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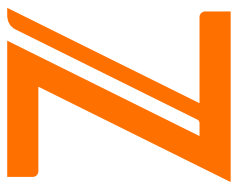
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE: EMBRACING AUGUST IN LAKE NONA

BY JENNY LYNN, PUBLISHER & OWNER



As we step into August, we are greeted by the warmth of summer's final days and the exciting anticipation of the upcoming school year. This month, marked by its mix of summer relaxation and back-to-school preparation, offers a unique opportunity to reflect on our community and stay engaged with the vibrant local happenings that shape our daily lives.

August is a transitional month, bridging the gap between the carefree days of summer and the structured routine of the school year. For many, it's a time of change – whether it's students heading back to school, families gearing up for new schedules, or communities hosting events and festivals that bring people together. It's a month filled with both nostalgia and new beginnings, making it an ideal time to celebrate our local achievements and stay informed about the events that impact our community.

In *Nonahood News* this month, we have a variety of stories that highlight the dynamic nature of our area. From back-to-school preparations and exciting community events to news on local projects and initiatives, August is brimming with news that affects us all. Here are a few key highlights:

**Back-to-School Excitement:** As students and families prepare for the new academic year, we'll be covering the latest updates on school events, supply drives, and the impact of Florida's back-to-school sales tax holiday. This is a crucial time for our educational community, and we are dedicated to bringing you the latest information and resources to support a successful start to the school year.

**Community Events:** August often sees a surge in local events and activities. From summer fairs and outdoor concerts to neighborhood gatherings and charity drives, our community is buzzing with opportunities to connect and celebrate. We'll keep you updated on these events and provide coverage of the highlights and outcomes.

**Local Projects and Developments:** Stay tuned for updates on local infrastructure projects, new business openings and other developments that are shaping our community. Understanding these changes can help us better appreciate the growth and evolution of Lake Nona.

**Spotlight Stories:** Each month, we aim to feature stories that showcase the people and organizations making a difference in our community. In August, look for profiles on local heroes, volunteers and businesses that contribute to the unique character of our area.

As always, our goal is to provide you with local and relevant news that keeps you informed and connected to the happenings in Lake Nona. We value your feedback and encourage you to reach out with any tips, story ideas or questions you may have.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Here's to a wonderful August filled with memorable moments and positive news. Let's make the most of this vibrant month and look forward to all the exciting developments that lie ahead.



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# THE WINNING FAMILY: THE 7-DAY FAMILY CHALLENGE

BY PASTOR RODNEY GAGE



**H**ave you ever noticed that when you come back from a vacation or you've been away from your home for any length of time, there is often an "odor" or "musty" smell in your house? Humidity and mold spores can creep into our homes when there is a lack of circulation and your home has been dormant for several days or weeks. What do we usually do in those situations? Open the windows, adjust the room temperature, light candles, or spray the house with some air freshener. You get the picture. You have to take some actions to improve your home's atmosphere.

The same is true with the relational atmosphere in our marriage or with our kids. It's easy to allow busyness and distractions to creep into our lives, which can cause us to drift emotionally and relationally. Bad attitudes, nagging, yelling or even isolation can cause a "foul odor" in the relational and emotional atmosphere of our homes. Instead of ignoring the signs and symptoms and hoping they go away or get better on their own, you have to take action and do some things to shift the atmosphere in your home and family relationships. Below are seven things you can do to shift the atmosphere of your home for the good in just one week!

## 7-DAY FAMILY CHALLENGE

**Day 1:** Write a handwritten note (not a text) to each family member to affirm your love for them.

You can be as creative as you want with where you put it. You can place it in their lunch box, bathroom mirror, the dashboard of their car or their pillow. Taking the time to write a note demonstrates you "took the time" and thought through it.

**Day 2:** Say nothing negative. (If you blow it, you have to say three positive things to make up for the one negative you said.)

Our words are powerful and memorable. Our words either tear down or build up. Nothing influences the atmosphere of a home or relationship like negativity, nagging and criticism. Be life-giving in what you say and how you say it.

**Day 3:** Participate in a random act of kindness as a family. For example, bake cookies for a neighbor you DON'T know. This could be a widow, single mom, or someone who just moved into your neighborhood or apartments. The purpose is to serve someone else as a family!

**Day 4:** Choose a word representing a value or virtue for each person to live out that day intentionally.

Discuss this core value over dinner. Everyone should have the "core value" on their minds as they start their day.

