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*with Erika Mount*

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*with Rowan Grace*

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# Black Hills WOMAN MAGAZINE

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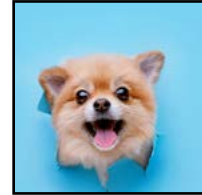


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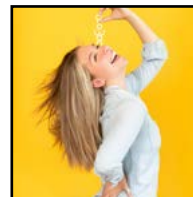


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# WHO'S IN YOUR FOXHOLE?

By Kelsey Parker





**IT'S** not likely you need to worry about digging a hole to create space for you and a few other close friends to protect against enemy fire.

But it is likely you'll traverse life, maybe dodging tragedy or maybe hitting it head on. You'll have battles of your own—some may end in victory, some may not. The question is, who do you want in your foxhole?

In real end-of-days times (maybe a zombie apocalypse, war, due to some natural disaster), no one would want me in their foxhole. I don't know how to hunt, garden, navigate with a compass, or start a fire. If you need me to plan an end-of-days-themed dinner, however, I'm your girl.

But I'm not talking end-of-days preparedness. I'm talking about the ultimate battle: life. The people who will stand next to you, no matter the season.

The question can get tricky. Who should be in your foxhole vs. who do you really want there? Maybe the first people who come to mind are those related by blood. Maybe they're not. Here are the people I would and would not want in my foxhole.

### THE CHARACTERS I WANT IN MY FOXHOLE

1. **The Golden Retriever.** They're kind, loyal, and gentle, and they're always happy to see you! The Golden Retriever friend is the friend you'll call when you need help, companionship, a night out, or some cheering up. The joy they exert is contagious. (I'm a dog person, so I'd accept the animal, too.)
2. **The Comedian.** I want the guy/gal who will make me laugh, no matter the circumstance. Delayed flight? Lost your job? They have a joke for you!
3. **The Statistician.** Who doesn't want to know all the data before making a decision? You can rely on this friend to give you honest, objective advice.
4. **The Pusher.** You can rely on the pusher to force you to do things you might not otherwise do. They will encourage you to try new things, push past your comfort zone, and press you when they know you can do better.
5. **The Cheerleader.** This friend is loyal and **EXCITED** about everything you do! This friend is the first to celebrate your victories, big or small.

## THE CHARACTERS I DON'T WANT IN MY FOXHOLE

1. The Hangover Inducer. Not the hangover caused by too many glasses of wine, but the person whose energy drains you for hours/days after you hang out. They're grumpy, negative, and/or they suck the energy right from you.
2. The Pessimist. The last thing I want to hear from a friend in my foxhole is, "Things are gonna end badly for us." Nobody has time for that kind of energy.
3. The One-Upper. This "friend" is too busy trying to outdo you, so you're not sure if they're rooting for you or against you.
4. Friend Collector. This person isn't worried about creating meaningful, genuine relationships. Instead, this person just wants to add you to their list of contacts that they'll come back to when they want/need to.

Choose your foxhole friends wisely.

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**BE**cause everyone needs a little pampering from time to time, from a tired mom to an overworked dad or a beautiful bride to be and her tribe, to the last days of bachelor life with the guys, there needs to be a place to unwind and feel special. That's part of what the BeBeauty studio is trying to achieve in the Rapid City area.

Located in a beautiful historic brick building on St. Joseph's street downtown, owners Tara Reid and Amy Scherer have come together to offer a combined space for men and women. Benevolent Beauty and B Sharp Cut Co officially opened in November. The two have high hopes for the space and really believe it could be something spectacular that the community hasn't experienced before.

Tara runs Benevolent Beauty while Amy rents a booth on that side for women's services and runs the other side for men, B Sharp Cut Co. "The entire salon has been carefully thought out, the decor, the experience, the products, the signs etc." Amy proudly says.

When you walk into the space, your experience starts.

Amy and Tara opted for an open floor plan to keep the beauty of the historic building on display and to provide an open community for both those that work there and the customers that choose to be there. "We love the idea of everyone being able to see everything going on," Amy explains. "It becomes a hive of activity - the clients can see what is going on and interact with one another during appointments, and the stylists can mingle and turn to one another for advice or opinions throughout the day."

The environment gives off a united feeling where everyone can feel comfortable to just be. While you're enjoying your service, you can add a beverage alcoholic or not, to the tab to just enjoy your moment. Tara adds, "We created a space where everyone can be whoever they are, and that's how I knew the name had to start with 'Be.'"

#### ABOUT AMY SCHERER

Amy has dabbled in several different career fields and industries over the years. Starting as an English college teacher, being a stay-at-home homeschooling mom to three, photography, etc. she comes from a family of small business owners.

# THE PLACE TO "BE"

By Sarah Grassel







“

“Fun fact—this building has been used for the hair industry for over 100 years!”

