

THE KIT

Wish list

Our editors on what we'd love to gift our moms this May 12 PAGE 4



YOU LOOK GREAT FOR YOUR AGE

Let's change the conversation around aging—one compliment at a time

After a certain stage in life, the average woman will commonly start hearing that she looks great "for her age." But is that truly flattering, or a compliment with a caveat? Why can't the phrase be "you look great," period?

We're here to tell you it can. Because aging is beautiful, no matter what our youth-obsessed society might say. And it's time for a new attitude: celebrating all the positives of aging in all its diversity.

Mary, Georgia and Alka, three women who radiate joy and confidence from the inside out, want to be part of that conversation. And they have a few things in common. They feel more comfortable in their own skin than ever. They're forever learning and growing. And they're ready to embrace whatever life throws at them next.

Here, they chat with The Kit about what aging means to them, while putting

the L'Oréal Paris Age Perfect Rosy Tone Cream to the test. Enriched with LHA to gently exfoliate, imperial peony to reveal radiance and rosy pigments to revive a blushing tone, this rich yet non-greasy daily moisturizing cream gives skin a boost and leaves it feeling smooth, hydrated and healthy.

As the years go by, everybody's skin naturally changes and matures—but that doesn't mean beauty has to fade. A high-performance, age-defying formula designed to restore your glow, both inside and out, L'Oréal Paris Age Perfect Rosy Tone Cream fulfills the brand's mission of bringing confidence to women at every age, from menopause and beyond. As L'Oréal Paris strongly believes: Mature women have still got it, and they've never been more worth it.

Like Mary, Georgia and Alka, we all deserve to look great, period, in all our ages and stages.



L'ORÉAL PARIS AGE PERFECT ROSY TONE CREAM, \$44.99. COMES IN THREE VERSIONS: CLASSIC, ENHANCED WITH SPF 30, AND FRAGRANCE-FREE.

L'ORÉAL PARIS



ALKA loves people and they love her. No matter their age, she finds common ground. "I get along with everyone," says the mom of four, citing former co-workers, her kids' friends and their life partners, too. "I'm confident in the way I talk to people. It's a natural confidence."

Alka is also secure in the way she looks, and it has nothing to do with appearing young for her age. It's about feeling good in her skin. "I have five sisters," she says. "My mother would get up in the morning and make face masks for us. We grew up talking about how to maintain our skin." For them, a beauty ritual was a form of relaxation and a way to bond.

Since moving to Canada from India when she was 21, Alka has continued to indulge her passions for fashion and beauty, and she believes they shouldn't be restricted by age or gender. "Age is nothing," she says. "My mother, when she came to visit me here in Canada, she was 70. She was putting on so much cream, changing her clothes every hour!"

Alka takes after her mom, and she passed that love for a good moisturizer onto her kids, including her two sons. "I go to my son's washroom and use his stuff. He has such good stuff!" she exclaims. One of her sons works in the beauty industry. The other loves to go with Alka for facials and pedicures.

She knows that some people from her Indian culture might judge her for being so trendy as she gets older. "People will talk behind your back." But she's ready to let them talk. "I want to open myself up. I'm still learning. Getting older is not a bad thing. It's good. You've experienced life."

How I feel in my skin: "Even though I had four kids, I still took care of my skin. Every day, my routine was to wash my face, use a toner, a serum... It's self-care. I'm never going to stop. I'm obsessed with new products. Now, I have a little wrinkling, but it doesn't bother me. Wherever I go, I dress up. I put on red lipstick. I like to express myself."

My first impressions of L'Oréal Paris Age Perfect Rosy Tone Cream: "Personally, I like a little bit of scent. This one is perfect. Subtle."

My experience and results: "It doesn't feel like I put anything on. It feels weightless and looks natural. I love it. It brightens and balances my skin."



MARY knows that age is an asset. "It means more power, more wisdom and more ability to help others," says this septuagenarian. "In my heart, I feel like getting older is better." And she wants to set an example for her family of how wonderful growing older can be. "I haven't found one single thing that my age has held me back from, but I'll keep looking!"

Now retired from the plant nursery and import business she founded and ran for 22 years, Mary's life is full. She spends hours each day tending to her roses and channeling her creativity into elaborate floral arrangements. Thanks to a vibrant social circle, she enjoys frequent tea parties. Her saxophonist husband of more than 50 years built a treehouse on their property, and they love watching their grandkids play in it. Every day, she practises a headstand pose for 10 minutes. She can do the splits.