**Day 5:** Spend one hour in meaningful conversation or activity with all electronics turned off.

This can be taking a walk, playing a board game, or simply having a meal together and talking about the highs and lows of the day. You can also talk about the core "value" from the day before and what you did to live it out intentionally.

**Day 6:** Post one thing you love about each person in your family on social media.

Focus on an attribute or celebrate a win in their lives. This will show recognition of how proud you are and the deep love you have for them. This will be sure to get a lot of "likes."

**Day 7:** Schedule something on your calendar to do one-on-one with each family member over the next week.

This can be a date night with your spouse, a trip to the mall, a bicycle ride, or an ice cream shop. The purpose is to enter into the world of your spouse and each of your children so that you can be intentional about spending quality time together.

Imagine what would happen to the relational and emotional atmosphere of your family dynamics if you set aside one week to apply these seven action steps and suggestions into your family. Before you can enjoy the fruit, you must first plant the seeds. When you cultivate the soil, sow good seeds, you will reap the fruit that comes from doing good things. Take the 7-Day Family Challenge and watch what happens!

*Rodney Gage is a family coach, podcaster, author, speaker and the founding pastor of ReThink Life Church, which meets at Lake Nona High School. His passion is to help families win at home and in life. To learn more about how you can get a copy of his new book called Why Your Kids Do What They Do, go to [www.thewinningfamily.com](http://www.thewinningfamily.com) or [ReThinkLife.com](http://ReThinkLife.com).*

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# LAKE NONA INTERIORS INSIDER VOLUME ONE: LET'S TALK DESIGN AESTHETICS

BY EDINA HOUSTON



When it comes to decorating your home, figuring out your interior design style aesthetic can be an overwhelming task. With so many options and trends out there, it's easy to get "analysis paralysis." But fear not, fellow design enthusiasts! Discovering your unique style is a journey of self-expression and creativity, and it's never too late to embark on this exciting adventure.

So, how exactly do you go about discovering your interior design

style? The key is to start by exploring your own preferences, interests and personality. Your home should be a reflection of who you are, so it's important to identify what truly resonates with you. What is the look you are going for? Are you drawn to clean lines and minimalistic spaces, or do you prefer cozy and eclectic interiors filled with vibrant colors and patterns? Take some time to think about the spaces and environments that make you feel happy, inspired and at peace; this will give you valuable clues about your design aesthetic.

One helpful way to discover your style is to create a mood board. This can be a physical board where you pin images, swatches and inspiration that speak to you, or it can be a digital collage created on platforms like Pinterest or Houzz. By curating a collection of images that resonate with you, you can start to see patterns and themes emerge that point toward your unique design sensibilities. Pay attention to the colors, textures and styles that consistently appear in your mood board – these are the building blocks of your interior design style.

Now that you have a better understanding of your preferences and tastes, it's time to familiarize yourself with key interior design terms that will help you articulate and refine your style. Let's break down a few of these terms to make them more accessible and easy to digest:

- 1. Minimalism:** A design style characterized by simplicity, clean lines and a focus on functionality. Minimalist interiors often feature neutral colors, uncluttered spaces, and a sense of calm and tranquility.
- 2. Eclectic:** A design style that blends different periods, styles and influences to create a unique and personalized look. Eclectic interiors are often characterized by a mix of colors, patterns and textures that come together in a harmonious way.



**3. Mid-Century Modern:** A design style that emerged in the mid-20th century and is known for its sleek lines, organic shapes and minimalist aesthetic. Mid-century modern interiors often feature iconic furniture pieces and a blend of natural materials like wood and leather.

**4. Bohemian:** A design style that embraces a free-spirited and eclectic approach to decorating. Bohemian interiors are characterized by a mix of colors, patterns and textures inspired by global influences and a sense of wanderlust.

**5. Scandinavian:** A design style that hails from the Nordic countries and is known for its emphasis on simplicity, functionality and natural materials. Scandinavian interiors often feature light colors, clean lines and a cozy, hygge-inspired atmosphere.

**6. Coastal:** Coastal style is inspired by beachside living and the colors of the sea. This style often features a light and airy color palette, natural materials like rattan and jute, and nautical decor elements such as shells, ropes and anchors. A relaxed and breezy atmosphere is key to achieving a coastal look.