TARA REID



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After a life change in 2016, Amy knew that she had to find a career that would not only fulfill her creative desires, but also continue to allow her to be flexible with her kids.

She explains, “I have siblings who are salon owners and hair stylists that encouraged me to pursue that direction, and I knew because I was older that I wanted to hit the ground running and eventually come to own my own salon as well.”

B Sharp has a special all-inclusive service called the “B All, End All.” It includes a haircut, shampoo + style, hot towel, scalp massage that helps with hair loss or thinning, hair repair or scalp treatment, facial wax, and a specialty beverage.

#### ABOUT TARA REID

Tara fell into the hair industry by accident when discovering what life after high school would look like. After the traditional college route wasn’t really panning out for her, she decided to pursue beauty school, thinking it would be a trade that she could use for her entire life.

“Come to find out, I had a talent and passion for it since the first day I started,” she says.

Over the years, Tara has been a part of four salons and only recently decided to rebrand and relaunch as her own. When she found

out that Black Hills Beauty College was moving, she knew she had to reach out to the owners of the building and see what the future entailed. Tara explains, “The owners had not made any decisions but said they had contemplated a salon and that is when the seed was planted.”  
BHW

”

“Eventually we want to host classes for stylists and become a source of education. Everyone needs a hair stylist; we don’t need to worry about competing, so let’s learn from each other and build each other up.”

AMY SCHERER



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*To the Mother Who  
Lost Her Baby :*

By Emily Smoragiewicz





I know, you're in shock. You feel like you've been rocked to your core.

I've been there. I, too, have locked eyes with a medical professional who found herself carrying the unfathomable burden of telling me that my baby was gone. I don't even know how I formulated the words, "But... we heard a strong heartbeat two weeks ago..." And quite frankly, I don't remember what my doctor said in response. I just remember wondering why it suddenly felt like all of the air had left the room.

My doctor said something to me that day that I have repeated to myself nearly every day of the seven months since I left that exam room: "This is not your fault. There's nothing you could have done." I needed her to say that, even though the sensible part of me should have already known.

I'm saying it to you now. There is nothing you could have done. Trust that your body did everything it could to keep that baby alive. Your body didn't fail you. Your body is strong, and nurturing, and capable. There is no logical explanation for the unworldly horror of losing a baby, or why it happens to some people and not to others.

I wish that I was not qualified to give this advice to you, but we both found ourselves here. I wish I could throw my arms around you and take this heartbreak away, but we both know that I can't. But I can tell you how I got through the dark days ahead of you.

You must give yourself space to grieve, internally within the confines of your inner being, and externally with the people you trust—especially your partner. You will learn that the bedrock of respect and trust you have built your relationship on will serve you well as you weather this storm.

And while we're talking about your partner, try to give them grace. They might not remember your due date months from now. They might not seem as devastated as you feel. But they are. Their heart is broken into a thousand pieces, too. Their grief

might be different than yours, but remember that they are in the trenches with you. Honor that sacred bond. Let it strengthen you, not be the tragedy that breaks you.

You might find that you need people and the distraction they bring. You might need to take your mind off of what you lost or throw yourself blindly into work so the tide doesn't suck you under.

Or...you might need space. And you should take it and not let anyone push through it. Build a freaking wall around you and all of your space, and don't

apologize for it. It's okay to skip baby showers and not respond to text messages from well-intentioned friends checking in. In fact, it's more than okay. Your only job is to get you, your partner, and your family through this. The world will keep spinning and the sun will keep rising, and some days that reality will feel almost cruel when your world feels so dark. But be thankful for that because it ensures you have a world to return to when you come out on the other side of this.

As you take a little breathing room, please know one thing: I am here for you. I am in your corner. There are thousands of women neither of us have ever met who are

---

*You must give yourself  
space to grieve,  
internally within the  
confines of your inner  
being, and externally  
with the people you  
trust - especially your  
partner.*

---

meditating, and journaling, and wishing, and good-vibing, and praying us both through this. There are armies of women who know what it feels like to miss someone they've never met. I'm sorry you're part of that army of warriors. I'm sorry I'm part of it, too.

But we are strong. We are capable. We are nurturing. We are mothers to children we don't get the pleasure of raising. I don't know if there's a light at the end of your tunnel, or a light at the end of mine. But I know that your baby was lucky to have you as his mother for his entire, short, beautiful life. And I know you'll be his mother for the rest of yours. And that, my friend, is a precious gift. BHW

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## Getting Nutty

By Kelsey Parker

Photo by Riley Winter Photography



**E**rika Mount and her husband Craig have created a national treasure: Nerdy Nuts, a handmade, small batch peanut butter company. Four years ago, the pair started Nerdy Nuts in their garage in Rapid City. The two would sell jars of their tasty peanut butter at farmers markets and craft shows; it was a fun side hobby. You'd be lucky to grab a jar of the freshly made peanut butter before they sold out. Fast forward to 2022, and they've fundamentally re-imagined peanut butter, offering over 170 different flavors of peanut butter, available for purchase online. Some of their best sellers include Cookies and Cream Peanut Butter and Birthday Cake Peanut Butter Treat.