Sure, Mary's heard that she looks good for her age, but it's not something she pays much attention to. "I feel like I look great, period," she says. And a lot of it comes down to her spirit. "I'm happy, funny and fun to be around. I still feel like the carefree girl I've always been." Ultimately, these positive traits come down to a decision she's made: "I've been through a lot in my life, and in the end, I've chosen to simply be happy."

How I feel in my skin: "I used to dye my hair to look younger. When the grey grew in, some customers would say, 'What happened? Are you sick?' One day, I decided I don't care. I'm going to feel great with my white hair. Now I love it and feel powerful and radiant. I love my wrinkles, too! They're the memories of all the times I've smiled. Why would I want to get rid of them? My skin does tend to be on the dryer side, so having an effective moisturizer is important, but the wrinkles aren't really a concern of mine."

My first impressions of L'Oréal Paris Age Perfect Rosy Tone Cream: "The scent feels very light. The fragrance reminds me of my roses, but it's very soft. And pink's my favourite colour."

My experience and results: "My skin feels so soft and silky. My face glows."



GEORGIA has believed she could do anything, even from a young age—and she credits her father for showing her the way. In 1984, she joined her family's general contracting company, where she's now the president and CEO, and found herself in an industry largely driven by men. "I was definitely looked at differently," she remembers. "But I had a father who believed women are equally as good as men in every single way."

As she's gotten older, she's internalized that confidence in her abilities and trusts herself more than ever. "When I was younger, I had this feeling that I had to impress somebody else," she says. "Now my goal is to impress myself."

When it comes to aging, she focuses on experiencing as much as possible. "I think my daughter would tell you that my life has been about making memories for us," she says, remembering the times they'd dress up and head into the city for dinner and a night at a hotel. "As I've gotten older, I've enjoyed things I didn't think I would enjoy. I've done things I never thought I would do."

Again, she credits her father for being her role model. "My dad is 87, but he thinks he's 40," she says. It's proof that age is just a number. "It makes me realize I don't have to stop. There's so much opportunity."

How I feel in my skin: "I've been very blessed with good skin, and I've taken care of it. I stay out of the sun. I wash my face properly every night. I've moisturized and had facials my entire life. As I've gotten older, my skin has gotten drier and I have rosacea, so it's important that I drink a lot of water and keep it moisturized. When I choose a moisturizer, how it feels matters. It could be the most expensive product, but if it doesn't feel good, I'm not going to use it."

My first impressions of L'Oréal Paris Age Perfect Rosy Tone Cream: "The colour of the cream is beautiful. It's easy on the eyes. Right away, it makes you think 'I'm going to have this beautiful, glowy skin.' I also like that the jar is pretty. You'll want to leave it out on your counter because it's so pretty to look at."

My experience and results: "My face drank it up. It feels light. You can tell it's a moisturizer, but it's not oily. I've had creams before where you can feel them sitting on your face. But with this one, I feel like I have nothing on. My skin glows in all the positive ways. It feels healthy."



ALL OF ME

Sarain Fox has always been ahead of the curve. The Indigenous creative powerhouse is pushing forward as an artist, activist and mother of two

Photography by Steve Russell



Sarain Fox with her youngest child, Animkibanasie, wearing a dress by her friend and collaborator Lesley Hampton.

LESLEY HAMPTON DRESS, ELIAS JADE NOT AFRAID EARRINGS, LAG ZUNI BRACELETS, RUSSELL SAM RING

PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE RUSSELL; STYLING: CARLA CANDELA; MAKEUP: LATESHA GRANT; PLUTINO GROUP; HAIR: TAYLOR CHODSKY; PLUTINO GROUP

I wasn't so concerned about the way the world saw me, and I was way more concerned with how my kids saw me.

Growth cycle

Storyteller and activist Sarain Fox is evolving and expanding with the experience of mothering her two small children

By Leanne Delap

Sarain Fox is running around with her small children in the fresh spring air of Northern Ontario, all of them chasing their small poodle, who took advantage of her distraction with a phone call to make a break for it.

This is their happy place: Batchewana First Nation near Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., the place where Fox feels most free, closest to nature and her circle of elders and family. "We love being up here, staying with my auntie, seeing the people on the land. My kids never ask for an iPad or TV; they get dirty and messy and collect rocks," she says. "Currently, we have more rocks than toys."

Fox lives on her own farm in Horseshoe Valley, Ont., with her partner, Nimkii Osawamick, the Juno-nominated musician of Nimkii and the Niniis fame (they are newly engaged; Fox flashed the ring on Instagram), their 3-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son.