**7. Contemporary:** Contemporary style is constantly evolving and reflects the current design trends of the moment. This style often features clean lines, neutral colors, and a mix of modern and traditional elements. Contemporary interiors are sleek, sophisticated and minimalist in nature.

**8. Industrial:** Industrial style draws inspiration from urban lofts

and factories, featuring raw materials like exposed brick, steel and concrete. This modern style often incorporates rustic elements, distressed finishes and utilitarian design elements.

By familiarizing yourself with these key interior design terms, you can better articulate your style preferences and communicate your vision to others. Remember, interior design is a journey of self-discovery and creativity, so don't be afraid to experiment, take risks and trust your instincts. Your home should be a reflection of who you are, so embrace your unique style and let your personality shine through in every corner and crevice.

#### About Edina Houston

*Edina Houston is a professionally skilled interior designer dedicated to creating visually appealing and functional spaces tailored to her clients' needs. Specializing in creating luxurious, comfortable environments that uniquely reflect each project's individuality, Edina infuses her work with a deep passion for design and unwavering dedication to excellence. Connect with Edina on Facebook and Instagram @EDesignsAndCo*

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# BEST FRIENDS IN THE NONAHOOD: MEET BEAUTIFUL BELLA!

BY PATTY REBER  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF KELLY AND EVELYN ISHMAN

This sweet girl is a classic! You may have noticed Bella sunning a bit in the corner of her yard if you ever walked down Reymont Street. A face so adorable that I couldn't help but stop to talk to her, especially since our dog Grant pulled me to her when he spotted her nestled in the corner near bushes. Grant wagged his tail endlessly, and he and Bella had some kind of pooch talk together! Bella is half Beagle and half Shiba Inu, a very unusual combination. Bella's telling eyes and wagging tail will always greet you. If she weren't already with her great family of partners Keli and Marisa, I would welcome her in our home! Not a chance! They adore her!

Our Rhodesian Ridgeback, Grant, was the first to notice Bella along one of our walks, and every time we are on Reymont Street he pulls me to her yard looking for her. When she is not in the yard, Grant waits. "Sorry, Grant, she may not be out for awhile!"

Keli went to a pet store before Thanksgiving back in 2012 in Washington, DC, *just to play with puppies!*

Yes, you guessed it, Keli fell in love with Bella, who was 8 weeks old at the time. "Surprise, Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!" Bella was her first dog, and it is clear the love that Keli and Marisa have for Bella. Because Bella is half Beagle, she has a Beagle howl, but the hilarious part is that she only howls when she is dreaming! Bella needs to be heard! Her nose is always to the ground, especially when she visits grandma's house where she remembers all locations for past treats! Smart girl, Bella! She loves riding in the car, and one can only imagine her ears flying back as she sticks her head out of the window.

Until we see you on our next walk, Bella. Stay well since I am sure Grant wants to marry you!



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# JULIAN VILLELA: YOUNG SIMBA ON LION KING'S NORTH AMERICAN BROADWAY TOUR

BY JULIAN VILLELA  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF VILLELA FAMILY



and we are loyal to anyone we love. What's pretty cool is that I can give my character as Young Simba my own flavor and swag.

I love the feeling I get on stage. It's a "NervCited" feeling...the nervous and exciting feeling I get as I walk onto the stage, especially for the first few shows. It was an adrenaline rush!!! The best way to describe it is like the feeling you get when there is a drop in a roller coaster. You are nervous, scared, but the rush is so fun!

The cast, crew and company of this tour is hands down AMAZING! There is SO much talent here. I learn a little every day from them. Every person on tour is so kind, so supportive, and has beautiful personalities.

I bet you are wondering if I go to school? The answer is absolutely! We have an onsite teacher and child wrangler – Lisa Swift (better known as Ms. Lisa). She is a rockstar! On tour, we have 3 other kids she oversees to teach. My mom always says, "Lisa is an extension of her backstage."

Traveling on tour has been so eventful. I have been in 13 cities across the country in less than a year! Fun fact is that I travel with my whole family –

Mom, Dad and sister. They are my biggest fans!!! Can you guess how much luggage we travel with? 10!

We have been able to do fun things in every city such as college campus visits, attend interactive science museums, amusement parks (I love roller coasters, by the way), film studio tours, tons of new restaurants, several

zoos and a tour of Paisley Park (the home of Prince!).

