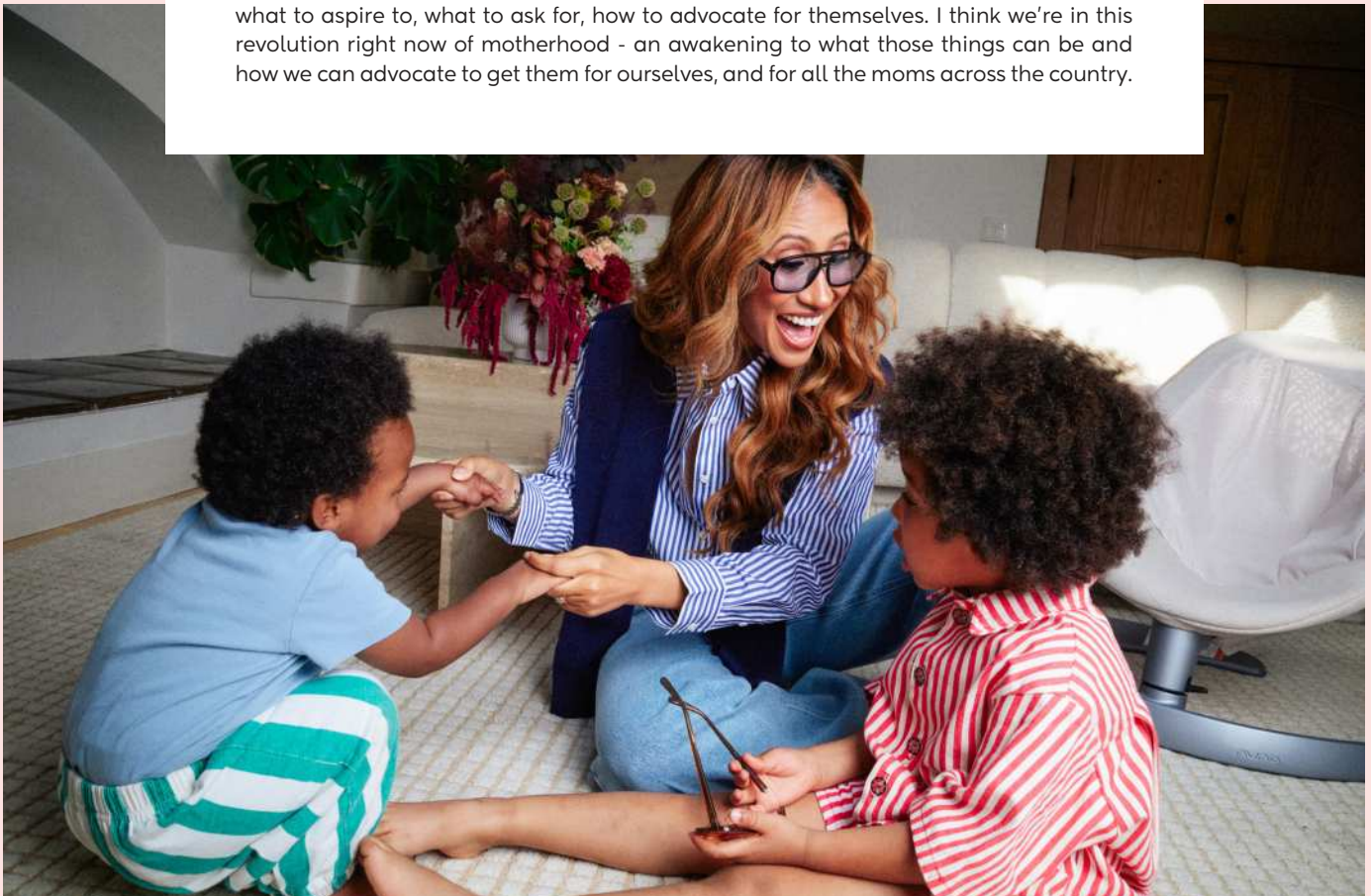
That mindset shift, that paradigm shift, completely changed my experience of new motherhood for the better, and I want that for other moms like me. I want that for moms who are scared of the pain of birth, and who feel really rocked by the identity shift.

It's so important to have the right support, and for me I found that in a midwife who provides more than just support for your body, but support for your mind, for your heart, for your spirit. It really is a 360 transition, and you need support that is 360 and completely holistic.



What are you hopeful about for the future of motherhood?

What I'm hopeful for is a world where mothers actually get the support that they need, and they have enough examples of what support can look like. So that they even know what to aspire to, what to ask for, how to advocate for themselves. I think we're in this revolution right now of motherhood - an awakening to what those things can be and how we can advocate to get them for ourselves, and for all the moms across the country.





"Every child is my child, every mother is my girl, every family feels like part of my village."



“She put her
hands on my
belly and started
talking to him.
It made me
realize I am the
custodian of a
whole new soul.”





Em



Clarkson

on hyperemesis, online safety, and why
it's okay to say motherhood is hard

Through her work as a writer, creator, and campaigner, Em Clarkson has built one of the most honest platforms in British parenting - a community of hundreds of thousands of women who come for the bit nobody else says out loud. In this

conversation, she talks about the relentlessness of expectation, what she would say to herself in those first postpartum weeks, and why the most radical thing she can wish for mothers is that they just get to relax.