There, Fox is negotiating motherhood with her many and varied creative outlets. She is an activist, a dancer, filmmaker, model, designer and influencer (she prefers the term "infiltrator," as she intentionally uses her platform to promote Indigenous talent and subjects). She's also a broadcaster and the co-founder of Land Back Studios, a new media production studio dedicated to telling authentic stories.

After Fox became a mother, her life, identity and career—unsurprisingly!—shifted. She was no longer feeling split between her identity as an Anishinaabekwe and her existence in a colonial world. "I wasn't so concerned about the way the world saw me, and I was way more concerned with how my kids saw me," she says. "I only have to be who I am. I don't have energy to put up any walls or front." It is wild, she says, "to show up in your raw state."

Fox, now 36, says her two pregnancy experiences were completely different. Before them, her career was in overdrive. "I was never not working." Her first child was born during the pandemic. "With my daughter, I sat down during my pregnancy and early days with her and took moments. There was an experience of stillness. It was a romantic vision of motherhood."

With her second baby, it was, in her word, "chaos." "It was nonstop working all the time. I got what other people always said was hard about motherhood: continuing to be who you are." For instance, she filmed the fourth season of *Canada's Drag Race* as a guest judge just two months postpartum.

"The show didn't come out for a year, so I didn't see it [right away], but when it came out, I thought, 'I'm so round, look at my cheeks,'" she says. "It was interesting for me to notice that, then take a step back to process." Existing in a space of body positivity is important to Fox, and this onscreen encounter with her own changing body was formative for her. "I want to acknowledge that I saw a different version; I don't want to say judged. It was like a pregnancy mourning of different parts of my body. Then it was about falling in love again."

Fox explored her feelings around having children in the 2022 documentary *The Climate Baby Dilemma*, which looked at many people's anxieties around having children amid the climate crisis. Fox said, "For a lot of people in communities that have been marginalized, having kids and teaching them culture is an active act of resistance. I have never met an Indigenous person who didn't want to have kids because they thought the world was ending. Why would we think about not having children when we've already experienced the apocalypse?" She elaborates on the thought now. "I was able to make the choice to be a mother, to raise [my children] in ceremony with their language and in connection to their land. That was the exact thing that was targeted and stolen from our people through the residential school system, and now also the Indigenous welfare system today."

The residential school system was the subject of Fox's 2020 film, *Inendi*, produced by Land Back Studios. It's the story of Fox's Auntie Mary, an elder and Knowledge Keeper, and the horrors she suffered from the age of 7 to 16 at St. Joseph's Residential School in Spanish, Ont.

Fox endured her own traumas growing up in Barrie, Ont., as one of the only Indigenous students at her school who was "out." As in, "everything I talked about, everything about who I was, what I wore, informed the public that I was an Indigenous person," she says. "There was a Sarain Haters club." Fox grew up with a single mom, two older sisters and one younger half-sister.

She pauses. "Full transparency. We are in such an interesting moment. We as a family have been through so much," Fox says, referring to a statement she made with her sisters in February, reinforcing their heritage as members of the Bell family of Batchewana First Nation and Garden River First Nation. "Being visible, speaking for Indigenous peoples, we are all having to prove our identities. This is a moment in representation. Indigenous peoples have not had the opportunity to unravel and dissect and engage in how quickly we have seen our rise in the public discourse."

Fox's early experiences with racism informed her educational decisions. She went to Quinte Ballet School of Canada for Grade 9, then switched to Etobicoke School of the Arts, then City School. For university, she went to the Ailey School, "one of the predominant spaces for Black and Brown bodies." All of those experiences, she says, "were about being submersed in different places, and collaborations."

Working in broadcasting brought the opportunity to tell stories that are important to her. She travelled across the Americas reporting on activists confronting oppression for the 2017 series *RISE*, which premiered at Sundance and aired on Viceland and APTN. Her 2018 series *Future History* for APTN explored Indigenous knowledge.

At the same time, Fox was ahead of the curve on using social media for social good. For a decade, she has been an ambassador for Manitobah Mukluks, a footwear brand founded by Métis entrepreneur Sean McCormick. "I got to understand the power of representation from within," Fox says. "We had a whole team of Indigenous people using our own narratives to tell our stories." At first, it felt like they were crashing footwear conventions, but she eventually found the brand was "changing hearts and minds."