I was born in Miami and currently live in Lake Nona. My mom is of Colombian descent and my dad is of Honduran descent. I'm one of the few Latinos on this tour and love representing my heritage!



Hi! My name is Julian Villela, and I am Young Simba on the Lion King's North American Broadway Tour. I have been on tour for the last 10 months, and I've performed over 130 shows and in front of over 325,000 people. Oh yeah... I'm 11 years old @.

To be honest, there are SO many "favorites" about performing on the Lion King's National Broadway tour. I love to perform in front of people of all ages and put a smile on their faces. The best part of this musical is that I get to act, sing and dance ALL in one show. Also, don't forget that musicals are LIVE, so we have to be able to deliver a high energy performance every time in one take – NO pressure...

Also, I love bringing the character to life, in this case Young Simba. The funny thing is that Young Simba and I are very similar. We are confident, we view our dads as our hero,



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## CIVIC-MINDEDNESS

In today's political climate, the importance of being civic-minded cannot be overstated. Civic-mindedness involves a deep sense of responsibility and active participation in the well-being of your community. It means going beyond your personal interests to consider the collective good. This fosters a stronger, more resilient and vibrant community and creates a ripple effect that benefits all of society.

At the heart of civic-mindedness is the commitment to volunteerism. Volunteering your time and skills to support charitable causes – whether it's helping at a food bank, participating in neighborhood cleanups, or mentoring others – directly impacts the quality of life in your community. These efforts not only address immediate needs but also promote a culture of cooperation and empathy.

When community members regularly engage in volunteer work, they build trust and camaraderie, laying the foundation for a supportive and connected community.

Being civic-minded also involves staying informed and engaged with local issues. Understanding the challenges and opportunities facing your community allows you to contribute effectively to discussions and solutions. The Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce works to educate both its members and government officials about issues facing our community and the importance of public policies to address them. By participating with the chamber, you can ensure that your voice and the voices of your neighbors are heard. This active engagement leads to more democratic and representative governance, where policies and

initiatives reflect the true needs and desires of the community.

Chambers can provide a wealth of information about local issues as well as many opportunities for civic engagement. As more individuals take part in community activities, the collective impact grows, leading to significant improvements in various aspects of community life, from public safety to environmental sustainability.

In a broader sense, being civic-minded strengthens the social fabric. Communities with high levels of civic engagement are better equipped to face challenges and crises. They exhibit greater social cohesion, where members look out for one another and collaborate to overcome obstacles. This resilience is crucial in times of adversity.

In conclusion, the importance of being civic-minded in your community extends beyond

the immediate benefits of volunteerism and engagement. It cultivates a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support, creating a stronger, more connected and resilient community that transcends political parties. By actively participating in the well-being of your community, you not only enhance the quality of life for yourself and your neighbors but also contribute to the broader goal of building a better society.

**For information about how to join the chamber or to get the most out of your chamber membership, please reach out to the Lake Nona Regional Chamber of Commerce at [administration@lakenonacc.org](mailto:administration@lakenonacc.org) or call us at 407-796-2230. We would love to hear from you!**

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Mark Reid, Beep; Hemali Shah, KW Commercial; and Brandy Bennett, Board Chair, networking at the chamber First Tuesday After Hours at Gator's Dockside.



Venestina Cuevas, VNM Inspection Services; Stephanie Houde, Lake Nona Arts; Christopher Marquez, Verizon; Richard DiBiase, Restoration 1; and Damian Franchi, 360 Painting, networking at the chamber First Tuesday After Hours at Gator's Dockside.



Candy Cole with Dr. Duron Lee at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Lake Nona Primary Care.



Pat Garcia, Meals With A Mission, and Julio Aviles, Unik Title, at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Meals With A Mission.



Kevin Kendrick makes welcoming remarks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Meals With A Mission.

Thank you to all our sponsors and volunteers



Board members with Maurita Brown of Her Scholarship Fund at their ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Magic Gaming, the 2024 NBA 2K team for the Orlando Magic, hosted an in-person event so the community could watch the Magic Gaming team vs the Haws Talon GC.



Heart of Florida United Way collected donations for mothers-to-be in preparation for their community baby shower.



VA Executive Director Tim Cooke speaks at a networking event about how the VA is serving Veterans, its health care practitioners and the community.