We're so excited to honor you as a 2026 Changemaker. You've built something really rare - a platform that's honest and committed to bettering the lives of women everywhere. Did you ever imagine it would become what it has?

I'm so grateful and constantly blown away by the community that I have online. I never imagined it - never have dreamt it, to be honest.

Your work talks a lot about the pressure women put on themselves, as well as societal pressure. Where do you think that comes from?

The pressure on women - whether it's put on by ourselves, our peers, by societal expectation, or actively by those around us - it is relentless. I can't think of an area where it's not just so pervasive. And so much of it starts with social conditioning and gender norms - there's just so much to unpick. I think ultimately it comes down to setting ourselves free of it. I think that's

probably going to be the most healing thing we can do - worldwide, certainly community-wide.

What did motherhood teach you about yourself?

Motherhood has made me the best version of myself. Me as a mum is someone I couldn't have imagined before. She has all the confidence I needed as a child and as a young woman. I love what my children have made me; they've given me boundaries, confidence, purpose.

For me, seeing the person I needed to be for them allowed me to become somebody beyond my wildest dreams.



"Setting ourselves free is going to be the most healing thing we can do."

"Motherhood has made me the best version of myself. I love what my children have made me: they've given me boundaries, confidence, purpose."



“You are rushing back to a version of yourself and your life that isn’t there anymore.”

You’re not afraid to say the parts that often go unsaid. What’s the truth about motherhood that you think we’re still not saying loudly enough?

That motherhood is hard. There’s so much of it that’s hard. And it’s also the best. I’m like a propaganda machine for motherhood, I love it. But I think so many people are scared to say that they’re struggling. And I think a lot of the time it’s not even because their friends don’t want to hear it - it’s because they don’t want to admit it themselves. There’s so much pressure to find it easy, to feel like you’ve just found your life’s purpose - and that’s not to say you haven’t, but it doesn’t make it easy every day. And I think we’re often scared to say help, because then it feels like we’re admitting we can’t do something. And that’s a tragedy.

If you could sit with yourself during those first

few weeks of postpartum, what would you say?

Big hugs, for a start. And I wish I could say this to every friend of mine who has children, and to every woman everywhere - it’s going to be okay. Just hold on. It’s going to be alright. Stop rushing. You rush yourself out the door, you rush yourself back into your clothes, back into your relationships, your friendships - and you are rushing back to a version of yourself and your life that isn’t there anymore. It’s a really disorientating feeling. It feels like running on sand, or running on jelly - everything is just so hard.

I wish somebody had just told me I didn’t need to be running. I could have just walked it. So I guess what I would say is just: slow down. The fear that your career, your life, your body - everything has changed forever and you’ve got to scramble to bounce back - that’s huge. And if I could have taken that away from myself, I would have done it in a heartbeat. I’d do it for anyone.



"Time and time again, you hear people say: it's not being a mum that I find hard, it's everything else."

Favorite TV or movie mom?

You're going to cancel me for this, but I have some theories. First of all, I'm eliminating Disney - because all Disney mums are dead, and that's a bit screwed up if you ask me. Step-mums are not portrayed well either - there's a whole other chat to be had there. Instinctively, I want to say Lorelai Gilmore. I know she's not a great mum in loads of ways, but I'm going to say it - she's doing her best. She was sixteen. She built a great relationship with her daughter. She always did what she thought was best, and they came out of it probably needing a little bit of therapy, but happy and together.

What does your toddler think your job is?

Oh God, I don't want to know. The longer she doesn't know the better. If she never finds out there are hundreds of thousands of

people out there on the internet - great.

What are you hopeful about for the future of motherhood?

I don't want to speak for everybody's experience. But if I could hope one thing for mums, it would just be that they're happy. There's so much within motherhood that's beautiful and joyful. Yeah, there's hard stuff, and you're knackered, and I don't want to discount any of that. But there's so much that's lovely. And time and time again you hear people say: it's not being a mum that I find hard, it's everything else. I just have to hope that there's less of everything else at some point, and that mums just get to be happy. Relaxed, even. When was the last time you saw a relaxed mum? They don't exist. If I could wish one thing for the future of motherhood, it would be that they could relax.



Alysia Montaño



on running, resting, and
making mothers visible

Alysia Montañó is an Olympic bronze medalist, a five-time national champion, and the athlete most people know as the pregnant runner – the woman who lined up at USA Nationals eight months pregnant and made the invisible labor of motherhood impossible to ignore.



03

Her advocacy pushed major organizations to rewrite their pregnancy policies. Since then, Alysia has been building For All Mothers+, a nonprofit pushing sports - and society - toward a gold standard of care for mother-athletes.

What's your name, and where would people know you from?

My name is Alysia Montano. I'm an Olympic bronze medalist. People probably know me best as "the pregnant runner" - I was eight months pregnant at USA Nationals as the five-time defending champion, fighting for moms.

When you ran the USA Nationals eight months pregnant, did you know in that moment that you were starting a movement?

I wasn't quite sure that I was starting a movement, but I was hopeful that I would create conversation in that moment. I knew that it was so important for the invisible labor that mothers face all the time - in fighting for their lives and their opportunities to thrive - to be made visible, and I knew that I had an opportunity to do that.

Your advocacy helped push Nike to change its pregnancy policies. Where do you think we are on the culture side of change, versus policy?