Fox has also been a longtime ambassador for Canada Goose. "I'm deeply invested in their work against climate change," she says. In one memorable shoot, she and her mom appeared together for the brand. "It was the first time there were multiple Indigenous people in a campaign," she says. One of their billboards went up across from the Eiffel Tower (she tried to talk her mom into going to Paris to see it, with no luck); people would send her pictures when they spotted them across Europe, China and the United Arab Emirates.

Fox had a memorable Canada Goose red-carpet moment at the CAFA awards last year. She wore a white coat that was transformed into a gown by Indigenous designer Lesley Hampton, a longtime friend and collaborator who also made the dress Fox is wearing in this *Kit* shoot. "I was terrified to cut into this parka," Fox says. "She got out her scissors and fearlessly cut it and let down fill her studio. I was inspired."

Another inspiring red-carpet moment took place at the Junos, which Fox attended to support Osawamick. She wore a navy gown with a beaded panel by Yukon-based designer Randi Nelson, sourced from the collection of the owner of Unorthodox Yukon, a Whitehorse retailer of fashion and wearable art by Indigenous artists.

"I've used every red carpet experience to showcase Indigenous designers," says Fox. "That's how my platform started, and it is how I intend to continue it."

As her platform grows and expands in new ways, reflecting her life as a working mom, Fox continues to push for her long-held passions and convictions. She has two more tiny reasons to make the world a better place.

UTTERLY SPOILED

If price were no object, what beautiful luxuries would you lavish on your mom for Mother's Day? That's the question the *Kit* team answered, with love



Briannah Daniel

My mom is a jewellery lover through and through, with a collection that she's been cultivating since long before I was born—one that I admittedly shop through quite often. She's never afraid to wear a piece of statement jewellery and reaches for gold pieces most frequently, so I think this set of sculptural gold wrist cuffs from Omi Woods would be the perfect addition to her collection.

OMI WOODS CUFF SET, \$434, OMIWOODS.COM



Rani Sheen

Glorying in vibrant colour is a beautiful point of connection for me and my mum. I've given her a fuchsia wool throw blanket, Majorelle-blue linen bedding and a cashmere wrap the deep turquoise of a mid-morning Aegean sea. This time, I'm thinking glowing rosebud pink, in the form of this translucent salad bowl and servers made of resin, a byproduct of the oil industry. It's by Dinosaur Designs, a brand that was born in 1985 in Sydney, Australia, where I grew up. Many of my formative family gifts came from there—a raspberry resin necklace, a juicy orange ring box—so this is a colourful full-circle moment.

DINOSAUR DESIGNS SALAD BOWL, \$340, SERVERS, \$150, HOLTRENFREW.COM



Renée Tse

Like everyone on this planet, my mother has an affinity for ballet flats lately. Growing up, I remember her telling me she couldn't pull them off with her small 5-foot-2 frame. But between #balletcore and spring's new flattering designs, she's pushed those silly thoughts aside. Last Christmas, I got her a pair of metallic silver Mary Janes and she's been wearing them every chance she gets. I think it's time to work a new treasured pair into her rotation; these delicate white, ribbed styles from Chanel will be perfect with her spring uniform of a white T-shirt and blue jeans.

CHANEL SHOES, \$1500, CHANEL.COM



Elena Viltovskaia

An admirer of simple classics, my awe-inspiring, beautiful mama is the most fearless fashion adventurer I've ever met. She loves what she loves with little regard for ever-changing trends. Her style is somewhat reserved, but she's always up for adding drama. She builds her looks around a statement showstopper, whether it's a bold colour or a sleek accessory, like the beautiful Mini Dior Book Tote: a perfect combination of exquisite design and timeless elegance.

DIOR MINI DIOR BOOK TOTE, PRICE UPON REQUEST, DIOR.COM



Eden Boileau

My mom can't get enough plant life around her. She's always tending to and rearranging her houseplants, and as soon there's the slightest hint of spring on the horizon, she's talking about gardening. I can't think of anything that could bring her more delight than a year-round supply of bright, joyful fresh-cut flowers arriving on her doorstep every month.

CANADIANA FLOWERS MONTHLY FLOWER DELIVERY, \$960 (12 MONTHS), CANADIANFLOWERS.COM



Caitlin Kenny

While getting ready to go out for my mom's 66th birthday recently, we stood in front of a mirror as she lifted sections of her hair to show me how she finds it to be so frizzy and fine. For the record, I think her short blonde hair looks wonderful, but I can appreciate concerns of weakening strands with age. So when I first heard about Dyson's newest blow-dryer, I thought of my mom right away. It uses an invisible infrared beam to measure how close you're getting to your head and automatically adjusts the temperature to dry your hair quickly without blasting your scalp. Less damage at the scalp can help with hair health overall—an easy win that fits into my mom's styling routine.