Orange County Commissioner Maribel Gomez Cordero with Mayor Jerry L. Demings at the Centro Unido de Detallistas Business Journey Forum designed to help facilitate commerce between businesses of Central Florida and Puerto Rico.



LIV Realty Nona hosted the chamber ambassador social, where performers introduced attendees to cultural dances of Carnivale.



Performers taught chamber ambassadors some of the cultural dances of Carnivale at the social hosted by LIV Realty Nona.

# FINANCIAL FOCUS: 529 PLAN CAN HELP EASE COLLEGE 'STICKER SHOCK'

BY KRISTINA DHOUNTAL



The school year will soon be here. And if you have young children, you're one year closer to the day when they may be headed off to college. When that day arrives, will you be financially prepared?

College isn't cheap. For the 2023–24 academic year, the average cost – including tuition, fees, housing, food, books, transportation and other expenses – was nearly \$29,000 for in-state students at four-year public colleges and universities and about \$60,000 for private schools, according to the College Board. Most students do get some type of financial aid or scholarships, or both, but even the “net” price of college can

be considerable. So, it's a good idea to begin a savings program as early as you can.

One popular way to build money for college expenses is through a 529 education savings plan. When you invest in a 529 plan, your earnings can grow tax deferred and your withdrawals are federally tax free when used for qualified education expenses – tuition, fees, books and so on. And while you can invest in any state's 529 plan, you might be able to deduct your contributions from your state income tax or receive a state tax credit if you invest in your own state's plan.

Despite these tax benefits, some people are concerned that a 529 plan can prove costly in terms of lost financial aid. And the value of a 529 plan is looked at as an investment asset on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

(FAFSA). However, recent changes to FAFSA may mean that a 529 plan has a relatively small effect on the amount of aid you may receive.

A 529 plan also can be used to pay for other costs, including:

- **K-12 expenses** – You can use a 529 plan to pay K-12 expenses, up to \$10,000 per student per year. Not all states comply with this 529 expansion for K-12, so you might not be able to claim deductions and your withdrawals could be subject to state tax penalties.
- **Apprenticeship programs** – A 529 plan can be used to pay for most expenses connected to apprenticeship programs registered with the U.S. Department of Labor. These programs are often available at community colleges and combine classroom education with on-the-job training.
- **Student loans** – You can withdraw funds from a 529 plan to repay qualified federal private and student loans, up to \$10,000 for each 529 plan beneficiary and another \$10,000 for each of the beneficiary's siblings.

Another potential advantage of a 529 plan is its transferability. If you've named a child as a 529 plan beneficiary, and that child eventually chooses not to pursue any post-secondary education, you – as the account owner – can name another family member as beneficiary. And with the passage of the SECURE 2.0 Act, any unused 529 plan funds up to a lifetime limit of \$35,000 can be transferred to a Roth IRA for a beneficiary, free of taxes and penalties. There are certain rules governing this 529-to-Roth move – for example, you must have had your 529 plan at least 15 years – so you'll want to consult with your tax advisor before making any moves in this area.

If you'd like to invest in your children's future education, a 529 plan can be a good choice – so study up on it soon.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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# DOWNTOWN ARTS DISTRICT 'ART AFTER DARK' SEMI-FORMAL SOIREE FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS RETURNS ON SATURDAY, AUG. 17

BY DOWNTOWN ARTS DISTRICT  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOWNTOWN ARTS DISTRICT

Join the Downtown Arts District for the Exclusive Annual Young Professionals Art Event

Downtown Arts District announces the return of its popular program “Art After Dark,” a Soiree for Young Professionals on Saturday, Aug. 17, from 7-10 p.m. at CityArts Orlando. Art After Dark introduces young professionals to the Arts District and its mission through social interaction, arts engagement and networking. Guests will enjoy the celebration in a unique setting by strolling through CityArts' five different galleries and CityArts Café. This year, the evening's festivities include interactive art experiences with Sketchbook Orlando founder Jennyfer Marie, henna artist Ashleigh Mausser, tarot card reader Angelique Luna and fashion sketches by The Paper Bar Co. Guests will enjoy performances by DJ Lindsey Leigh, music performance curated by Kai Carter, and a few surprise performances throughout the night. There will be meet-and-greet opportunities with special guest artists, live music, photo opportunities, a raffle, whiskey and beer tastings and light bites by Chris Hernandez Catering.