It did push for Nike and other big companies to change their policies to better support

mothers in sports. But it wasn't just about sports - it was about creating an opportunity for us to really see how society has created so many barriers for mothers, not only to expand their families, but to continue their careers and grow in them. Now I see the opportunity we've had, using sports as a microcosm of what's happening in the world, to highlight the importance of having support structures for moms.

Because if we take care of the moms, then we take care of everyone else.

Your research found that 73% of mothering athletes experience a decrease, pause or termination of funding related to pregnancy or motherhood. How did those findings make you feel?

We did research with my nonprofit organization, For All Mothers+, to really understand what the landscape has actually looked like for mothers who are athletes in their careers, and we found that 73% of athletes faced a decrease in funding from their sponsors, or a complete termination altogether. For me, what it really spoke to was the stark difference across all industries, and the changes we need to make happen. It also emphasized the need to push toward policies that weren't just going to take care of the athletes - they were going to use our podium moments as a podium

moment for all mothers.

When we ask mothers what they actually need, what the barriers are that they're actually facing, it was things like safer lactation accommodations, the ability to transport their milk, opportunities to have their families on the sidelines with them, and the ability to continue their career growth. We knew that if we could do that in sport, we could do it anywhere.

If For All Mothers+ achieves everything you're building toward, what does the world look like for the next generation of mother-athletes?

I will know that we have achieved that gold standard when we look across the aisle and see moms in all industries showing up to work with smiles on their faces. When we see their kids and their families accepted in the spaces they're in. When we see women in leadership positions, in C-suites, and they also have their families.

But not only that - when we see women have choice, whether to embark on motherhood or not, because they're able to be informed on their choices, and they're not being forced to choose because the opportunities aren't there for them if they do become moms. At the end of the day, I'd love to see women cared for the choices they get to make, not forced into them.

"Rest is part of growth"



"Everything in nature
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"As a mom, every time you think you've got it figured out, you're about to get humbled."

What surprised you most about becoming a mother?

I think just my ability to adapt. Being a mom, you have to be malleable, you have to be stretchable - you can't be so rigid, or you'll find that it won't be an enjoyable experience. I really enjoyed that process, and was proud of myself for taking it head-on and taking motherhood as it came.

It allowed me to put more tools in my toolbox for other places I would go, where motherhood was going to be my value add - my superpower in other arenas, whether I was speaking at a keynote or racing on the track. I now had this opportunity to see my life in a way where things don't have to go 100% as I thought, but I could still come out with a wonderful outcome.

What do you love most about being a mom?

I really love being a mom - I'm the worst with favorites, but one of the things I love most is just recognizing my opportunity to grow every single day. Kids humble you. They're so honest, so real, so raw. Being a mom has allowed me the opportunity to continue to evolve, and to recognize the beauty in that.

My signature is a flower. Everyone knows me for having a flower in my hair. It's something that embodies strength for me, resilience, and allows me to not let go of my femininity, not being told that I can't also bring my femininity into strength and into bravery. And I think one of my favorite parts of being a mother is that it does embody everything that the flower does represent. It's continuing to allow myself opportunities to bloom.

What does rest mean to you, as someone whose whole identity has been built around movement?

Rest is completely underrated. There's this idea that athletes take no days off - people love the hashtag #NoDaysOff - but rest is a part of growth. Everything in nature goes dormant one time or another, and it allows it to bloom more fully. Rest allows me to come into a new space more fresh, more excited, and gives me a better opportunity to continue to pollinate. If I didn't allow myself the opportunity to rest, I'd be putting myself in a scenario where I wouldn't be able to continue to evolve, expand, change, grow, and pollinate others.

What does the first 10 minutes of your morning actually look like right now?

It's the calm before the storm. I have an 11, 8, and 6-year-old, so asking me this two years ago would have gotten a completely different answer, but I do get a chance to open my eyes just a second before the kids. I don't try to spring out of bed - I allow myself a second to just be grateful, and to appreciate that I woke up and have another opportunity to seize the day. Then I ground myself, purposefully.

I appreciate that beginning because it's going to get real loud and wild really fast. Every time you think you've got it figured out, you're about to get humbled - someone's going to be fighting over a toy, someone's going to have opinions about breakfast, someone's going to want to do it themselves. Either you laugh or you cry, and I'm choosing to laugh through it.



“Being recognized as a Changemaker is simply, an *honor*.”



What are you most hopeful about for the future of motherhood?

I have a lot of hope. We've come so far just in the time since I wrote my New York Times op-ed - "Nike told me to dream crazy, until I had a baby." Since starting For All Mothers+ in 2020, I've seen brands get behind our work in helping implement maternal protections and policies that better support moms in the workplace. The future of motherhood is hopefully one where mothers are respected as the leaders that they are.

What does being a Changemaker mean to you?

Being a Changemaker is an absolute honor. When I really look at my legacy, and where I've come from, I think about my grandma, and I think about my mom, and I recognize that our children are our parents' best dream. Our goal is to help their dreams come true as we make our own dreams come true. What I've recognized in this opportunity is that I'm continuing to leave a legacy that blazes a trail for the next generation, to leave the landscape better than they found it, and to help them walk into it in a really great place.



"The future of motherhood is hopefully one where mothers are respected as the leaders, that they are."



"I'm continuing to leave a legacy that blazes a trail for the next generation."