DYSON SUPERSONIC NURAL HAIR DRYER, \$630, DYSONCANADA.CA (AVAILABLE MAY 2)



Laura deCarufel

Can lipstick be a love language? My mom and I are both devoted to the daily joy of applying creamy colour—a slick of ripe red or a dash of poppy pink like this glorious spring shade from Hermès. Other than her beloved Chanel No. 5, lipstick is my mom's only beauty indulgence: the engraved gold bowl by her front door is full of tubes in varying stages of curvy sculpture like pigmented Brancusi. (You only have to twist one up to know which lipstick is hers.) She prefers to spend time with her grandson or in her garden, among the tulips, peonies and climbing roses. I picture her there, ruddy from the sun with a bright mouth and even brighter eyes.

HERMÈS ROUGE HERMÈS LIPSTICK IN #1 ROSE POP, \$99, HOLTRENFREW.COM

THE KIT X BAYVIEW VILLAGE

GLAM GIFTS UNDER ONE ROOF

Shop Bayview Village for the perfect something to surprise and spoil your mom, stepmom, grandma, mother-in-life, or bestie with a baby



WORTH THE SPLURGE

The best gifts are the ones that sparkle, and nothing sparkles brighter than these gems from *Berani*.

PASQUALE BRUNI GIARDINI SEGRETI NECKLACE, \$41,800. **POMELLATO** RITRATTO RING, \$16,150. AND **CRIVELLI** AQUA + PINK 18K RING, \$9,500.



GOURMET GOODIES

These treats from *Pusateri's*, a.k.a. foodie heaven, are sure to delight.

SHORTBREAD HOUSE OF EDINBURGH HANDMADE SHORTBREAD BISCUITS, \$18.99. **LEITZ** EINS ZWEI ZERO SPARKLING ROSÉ, \$17.99. **CARTWRIGHT & BUTLER** MILK CHOCOLATE CHUNK BISCUITS, \$13.99. **CHARBONNEL ET WALKER** PISTACHIO TRUFFLES, \$39.99. **NUGATEAU** RASPBERRY MERINGUE, \$5.50, AND LEMON MERINGUE ECLAIR, \$8.



MADE IN THE SHADE

These shades from *Squint* are so cool, your loved one will insist on wearing them even when the sun isn't out.

FACE A FACE ZUIKU 1 SUNGLASSES, \$550. **THIERRY LASRY** ICECREAMY PINK SUNGLASSES, \$825. AND **ANY DI** SUNCOVER IN SUNRISE, \$165.



HOME CHIC HOME

Add something special to their coffee table with eye-catching decor from *Dana Jordan*.

GLASSHOUSE FRAGRANCES MOON & BACK, \$65. AND **JONATHAN ADLER** ACCESSORIES. MOSAIC BOX, \$65. DRUGGIST EYE VASE, \$449. **LE WINK** COASTERS, \$125. AND **BEL AIR** GORGE VASE, \$279.



LABEL LOVE

At *TNT*, you'll find a plethora of high-end luxury designers for them to choose from.

MAGDA BUTRYM TEARDROP PEARL AND CRYSTAL NECKLACE, \$595. **CULT GAIA** EOS CLUTCH, \$495. AND **GIA BORGHINI** GALANTINE SANDALS, \$595.



ALWAYS IN STYLE

At *Andrews*, find a who's who of trending brands, all with a timeless twist.

TAGLIATORE ALICIA DOUBLE-BREADED PLAID BLAZER, \$975. **OLYMPIA LE-TAN** ROME THE CITY OF LOVE CLUTCH (LIMITED EDITION), \$2,495. **SELF-PORTRAIT** METALLIC BOW MINI SHOULDER BAG, \$645. AND **NAGHEDI** TULUM PETIT TOTE BAG, \$310.



ON TREND

There's something fab at *Honey* for the fashionista in your life.

FANTASTIC FAWN CALLIE SHAGGY FRINGE JACKET, \$145. **HONEY** MILAN FLORAL APPLIQUE BUSTIER, \$145. AND **HONEY** D-LINK NECKLACE, \$88.



SPA INDULGENCE

For ultimate pampering, gift a day at *Hammam Spa* by *Céla* (packages from \$447) or products for take-home indulgence.