Limited Early Bird tickets are \$40 per person online until 11:59 p.m. on Aug. 14. Regular tickets are \$50 per person until sold out. The admission includes entertainment, food and three complimentary drinks. Art After Dark is a limited engagement with entry for 200 attendees.

“We are so happy to bring back one of our most popular annual events created to introduce young professionals and the ‘young at heart’ to CityArts and the mission of the Downtown Arts District,”

says Downtown Arts District Executive Director Barbara Hartley. “We encourage guests to get their tickets early so they don't miss this unique opportunity to experience art in a very fun way.”

Don't miss Downtown Arts District Art After Dark on Saturday, Aug. 17, hosted at CityArts Orlando located at 39 South Magnolia Avenue, Orlando 32801. To purchase tickets, go to <https://aad2024.eventbrite.com>, and for more information about the Downtown Arts District, visit [www.downtownartsdistrict.com](http://www.downtownartsdistrict.com). (Art After Dark is for ages 21 and up.)

### About Downtown Arts District

The Downtown Arts District is a dedicated nonprofit organization for advancing arts and economic development in the City of Orlando. Established in 2000, the Arts District represents and serves the arts community through signature programming and public art projects. Comprised of a series of cultural communities, the Arts District encompasses the visual arts, literature, the performing arts – including music, drama, film and dance – and arts and culture-related retail businesses. The Arts District is the producer of a series of mission-based events and programs to heighten visibility for the arts, including the monthly 3rd Thursday Gallery Hop, annual themed arts celebrations La Maschera and Día de los Muertos, Orlando Story Club and much more. In addition, the Arts District manages and operates CityArts Orlando, the multi-use art and cultural destination in the historic Rogers Kiene Building in Downtown Orlando.





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## NONA.LIFE.STYLE: EASY OUTFITS FOR AUGUST

BY MARISSA BURNS  
PHOTO COURTESY OF LV SOCIAL



It's that time of year again. We grudgingly flip the calendar from lazy vacation days to looming fall deadlines, bracing ourselves for the uphill struggle that is August. The next few weeks may be pure chaos as we drag ourselves (and our kids) back into stricter schedules and return to the full-time grind of work, school, routines and rhythms. Amid this annual chaos, we could all use a bit of help. (I mean besides coffee, of course.) While I can't remedy your family's jigsaw puzzle of a schedule, I can make getting dressed for work a quick, easy and enjoyable process. Here are three easy, work-wear outfit inspirations to eliminate the style guesswork and ensure you look sharp and sophisticated all month long.

### Outfit Inspo #1: Dresses

The best thing about dresses is their ease. No need to worry about matching it with other pieces, this no-thought-required formula reads polished and professional with little effort. A simple sheath dress is a perfect go-to work outfit for hectic mornings. For a business professional environment, pair it with pointed-toe heels and a contrasting color blazer for chilly offices. If you work in a less professional atmosphere, try pointed-toe flats or neutral sneakers and a jean jacket (like I did here) for a more casual but still stylish look. And if you prefer a more forgiving silhouette, a shirt dress will do the trick. This looser style has all the structure and presence of workwear but is less fitted and breezy for maximum comfort. Calvin Klein is my go-to for chic sheath dresses, and you can also find shirt dresses by classic American sportswear designers like Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger and Michael Kors.

### Outfit Inspo #2: Vests

Dust off those '80s threads and get ready for a comeback, team. I'm absolutely loving the fashion revival of vests right now. But this time, we're leaving the denim behind and embracing vests for work and – wait for it – as shirts. Yes, you can pull this off in the office if you get the fit and styling just right. Go for a fitted vest that's modest and not too revealing. Pair it with a looser, flowy bottom to keep things fresh and not too sexy. Think wide-leg linen pants or a pleated broomstick skirt for a more relaxed vibe. You can also rock it under a matching blazer. Pair it with the coordinating pants and you have a sharp, three-piece monochromatic look, perfect for stricter office dress codes. The monochrome approach simplifies the matching game and ensures you look chic with minimal effort. You can find these three-piece sets at retailers like White House Black Market and Express.