Jada



Sezer

on firsts, twins, and
the invisible mental load

Jada Sezer has spent her career being the first: the first size 16 model on ASOS, the first plus-size model to walk London Fashion Week, the first on the cover of Women's Health. She trained as a child psychotherapist before fashion found her, and she ran

a marathon in her underwear to make a point about whose bodies get to move. Now a mother of twins, she hosts the CEO MUM podcast and is building MOTHER AI – technology aimed squarely at the mental load that mothers carry silently.



"Now that being
imperfect is exactly
right."



When you look back at your career to date, what threads do you think bind it all together?

Being the first plus-size model, the first size 16 model on ASOS, the first plus-size model on the cover of Women's Health - all of these things, for me, have been related to the way that I show up in the world. If I see a problem, I like to think: how can this be improved? The thread connecting all of it is: when something with the world doesn't feel right, what solution can we create? How can we reimagine it? How can we make a change that affects the world I want to live in, makes my life a bit easier, and hopefully inspires others. I want everyone to know that we don't just have to accept what's in front of us - we can do something about it.

When I became a mum, I realised that was the biggest point in my life where I felt inequality - not because I didn't have a capable partner or supportive family, but because the weight of being a parent in this day and age, is a lot to bear alongside a career, a family, and a house to run.

The CEO MUM podcast is built on the premise that ambition and motherhood aren't opposites. But our data shows 70% of mothers feel they've

had to shrink their career ambitions since having children. Why do you think that is still happening?

It's hard, and the systems we're working within are completely outdated. Having to sit in an office 9 to 5 while also coming home to do dinner, put a wash on, and make sure your child's emotional needs are met - it's all too much. The reality is, we don't have to be in an office every day to be productive. We saw that in COVID: working remotely created the same amount of productivity, if not more, compared to office working.

It's layered, too. Millennial women grew up being told, from a young age, to dream big - I want to be a doctor, a lawyer, all these ambitions - and then you have a family and get hit with the motherhood penalty. They say becoming a mother is when you're affected by inequality the most in your whole lifetime. Up until that point, you're equal to your male counterpart. Then you take maternity leave, step back a year, maybe have another child, step back another year - and that's the pivotal point where your male counterpart gets promoted, or takes the job overseas. It's systemic, and it's cultural.

A question I like to ask is: how can ambition and motherhood coexist, and what way can you make that work holistically for your family? Everyone's setup is individual. What I've explored on CEO MUM is that everyone has a unique tapestry, and what works for me isn't going to work for someone else. I'm lucky to have five members of my family in the same post code as me. I have a partner with a flexible job who can do drop-off and pickup, who food preps and cooks dinner more than I do. That's all a real privilege.

I hope the
future of
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"You're a mother, but
you're also a woman,
and you get to live
your dreams."



61% of mothers describe their wellbeing as “good,” yet 93% are experiencing burnout. Does that tension reflect anything you’ve seen in your own community, or lived yourself?

We’ve been conditioned to present perfectly - like we’ve got it all together, like our lives are just the right amount of messy, but pretty much in order. That’s years of conditioning, years of the generation before us being socialized to put their needs last, to present like “this isn’t about me, it’s about other people.” That’s changing. Just identifying words like “the mental load” puts it into context - it’s trying to manage everyone’s calendars, diaries, nursery schedules, food prep. It’s so much, but being able to identify it, articulate it, is the first step in changing it.

When I was modelling, a lot of my work also involved talking about mental health. I had a master’s in child psychotherapy before I got into fashion, and I remember my mum saying that back in her day, we never spoke about mental health - we’d just say someone “wasn’t quite right.” Now there are degrees for it. I feel the same way identifying motherhood, and the areas within it – invisible labour, the mental load, all the things you just do. Women are talking about it now, sharing it, saying they don’t want that anymore. What I love is that once we can put it into words, it can be shared, delegated, outsourced - rather than carrying the burden alone. Hopefully that brings the start of burnout down.

Who’s your favorite TV or movie mom?

Rebecca Pearson, from *This Is Us* - anyone who knows me knows this. She’s a scripted character, obviously, but she feels so real. I resonate with her wanting to show up and do her best while being human, living in a family that’s real, with real issues, trying to keep afloat and keep these little humans alive while dealing with everything the world throws at you. Through all of it, she just keeps trying,

keeps striving to show up, and I love that. I also love how she held onto her own dream of becoming a singer - I resonate with that. There are times I’m with my kids and I love them, I want to be with them 24 hours a day, and then I think, actually, I still really love my dreams, I love being in a room with a voice, showing up, making money. All the sides of you, not just one. I think Rebecca demonstrated that really well.

What do your twins think your job is?

Whenever Blake sees any equipment in the house, she’ll say “Mummy’s podcast? Podcast?” She knows I’m going to work when I’ve done my hair and makeup, because she’ll say “Mummy, you look fancy” - or my son will go “Mummy, fancy, like your dress, ooo.” I don’t really think they know what I do, to be honest. Sometimes I don’t even know what I do.

What are you most hopeful about for the future of motherhood?

I’m really hopeful that the future of motherhood looks distinctly different to how our mothers experienced it. There’s more equality in the household, we’re able to change the expectation of what a mother is, release the expectation of having to be perfect and do it all alone. It’s liberating - you’re a mother, but you’re also a woman, a girl, a human, and you get to live your dreams, not put them on the back burner, and show up for yourself as much as you show up for your kids.