CÉLA CRÈME ROSE, \$39. **CÉLA** CRÈME VIOLETTE, \$37. AND **TADRISSEI** SCENTS MEMORIES OF MONT-SAINT-HILAIRE CANDLE, \$69.



SWEET DREAMS

These designer cushions from *Palais Royal* will inject pizzazz into your beloved decorista's bedding or couch decor.

CHRISTIAN LACROIX FLOWER'S GAME BOURGEON CUSHION, \$235. AND **CHRISTIAN LACROIX** PREMIER RENDEZ-VOUS MARAIS CUSHION, \$395.



Better together

Life with mom needn't be confined to occasional family dinners or Sunday FaceTimes. Meet three mother-daughter duos charting a new path

By *Briony Smith*

For years, the script was familiar: Kids lived at home, grew up, moved out, got a job and lived their own life as an adult, seeing their parents from time to time. But what if you don't want to follow that script? Maybe you want to start a business with a trusted partner who can't ghost you, avoid sky-high rent without cohabitating with 1,000 strangers, or explore the world with a guaranteed sweetie who may pick up a cheque here and there. Maybe you just want to bask in the glow of maternal love as the world grows ever colder. Meet three mother-daughter pairs who share how living, working or travelling together has strengthened their bond—and made life all the richer.



TRAVELLING TOGETHER

Ashley Hassard (teacher, 33) and her mother, **Shelley Hassard** (retired, 73), of Toronto have spent the past five years travelling the world together in an effort to explore their family's roots.

Ashley "I lost my dad suddenly. Too suddenly. And if life has taught me anything, it's that nothing is for certain, and, since we never really know how much time we're going to have, we might as well make the time that we do have worth it. So, when my mom told me she wanted to spend some time chasing our ancestors it wasn't even a question.

Since then, we've been travelling around the globe, exploring our roots and discovering where we came from. From climbing glaciers in Iceland to sailing down the Danube, it's been the most eye-opening, humbling and gratitude-inducing experience. This past month we got to live out the final stop on our journey—a week-long pilgrimage to Ireland, the place where the Hassard name began.

I feel like travelling with my mom reminds me to slow things down a bit, to take my time and to really stop to smell the roses. It has been as much about the moments in between as it has been the destinations themselves. The road trips, layovers and walks give us space and time to connect in a way that we don't really get to have in our normal day-to-day lives.

It's been one of the easiest and most authentic ways to connect, to reconnect and to reacquaint ourselves with each other. I'm so grateful for the chance it gave me not just to know my mom as my mom, but to really get to know her as a person exploring and experiencing this world for the first time."



WORKING TOGETHER

Sapna Shetty-Hees, 50, and her mother, **Jayashri Shetty**, 73, of West St. Paul, Manitoba, started the condiment company *Jaya's Preserves* to share the deliciousness of passed-down family recipes with foodies far and wide.

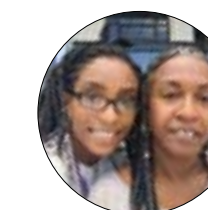
Sapna "Growing up, my relationship with my mom was not great. My parents were immigrants from India. My mom was a young mother and was very overprotective and strict, especially with me as her first-born. We argued and butted heads a lot as we're both pretty stubborn!

My mom has been making spicy pickles since the early 1970s. I think it was a way for her to connect with home, while being so far away from her family in India. She loved experimenting and pickling fruits and veggies that she grew herself. Eventually, it was her spicy carrot pickle that became a family staple.

In 2017, I took an early retirement from the federal public service so that I could be home more for my family, especially my daughter with Down Syndrome. I became obsessed with making preserves with all our home-grown rhubarb, sour cherries, grapes and apples and was finding that I was making way more than we could eat ourselves.

With encouragement from family and friends, my mom and I decided to start selling her spicy carrot pickle and my jam and jelly, and we now run *Jaya's Preserves*, with 10 different South Indian-style spicy pickles and a wide variety of jam, jelly and marmalade, all small-batch, hand-made and using seasonal fruits and veggies.

It's so meaningful because it really strengthens those family ties and cultural bonds that, nowadays, are so easily broken. We've built something that's truly been a labour of love for both of us. Working together has given us so much more time to connect in a way that wouldn't have happened otherwise. I think we're both really proud of each other for what we've accomplished."



LIVING TOGETHER

Micah McLeish, a 24-year-old flight attendant, and her mother, **Elaine Allen**, 58, a customer service representative, have always lived together, other than a few years when Micah was away at school. Now, they share a house in Toronto.