### Outfit Inspo #3: White Button-Down Blouse

Is there anything more classic than a crisp white button-down top? For decades this staple has been the epitome of effortless chic style. If you don't own one, take advantage of the summer's end sales and outfit your closet with this iconic essential. This versatile piece can be paired with jeans, work pants and skirts of any kind. No matter what you wear it with, this staple stunner is a surefire way to add instant finesse to any work outfit. You can even wear it over dresses as a finishing layer in the summer and under dresses and tanks for warmth in the fall and winter. A crisp, boyfriend-style white top paired with dark jeans and heels is the perfect end-of-summer outfit for a casual polished work look. Find this classic at contemporary retailers like J. Crew, Banana Republic and LOFT.

As we're abruptly thrust back into the whirlwind of fall schedules, deadlines and formalities, these easy outfit combinations will help streamline your getting-ready process. I hope you feel equipped to tackle this season with confidence. Just add cute shoes, a structured bag and coffee. (Lots of coffee.) Solidarity, sister. I'll see you in September!

*Marissa Burns is a personal branding expert, stylist and speaker. Her mission is to help professionals leverage the power of personal style to build confidence and grow their business. She is passionate about the small business culture in Nona and building community among its residents. You can connect with her on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok @MarissaAlexandraStyle.*



# NONA TRIALS



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# SAVOR TOOTH TIGER: TWO-INGREDIENT COCONUT ICE CREAM

BY ALLYSON VAN LENTEN  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLYSON VAN LENTEN

Is summer really summer without ice cream? Of course, ice cream of any flavor is available for purchase year round, but there is something so satisfying about making yourself the perfect sweet treat at home. The two ingredients? A can of coconut cream and sugar. That's it! Did I use an expensive ice cream maker? Absolutely not! Two metal bowls, ice, a freezer and some patience is all that is required.

This method for making ice cream works for almost any flavor. The simplest way to make ice cream is to take a large metal bowl and fill it with ice. Next, create a nest for a smaller metal bowl inside the ice. The ice cream base goes into the smaller bowl, and the entire contraption goes into the freezer uncovered. Every 30 minutes, take the large bowl out and scrape down the sides of the smaller bowl using a spoon or spatula. This aerates the ice cream and redistributes the ice crystals. It takes just a minute and gets popped right back into the freezer. You'll need to do this every 30 minutes for 2-3 hours or until the ice cream base has the consistency of a loose soft serve ice cream. Then, you can stop the stirring process and transfer the ice cream to an airtight container into the freezer for at least 5 hours. After the freeze, the ice cream scoops just as easily as any store-bought ice cream.

An alternative method to making ice cream that I love to use uses zip-top plastic bags and ice. The ice cream base goes into a quart-sized zip-top bag. Surrounding that bag is a gallon-sized zip-top bag filled with ice and a tablespoon of salt. The plastic bags get sealed so the ice and salt never touch the ice cream base. To churn the ice cream, you can roll the bag on the ground or shake the contents. This is a wonderful activity for kids!

This method only takes about 10 minutes of movement. Once the base is churned to a soft serve consistency, transfer the ice cream to a covered container in the freezer for 5 hours to fully set.

The basic formula includes a full fat cream or coconut cream, sweetener of any sort and a flavor additive. What I love about this recipe is that the coconut cream is not only the creamy base needed but also the flavor. Coconut cream already has so much concentrated coconut flavor that all it needs to become ice cream is sugar. White granulated sugar works great, but I prefer brown sugar, which brings even more warm, toasty flavor. This recipe is great for vegans and those avoiding dairy, or in my case people who just really love coconut. I like to top this ice cream with some toasted coconut flakes and fresh diced mango for the ultimate tropical treat.

## Two-Ingredient Coconut Ice Cream Recipe

- 1 can coconut cream (Not coconut milk. I use Trader Joe's brand.)
- 1/2 cup brown sugar

## Instructions

1. In a small metal bowl, mix together brown sugar and coconut cream very well until the sugar is dissolved.
2. Fill a larger metal bowl with ice and nestle the small metal bowl with the cream into the ice bowl.
3. Put the entire thing in the freezer uncovered. Every 30 minutes, take it out and scrape down the sides of the small bowl using a spatula or a spoon. This mixes the ice crystals that have formed along the sides into the ice cream base. This will take a few hours but is necessary to slowly churn the ice cream. Once the texture is like soft serve ice cream, transfer it to a covered container and freeze for at least 5 hours. After the freeze, it should scoop nicely. Serve with toasted coconut or diced mango.

This recipe makes enough for 2 servings but can easily be doubled. If you have an ice cream machine, this base works in that, too.