What does being a Changemaker mean to you?

Being called a Changemaker is an absolute honour. You kind of just do what you do - you don’t really think of yourself in any particular way, you just keep putting one foot in front of the other. But generally, the hope you have for a title like that is that you can effect change, make a difference, improve people’s lives in some sense. I hope I can do a little bit of that in my own way.







Shiza Shahid



on belonging, motherhood,
and never doing sleep alone

Shiza Shahid co-founded the Malala Fund at twenty-two, built Our Place into one of the most culturally relevant brands in America, and became a mother four months ago. The thread that connects it all is a sense of belonging: she and her husband

started Our Place as immigrants, cooking for new friends who became chosen family. Here she talks about the community she leans on now, what changed the day she had a daughter, and why rest, for the moment, simply means sleep.

"I'd rather be very tired and have this full life than miss out on it."

What do you want people to understand about how you got to where you are now?

That I didn't get here alone, that everything that I've achieved has come in partnership with so many amazing team members and people who have held me up when I needed them most.

You were 22 years old when you co-founded the Malala Fund, what was the mission you had in mind?

The mission of the Malala Fund is to help girls around the world get secondary schooling. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunities that I had, that my mother fought to make sure that I was given and it has taught me how to pay it forward.

You and your husband founded Our Place, and as a brand it has always been about belonging, has motherhood changed what that word means to you?

Becoming a mother has definitely created a deeper sense of belonging. It is a lonely thing to be an immigrant, and you work hard to build community and that's probably what inspired Our Place, and now I have community all the time.

It also gives me a deeper understanding of what so many women, so many mothers experience and what they sacrifice to build families, to build careers and to juggle it all.

You've said before that becoming a mother feels like the most communal experience of your life. Where do you actually find that community and who are your people right now?

I am so lucky to have an amazing husband and partner, I have an amazing team, and I have so many friends and women around me who are mothers, new mothers or been-there-done-that mothers, and I am constantly benefiting from their advice and infinite wisdom.

How easy is it to hold on to

your goals and aspirations in the hard moments?

I feel really lucky to have work that I believe in, that brings me so much meaning with people I love being around and have so much respect for. But it's still really hard to juggle it all, I knew it was going to be hard but I didn't know how hard until I was in it and wow, what women are able to achieve blows my mind every day. Every day I'm in it, I think I can't believe so many women are in it with me. [Work and motherhood] always feels imperfect, it's always a juggling act, but I'd rather be very tired and have this full life than miss out on it.

You've spent your career fighting for girls' education and opportunity around the world. Now that you have a daughter, does that work feel different?

Everything feels different now that I have a daughter. My work for global education feels so much more personal. I want her to have the experience of showing up, of giving back, of going back to the community that I grew up in, volunteering at the school that her grandmother runs for underprivileged children. I want all of that for her.

I also think more consciously about the words I use around her. Every time I say something that feels like I'm making myself small, I catch myself and think "I don't want that to be passed down to her. I want to stop that here" and it's really changing who I am and helping me step more fully into who I've always been.

"Everything feels different now that I have a daughter."



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What does your morning routine look like?

Within the first 10 minutes of waking up, I have a four-month-old. For context, I am attached to a pump, and pumping, while probably answering an email that I'm a little bit late on answering, and maybe downing a cold brew.

As a kitchen icon, we have to know, what was the first meal you cooked for your daughter?

I was so excited when my daughter started solids, we started a little bit on the earlier side. I had all these ideas of how I was going to cook her iron-rich beef, and I made beef puree and I took a bite and thought "I'm not doing this to her" so then I steamed some organic

carrots in my Always Pan and I blended them with some breast milk and it was delicious, and she loved it. That was her first meal.

What is your favorite way to treat yourself?

I used to love getting a massage. It's been a little while, but I'm looking forward to getting back to that.

What does rest mean to you?

Rest means sleep. As a new mom, I'm sleep deprived, and I want to be there for every moment with my daughter, I want to keep up with everything I'm building in my business and I want to be there for the people around me, and often that means I come last, and at a certain point I have to make sure I'm rested, so I'm trying my best to prioritize sleep so that I can show up better.

What are you most hopeful about for the future of motherhood?

I'm hopeful that we will have more support for parents at the government level. I'm hopeful that we will provide federal, guaranteed parental leave. It's so important that women, and men, all parents have the opportunity to be present for their children and not be stretched so thin that they're running on empty, and we are so far behind in providing the basics to set up families to succeed.

What does being a Changemaker mean to you?

I wouldn't be here today if women hadn't opened doors for me, and being a Changemaker means doing the same for other women.







Jess



Quinn

on adapting, rest, and
normalizing *different*

Jess Quinn lost her leg to cancer at eight years old and spent the next eight years hiding it. Then, a single photo that showed her running blade went viral and put her in front of an audience she has used ever since to normalize difference, through modelling, *Dancing With The Stars*,

and a lot of honest talking. She co-founded the women's health community The Cyclist and the supplement company Cadence in the same season she became a mother to Marla. Here she talks about chronic pain, adapting, and what her daughter already understands.

"I was the only person
holding me back."



You spent years hiding your prosthetic before deciding, one day, to put on the shorts. What changed, and how has that decision shaped everything you've built since?