Micah "Growing up, my relationship with my mom was very close. She wouldn't go anywhere without me; we were basically joined at the hip since I was born. It's about the same today: We do everything together, even run errands. We still enjoy going out to eat at restaurants and helping each other with our creative endeavours. I think we've grown closer.

We're navigating how to balance the responsibilities of living together.

What inspired me to live with my mom is the current economy and the fact that rent is so expensive in Toronto. I've had to get used to the lack of personal space. My mom is always barging into my room to show me a new TikTok or waking me up at 8 a.m. just because she can. She is also like a roommate, and we're navigating how to balance the responsibilities of living together while trying to keep it a positive experience. It is quite different than when I was growing up since she was more of an authoritative figure and I was a child, but now I'm an adult.

I consider my mom one of my best friends. We learn more about each other every day and are starting to see things from each other's point of view, which is nice in contrast to my teenage years when we would fight a lot.

She teaches me a lot of the customs and traditions she had growing up. She constantly teaches me new things, like cooking, beauty and just life skills, which is so helpful as a young person trying to navigate adulthood. Living with my mom has enriched my life greatly."

Elaine "As a stay-at-home mother, I had the privilege of being present for every milestone and supporting her through every challenge. She is my only child, so I tried to give her the opportunity to do as much as possible.

Our relationship now is good; we have open communication and I enjoy having her around the house. Whenever she's home from her flights, we spend quality time together. We like to explore new brunch spots, take our dog to the dog park, or just relax at home.

She complains that she wants to live on her own, but she can't afford to, so I guess I'm the backup option.

Living with Micah as an adult required a period of adjustment for both of us. It was weird to admit that she's now an adult and has her own social life and plans. She makes a lot of choices, some of which I don't agree on but have to respect. I'm also adapting to her busy schedule as a flight attendant, which means she's often away for long periods. It requires flexibility in our routines and communication to ensure we remain on the same page while she's away.

Living together has provided us with countless opportunities to deepen our bond and strengthen our relationship. Through shared experiences, open communication, and mutual respect, we have cultivated a sense of understanding and trust. We've been through the good times and the tough times, and it's just made us tighter as a team. Every day, we're growing stronger and learning more about each other."

The road trips, layovers and walks give us time and space to connect.

It strengthens those family ties and cultural bonds that nowadays are so easily broken.

Working with my daughter has been the best experience as we've gotten to know each other on a different level. My daughter has really pushed me outside of my comfort zone, which has been challenging for me as I don't really like change. I also like to be the one in control so I've had to take a step back and learn how to let go.

Working together, we understand each other much better—and I love her even more, deeply knowing who she really is."



Baby blues

Would you stay at a luxury postpartum retreat? Jillian Vieira reflects on “100 days of hell” and the fourth-trimester care that should be available to all new mothers

Moms-to-be, a word of frank warning: No amount of been-there advice, prenatal classes or save-for-later informative Instagram carousels can prepare you for the so-called fourth trimester.

Yes, there's the much-talked-about sleep deprivation, a perpetual state that's even more mind-bending than you've heard. But there's also navigating nap schedules and leaky boobs, processing a deluge of required knowledge you're apparently supposed to instinctively possess (or clumsily Google between overnight feeds) and developing a lifelong bond while simultaneously feeling downright ambivalent.

Take it from me: When my son was born three years ago, amidst a recent move to a new city and a raging pandemic, this adjustment period hit me like a ton of bricks. New motherhood was hard, and not in the way that pop culture had made quippy punchlines out of. Taking care of myself and my own transition seemed to be a total afterthought.

In the first few months, well-meaning people would ask, “Aren't you so happy?” I'd reply with a forced smile mirroring theirs, implying something I didn't actually feel. The truth was, I wasn't just drowning; I was on the ocean floor, draped in pitch black, wondering if I'd ever take a full, soul-satisfying breath again.

My fourth trimester experience is enormously common. An estimated 23 per cent of Canadians who give birth experience clinically diagnosable postpartum depression, but for many more than that, total overwhelm is a prevalent piece of the post-delivery picture, says Melissa Medjuck, The Perinatal Collective co-founder and a Vancouver-based therapist, doula and educator. Her shortlist of contributing factors—not including the all-consuming responsibility of keeping a small human alive—is overwhelming just to read: “Riding intense hormonal mood swings, recovering from birth, adapting to your new identity, contending with the fantasy versus reality of parenthood, managing information overload, lacking a ‘village’ that shows up to support you—it all contributes to this feeling.”