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# CHANGE OR DIE: ARE YOU READY TO SHIFT AS A LEADER?

BY DR. LINDA TRAVELUTE, FOUNDER, MAXIMIZED LEADERS



## The Harsh Reality of Leadership

Let's get real for a moment. If you don't change, you're going to die. Not physically (at least not right away), but your relevance, your innovation, your growth? That's all on the chopping block. As a leader, this isn't just about you. It's about your team, your organization, and everyone who depends on you to guide the way forward.

## A Cautionary Tale: Samantha's Story

I once worked with a leader as her executive coach – let's call her Samantha. She ran a successful family business right outside of Lake Nona, built from the ground up by her father. Samantha was smart, dedicated and cared deeply about her company's success. But when it came to change? She hit the brakes hard.

While her competitors embraced growth and transformation, Samantha clung to traditional methods like a life raft. "Our loyal customers won't adapt to these services," she insisted. But slowly, surely, that loyal customer base started to shrink. The once-bustling business began to struggle.

One day, Samantha sat across from me, tears streaming down her face. "I thought I was protecting what my father built," she confessed. "But by not changing, I've put everything at risk. I let fear dictate my actions."

## The Imperative of Change

Samantha's story hits hard because it's not unique. How many of us have let fear of the unknown keep us from making necessary changes? How many businesses, careers and dreams have withered because someone couldn't or wouldn't adapt?

Here's the tough truth: Change isn't just inevitable – it's essential. The world is moving at breakneck speed, and if you're not keeping up, you're falling behind. There's no middle ground.

## The Choice to Shift

But here's the good news: You have a choice. You can choose to shift, to adapt, to lead the charge into new territory. And

when you do, you open up a world of possibilities not just for yourself, but for everyone you lead.

This transformation is beautifully outlined in John C. Maxwell's book, *Leadershift*, which explores the essential shifts every leader must make to stay relevant and effective.

## Four Keys to Making the Shift

So how do we make this shift? Let's break it down:

### 1. Embrace the unknown

I get it. Change is scary. It's uncomfortable. But you know what's scarier? Becoming obsolete. Start small if you need to. Learn a new skill. Try a new approach to problem-solving. The more you practice stepping out of your comfort zone, the easier it becomes.

### 2. Empower your team

Remember, you're not in this alone. Your team can be your greatest asset in navigating change – but only if you let them. Foster an environment where new ideas are welcome, where innovation is celebrated. When your team feels empowered to contribute to change, they're more likely to embrace it.

### 3. Lead with vision

People need to understand the "why" behind change. Paint a clear picture of where you're going and why it matters. When your team can see the bigger picture, they're more likely to get on board, even when the journey gets tough.

### 4. Stay resilient

Let's be real – change isn't always smooth sailing. There will be setbacks. There will be failures. But here's a little secret from psychology: Resilient leaders don't see failure as an endpoint. They see it as data. Every setback is an opportunity to learn, adjust and come back stronger.

## The Psychology of Successful Leaders

Speaking of psychology, let's talk about the mindset of successful leaders. Research shows that those who thrive in times of change possess what's called a growth mindset. They view challenges not as threats, but as opportunities. They believe in their ability to learn, adapt and overcome.

Cultivating this mindset isn't always easy, but it's crucial. It's the difference between seeing change as something that happens to you, and seeing it as something you can shape and direct.



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## Envisioning Your Future

I want you to think about something for a moment. Imagine where you and your organization could be a year from now if you fully embraced change. What innovations could you introduce? What problems could you solve? What growth could you achieve?

Now, imagine where you'll be if nothing changes. Which future excites you more? Which one scares you more?

## Your Invitation to Transform

If you're ready to step up, to shift, to lead in a way that embraces change instead of resisting it, I want to invite you to join us for the *Leadershift Roundtable Experience*. Starting Sept. 3, we'll dive deep into the essential shifts every leader must make to thrive in today's fast-paced world.

This isn't just another leadership mastermind. It's a transformative experience designed to equip you with the tools, insights and mindset you need to lead confidently in the face of change.

Don't let fear hold you back. Don't let your organization become another cautionary story like Samantha's. It's time to shift. It's time to lead. It's time to change – because the alternative isn't an option. Change or die.

Ready to take the leap? Join us at [Maximizedleaders.com/roundtable](http://Maximizedleaders.com/roundtable). Your leadership journey – and your organization's future – awaits.

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