I spent the first eight years of being an amputee fully hiding my leg. I would be in the middle of summer in long pants and high-top sneakers just to hide as much as I could. I would go to events as a teenager and kind of find myself hiding my leg behind pieces of furniture when I was having conversations, just to avoid it. And then one day I was out with friends by the pool, and they encouraged me to throw on some shorts, and it was the first time I'd shown my leg properly in a group of people for a very long time. And it was that moment that I realised that I was the only person holding me back, I was making a bigger deal out of something than I needed to, and my life was going to be so much better if I just embraced my differences.

You've said Marla doesn't yet grasp why you need your leg to walk, she's even tried to put it on herself. What do you want her to understand about that as she gets older?

It's been really interesting stepping into motherhood and seeing how a toddler navigates people who are different, and it's so cool that Marla's going to get to grow up with that being so normal for her. One of the first tantrums we had was that

she couldn't put on my leg that day. So we've already had a few really interesting moments. But I really just want to make it normal in our house, which it luckily will be for her, so that she goes out into the world and just understands that people are different.

You've been open about the toll of chronic pain and sleep deprivation as a new mom, including the practical struggle of getting up quickly in the night. How do you hold onto self-compassion in those harder moments?

I always knew becoming a mum would be really challenging, and I almost didn't become a mum because I thought maybe it would be too hard. Obviously the good has outweighed the really hard times. But just little things like Marla calling out in the middle of the night and she only wants Mum, and I have to put on my leg, and then the guilt that my husband feels, that he's lying there and I'm getting up, putting on a leg in the middle of the night. But sometimes kids just want their mums. So, little moments that people wouldn't even imagine. Going to music class and all the mums are sitting cross-legged and my prosthetic's just sitting out, tripping up all these kids. There are little moments that are really challenging, but it's always worth it in the end, and we just adapt, and that's one thing that I'm really grateful for. I've been an amputee since I was eight, so I've spent my whole life adapting, and I'm used to life just being a little bit more challenging. So I guess motherhood has just been another part of that journey.



You've said all that really matters is what you think of yourself, not what anyone else thinks. Is that a harder or easier lesson to hold onto now that you're raising a daughter?

It's something I've navigated in my personal life being in a different body, but also something I've navigated as someone who shows up online. And I feel like that's only deepened since I've become a mother, and also since I've become a wife, because I've felt even more comfortable in my own body. We'll go on

holiday and I'm just walking around in my bikini even though my leg looks so different to other people. But I think I want to be that example for Marla. I also want to be that example for the person I'm walking past at the pool who's maybe feeling a little bit insecure about being in a bikini. I want everyone to be able to celebrate our bodies and our differences and not spend our whole lives worried about the way we look. So I do think motherhood has changed that a lot. I've also seen my body grow a human and give birth to a human, so it's really hard to then look at that body and not love it, because it's done something so incredible for us and our family.

"It's really hard to then look at that body and not love it, because it's done something so incredible for us and our family."



What's a moment with Marla that's completely changed how you see your own body or your own strength?

There have been so many moments. Just literally being her mum day to day has been really eye-opening to my strength and how much I can do, given how differently abled my body is. But I must say the coolest thing has been the way that she's just accepted my leg, and even now that she can communicate, she's still not asking a ton of questions. I know those will come, and I'll welcome them when they do, but for now she is a reminder that when it comes to difference, kids just get on with it. When I'm walking around in shorts, everyone will be staring at my leg, and I've gotten used to it. But she'll say things like "Your leg's so cool, mama!" or "Can I have a leg like yours?" And I just find the innocence of that really boosts my confidence, because it reminds me how we probably should all be acting as humans, towards people who are different.





What does rest mean to you right now?

What's your favorite way to treat yourself?

Honestly, my favourite way to treat myself is just a bath in the evening with the very smutty books that I'm reading. And if I really want to treat myself, it's a facial or a massage, or just some alone time in silence in the dark where I can get treated. But honestly, the bath and the smutty book does it for me.

Rest means a lot to me right now, and it's something I've had to really navigate throughout my whole career. It's something I didn't used to be very good at. But I've really been an example of, if you don't rest when you need to, your body will force you to do it at some point. I actually developed a panic disorder when Marla was a baby and my women's health businesses were starting out. So I've had to learn to juggle those two massive things in my life while also prioritising rest, which as a mum is really hard.

What does being a Changemaker mean to you?

Even saying it, I can feel the imposter syndrome instantly creep in. It does feel like a massive honour that I'm seen in that light, because I take my role of advocating for different bodies and all of the things I talk about online really seriously. So the fact that that's been seen in a positive way and is helping other people is something that I do not take for granted at all.

Tinuke & Clo



on being heard, and putting
themselves out of the job



Tinuke Awe and Clo Abe founded Five X More after a 2018 report confirmed that Black women in the UK were five times more likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth and the six week period after.

Seven years on, they are a two-woman organization that changed the national conversation on Black maternal health – and they hope to make themselves unnecessary.



A photograph of two Black women sitting at a red table. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow shirt and has long braids. The woman on the right is wearing a blue shirt and has short braids. A quote is written in red cursive over the image. In the background, there is a vase of pink flowers on the left and a framed picture on the right.

"We want to
put ourselves
out of,
a job."



Tell us about Five X More, the cause and the work.