Aiming to alleviate the intensity of this transitional time is Alma Care, Canada's first postnatal retreat. Nestled in the Kimpton St. George, a four-star hotel in Toronto's plush Yorkville neighbourhood with outposts planned for other major Canadian cities soon, Alma Care is co-founded by Hana McConville and Melissa Gallagher, two recent moms seeking to refocus care onto the birthing person.

Once the baby has arrived, new parents can check in for three nights up to a month-long stay with all the makings of a postpartum paradise, including 24-hour care for mom and baby by way of doulas, lactation consultants and personal support workers (PSWs). You're still waking up four or five times a night to feed your baby, but you can hand off your little one to a pro to be burped and soothed should you need to. Rooms are stocked with curated essentials like breast pumps, bassinets and baby loungers; there's a supervised

nursery to allow some much-needed solo rest and a menu of meals and snacks optimized for recovery and milk production. “There will be no excuses for you not to be taken care of,” says Gallagher.

Maybe you're thinking it sounds a bit out-there, a bit Goop-y—isn't the postpartum period often (and aptly) dubbed “the 100 days of hell” a kind of rite of passage? Elsewhere in the world, the answer is no. Alma's philosophy is modelled after *zuo yue zi*, the common Chinese postpartum practice of “sitting the month,” where a new mom can pursue physical healing, rest and breastfeeding as she's supported by her community through housework, baby care and a specialized diet. Similar to customs found in Latin American and Korean cultures, this mother-centred approach doesn't include the idea that putting yourself last is a post-birth badge of honour.

“It's like, if you didn't suffer, are you a good mom?” says McConville. “North Americans are conditioned to think they need to endure versus enjoy, and we kind of want to flip that script.” McConville followed *zuo yue zi* after the birth of both her children, and says the experience had a lasting effect on her throughout new motherhood. “I think it taught me to put myself first,” she says. “I care for my wellbeing...because I was told in the early days that's how I should be supported.”

To that end, Alma Care goes beyond the basics of sleeping and feeding to straight-up luxuries. There are communal support spaces that host daily educational workshops, and access to wellness and spa treatments (facials, foot baths, massages!). Every detail is considered, and intended to smooth out the sharp edges of this acclimation period.

But living the postpartum good life comes at a prohibitive cost. A stay at Alma Care starts at \$850 per night—not exactly accessible for the average person. “In theory, these retreats are a really good idea” but they shine a light on a bigger issue: the glaring gaps in maternal care across Canada, says perinatal inequity researcher Lesley A. Tarasoff, an adjunct lecturer at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto.

Take the standard six-week postpartum follow-up, for instance: After 10-plus months of deity-like medical attention, this single appointment—often a 10-minute, surface-level check-in—remains the only built-in care for birthing people on the other side. (If you opt for midwife care, you'll receive a home visit soon after the birth and roughly weekly appointments for the following six weeks.) At this visit, providers are supposed to ask routine questions about your mental health, home life, financial support and nutrition, but Tarasoff says the discrepancies between clinician approaches—or the shame and stigma of admitting you're struggling as a new mom—means that real concerns can often fall through the cracks.

Tarasoff notes that the perinatal phase can be especially heightened for people who are low income, have disabilities or live in urban centres where family support isn't always available. “There isn't an equivalency of high-risk postpartum [like there is in pregnancy],” she says. “It's kind of like, ‘Okay, you're on your own,’ after that initial visit.”

Finding sustainable solutions for the fourth trimester and beyond is, as always, dependent on government investment. At a base level, Tarasoff would like to see added resources for more frequent home visits and phone check-ins that can gauge how a new parent is managing. As a therapist and doula, Medjuck would push the ask even further, creating built-in support for services like perinatal mental health counselling, pelvic floor rehabilitation, lactation consultant home visits and postpartum nutrition support from the get-go.

McConville and Gallagher's hope is that as postpartum retreats are more widely adopted, insurance companies begin to cover them so more new moms can take part. Alma has also introduced more affordable in-home care options and free expert-led resources that cut through the internet clutter.

“What we hear from people who stay here is, ‘I would pay more, that was absolutely worth every penny, I want to stay longer,’” says Gallagher. “This needs to be the way. Dollars and cents can be a barrier, but there is an invaluable piece to this that I hope can be experienced more broadly.” At the very least, it can spark a critical conversation that puts an often disregarded women's health issue at the forefront.

New motherhood was hard. Taking care of myself and my own transition seemed to be a total afterthought.



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