Tinuke: Five X More is a women's health organisation that specialises in Black maternal health outcomes. We are very, very passionate about improving Black maternity outcomes for women in the UK.

This started from your own experiences navigating the maternity system. When did you realize it wasn't just your story?

Tinuke: I had a really terrible experience giving birth to my son in 2017, and at the time I was running a mothers' group, which is how I connected with Clo. She's going to say I stalked her, but you know, it was networking. When you get new mums together, the questions around birth experiences and labour come up immediately. Unfortunately, I was hearing exclusively negative experiences from Black mums. So when the stats came out the next year, in 2018, that Black women were five times more likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth and the six week period, I wasn't surprised. I wasn't shocked. I was seeing it happen first hand.

So many of the women you've spoken to describe feeling

dismissed. What needs to change?

Clo: Women need to be seen, and they need to be listened to. It's that simple. A lot of the women that we speak to feel like health professionals are just not listening to them, and that's directly correlated to their care.

The disparity has slightly improved, but Black women in the UK still face heightened risk. How do you hold that, the progress and also the fact that it's still not enough?

Tinuke: Of course we're grateful for any lives and families saved, but it's important to remember that these are real people behind the statistics, and incremental change isn't enough. Black women in the UK are still almost three times more likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth and the six week period after. It shouldn't even be a thing in the first place, so the only goal is zero. At the end of the day, we want to put ourselves out of business. The goal is for Five X More not to exist, because the disparities don't exist. And in order for us to do that, we have to work extremely hard and make sure we don't take our foot off the gas.





"These are actual
real people behind
the statistics."

You're both mothers doing this work, does that make it feel more urgent, or does it make it harder to carry?

Tinuke: It feels so much more urgent, because I actually have daughters, one on the way and one already. What I don't want is for them to be campaigning about the same thing in 20 or 30 years' time, should they ever choose to give birth. So there's a real sense of urgency. We've got to get this sorted. But it also makes it hard, because being a mum and having any job, or being a mum full stop, is difficult. When there's so much work to do and there's two kids, two and a half, juggling everything day to day is a real challenge.

Clo: For me, I see the joy that I bring to my children and the joy that my children bring me. That alone makes me want to carry on doing this work, because I want all Black mums to feel that same joy, and I want all Black children to have the joy of having their mum around them.

What does being a Changemaker mean to you?

Clo: Being recognised as a Changemaker means a lot. When we started this work, we just wanted to create change. It wasn't about the awards and the spotlight, it was just about creating change and knowing that Black women will stop dying from preventable causes. So being noticed by companies like Peanut and Nuna means a lot to us..

Tinuke: Being a Changemaker to me means leaving the world a better place than what I found it, not just for my children but for all children everywhere. I feel like there's a sort of duty and responsibility to make sure that there are better outcomes and more positivity in the world. So being a Changemaker means that we're not just thinking of the here and now, we're thinking of the future, and the legacy that comes along with that as well.





Babba



Rivera

on building a brand, four daughters,
and living at full volume

Babba Rivera was pregnant and pitching investors when she was told to wait five years to have kids if she was serious about her business. She hung up, cried, and kept building anyway.

That brand, Ceremonia, is now one of only a handful of Latina-founded companies to raise over \$1M in venture capital, and the first Latina-owned haircare line to land in Sephora.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright red sleeveless dress and a gold necklace, is smiling warmly. She is holding a young girl from behind. The girl is wearing a light pink dress with a large white bow at the back. They are standing in front of a large window with dark frames, through which green foliage is visible. To the right, a portion of a grey and black stroller is visible. The background wall is white. A white rectangular box with red handwritten text is overlaid on the center of the image.

"I try to
live life
at full
volume."



What's your name, and where would people know you from?

My name is Babba Rivera, and I am the founder and CEO of the clear hair care brand Ceremonia.

You became the first Latina owned haircare brand to earn a shelf at Sephora. You raised over 11 million dollars. You built all of it while becoming a mother. What do you want people to understand about how you got here?

I really want people to understand that there is no such thing as perfect timing. Life is now. This is life. So, instead of postponing dreams, I try to live life at full volume.

You grew up with two cultures: Chilean roots, Swedish upbringing. Now building a life in New York, how has becoming a mother changed how you hold all of those identities?

Becoming a mother, I feel like, has really brought me back to my heritage in a way that I wasn't always so focused on. Now that I'm a mother, I really want my children to feel Swedish and Latina at the same time, so I'm the annoying mom who goes all in at international week at school, and we celebrate all the holidays in full volume. We celebrated midsummer here last weekend, and we were dancing around this Swedish midsummer pole that we built ourselves, and I feel like the kids had the time of their life.

You built Ceremonia while pregnant, and a lot of the brand's mission was formed with your baby in mind. What did you want to build for her specifically?

In building Ceremonia, I was more cautious than ever about what I was putting on my skin, and I thought it was crazy how the haircare aisle was sort of like a free-for-all when it came to toxins. So, for me, Ceremonia really came out of this desire to do better for myself, and have products that are efficacious but also safe. I've been pregnant back to back through the entire journey of Ceremonia, and when I've not been pregnant, I've been breastfeeding, so being pregnancy safe and having this ethos of cleanliness has been so important since day one.

You're now a mother of four daughters. What does that actually feel like, day-to-day, and is there a version of this that looks like balance?

When I think about balance, I think about it more when I zoom out on a week basis. I don't think there is a perfect balance every day. At least, I have yet to experience a perfectly balanced day. But I try to make sure that I fill my week with all the things that are truly important to me. Balancing motherhood and family life with my ambition and career are my top two priorities right now, so every day looks different, but when I zoom out on a weekly basis, I want to make sure that I am getting equal amounts of importance to those two areas.



You fundraised as a visibly pregnant founder. Did you ever feel the motherhood penalty in that room, and how did you handle it?

It was very interesting when I was fundraising, because this was 2020 so I was highly pregnant, but I was also fundraising over Zoom. So, in some conversations, most conversations, you couldn't actually tell I was pregnant. I also questioned whether I should tell investors that I was expecting, because I didn't want people to feel that I was withholding information, but at the same time it had nothing to do with the topic at hand. I had very interesting experiences. I think two that really stood out was one, I had a meeting with a man who was talking about his own children, and I remember feeling so inspired by "oh, a family man, he will understand" and then, I hadn't told him yet, that I was pregnant, and he goes on to ask me "do you have children, by the way?" and I say "no-" and as I'm about to say the next thing in that sentence, he goes "good. You should definitely wait to have children, at least five years if you're serious about this business." I was like "Oh, that was not where I was going next." I think in retrospect it was clearly not meant to be, but at the time I was devastated. I hung up that Zoom and just sobbed. But then I had another encounter, that was equally eye-opening and it was with the founder of the Female Founders Fund. She had already invested before I knew I was pregnant, so then when I found out, I felt like I had to tell her and after the encounter with the investor I thought it was going to be bad, because clearly investors seemed to think that pregnancy equals bad news. I was so nervous, and she picks up the phone and I tell her "I have something I need to tell you" she's like "yeah, what's going on?" I said "I'm pregnant" she was like "oh my god, congratulations! So, what did you want to talk about?" and I said "no, that was it" "You're calling me to tell me you're pregnant? I thought you had bad news!" I said "It's not?" she said "no! Have you looked at our portfolio? All of our founders are mothers! Congratulations! Have fun!" I think it was very enlightening to realize that there's so many different schools of thought, and the good thing is that you don't need to go into partnership with everyone, you just have to pick the right people.

"Gone are the days of 'I wake up, and I journal, and I meditate' like, no."

If you could sit with yourself in those first few weeks postpartum, launching a brand with a newborn, what would you say?

In that newborn phase, I would just tell myself to soak it all in, which I also was doing, but it's almost like you can't soak it in enough. Already now, the twins, I still call them the babies but I mean, they are not really babies. They're two years old and they're walking and running around, and it goes by so fast and it's the biggest cliché that everyone says and you think you get it but I don't think anyone can fully understand how fast it goes by. I keep telling myself this mantra "this too shall pass" and that is true for the tough times and it's also true for the really beautiful ones. So I think, going back to my earlier point, this is life, this is the moment and this is the time to enjoy and really live the moment.

What do your children think your job is?

Well, my oldest, Alma, she's five years old. She, I feel like, is the closest to understanding what my job is. She has come with me to the office, she has helped me organize the store we have, she even designed a mother's day box for us. I think the first word, after her own name, that she learned to write was Ceremonia. She always practices her writing, writing Ceremonia and then she will draw our bottles. I think Selma thinks my job is more glamorous. Selma is the little fashionista in our house, she calls herself a stylist, and loves walking into my closet and styling me. So, I think she thinks my job is something in fashion.

What does the first 10 minutes of your morning look like?

The first 10 minutes of my morning are just honestly complete chaos. It's always someone screaming mama from some corner.

Gone are the days of like "I wake up, and I journal and I meditate" like, no. There is no hour in the day where I could have that peace or quiet in the morning. Even if I woke up earlier, it's almost like my kids sense that I'm up. So, the first 10 minutes of my morning is usually walking into the twins room, getting their night diaper off, and walking down to the kitchen and starting the day.

What is your favorite way to treat yourself?

Spa is my love language. I love a good facial, good scalp massage, I love lymphatic drainage massages. I really don't get enough time to do all of that, but self care for me is a form of spa. Which is honestly why I started Ceremonia, to bring a sense of spa into haircare. I think the biggest luxury for me is alone time, and I have very little of that.

What does rest mean to you right now?

Rest for me right now means sleep. I have a really hard time carving out rest throughout the day, but I really recover well at night. My super skill is that I can fall asleep within a few minutes anywhere, at any time. If I lay down right now I would fall asleep. I can sleep anywhere. According to my Oura ring, I am extremely resilient to stress, thanks to my nighttime recovery, but I need to work on my daytime recovery.

What are you most hopeful about for the future of motherhood?

I am most hopeful for motherhood to look and feel whatever way women want. I think there is so much pressure to be this or that, and I sometimes feel like there is tension between being a working mom and a stay-at-home mom and at the end of the day, what matters is that it works for you. I really hope for more diversity of thought there, and letting mothers do whatever feels right for them there in that chapter of their life.

There is no
such thing
as perfect
timing.

Life is now.



Last question, what does being a changemaker mean for you?

Being a changemaker for me, means living life on my own terms. I really try hard to ask myself "is this my dream, or am I living someone else's dream?" It means striving for your own dreams, and not what has been projected for you.