Nerdy Nuts has utilized the power of social media to create a national demand for their products. Currently, Nerdy Nuts has over 265,000 followers on TikTok. You'll get lost in the rabbit hole of delicious delights if you start watching their videos. "[We] got our first taste of viral stardom in 2019 when we created Presidential Peanut Butters. When COVID hit, we took to TikTok and influencer marketing. We went from selling a couple thousand jars a month to 40,000 jars a month due to influencer marketing and the power of social media," Erika said. Now, Nerdy Nuts employs close to 60 people.





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If you follow Nerdy Nuts on social media, they're always creating a unique flavor, filling their jars with candy, cereals, fruits, sauces .... anything you could think (or dream) of. Erika's favorites include Nut Roll, 7 Layer Bar, Blueberry Streusel Almond Butter, Toffee, and Avalanche. Now, it's time for locals to create their own Nerdy Nuts magic! Enter the Nerdy Nuts retail space at 405 Canal Street in Rapid City, South Dakota.

As you walk in their brick-and-mortar space, you'll be instantly jolted into a cheery mood. Bright colors. Adorable artwork. Perfect photo-op spaces. Friendly faces. And the smell... oh, boy. Much like a frozen yogurt shop, customers will fill up their Nerdy Nuts jar with a peanut butter base and then add their choice of nearly 50 different toppings. You'll leave this peanut butter experience with a cute jar of your custom-made Nerdy Nuts concoction and a smile on your face.

This custom-creation space is the newest addition to the Nerdy Nuts brand. "We felt it was time to finally put a face to our name and allow our customers the experience of crafting their dream flavors. ... It's exciting people can come in and create whatever they want."





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With overwhelming success, Erika has plenty of advice to offer new entrepreneurs. “Don’t overthink your dreams. Get an initial foundation and fix it over time. Your story and business will evolve over time, so don’t get so lost in the planning that you put off just going for it.” It’s no surprise that Erika is a dreamer; from the Nerdy Nuts website to her social media accounts, now to the storefront, creativity is at her core. Her favorite thing about being an entrepreneur? “The ability to let your ideas run wild.”

As a team, Erika and Craig are the perfect pair. Erika credits Craig for her inspiration and motivation. “He never stops dreaming, creating, and achieving. I feel like that is so important when it comes to business. He pushes me more than anyone else, too. I do the [social media] LIVES, but this company is so much him, too. The world of Nerdy Nuts and all our amazing characters come from his imagination. It’s incredible.”

What’s next for Nerdy Nuts? “We are really shooting for an East Coast drop in Costco. Eighty percent of our clientele live in the East and can’t come to our retail store. It’s important for us to give them a place to grab products easily without always having to order online.” **BHW**



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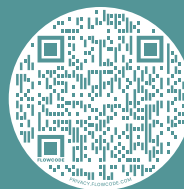
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# Blended Aquatics

*Swimming with Inclusivity*

By Kari Nielsen



**B**rea Merhar and her husband Bill moved from Seattle to the Black Hills this past August. They were ready to leave city life behind, and as Minnesota natives, Rapid City brings them a lot closer to home. But starting fresh was more than just geographical; it was a personal move to pursue Brea's dream.

Enter Blended Aquatics, specialized swim lessons designed for children and adolescents affected by behavioral challenges such as autism, down syndrome, and ADHD.

"My dream for this business started back in 2013," Brea said. "I had just entered the field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and was studying why certain behaviors happen. I saw a need for specialized swim services and thought I could combine my swim instructor background with my educational focus."

Brea is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and holds a master's in Special Education from Webster University. After working for a preschool that focused on creating an accessible environment to all kids through specialized modifications, Brea saw a need to expand that inclusivity beyond the classroom.

"The first pool I called to discuss my idea in Rapid City was High Plains Physical Therapy," Brea said. "They were so positive and supportive about what I was proposing."

Brea currently rents pool space from High Plains on the weekends in order to provide specialized swim

lessons for children and adolescents who experience behavioral challenges. These individuals often have a harder time following directions and being social. Because of this, they often encounter barriers to community swim lessons. Brea's hope is to educate both individuals and families to promote water safety and also work on creating an environment that is accessible to everyone.

"Peer interaction is so beneficial and helps to encourage fine motor skills," Brea said. "Specialized swim lessons prepare an individual for more success and access to being in the community by creating a positive experience in the water."

Every child is different, so Brea meets with families to understand what goals they'd like to accomplish based on each individual's needs.

"I like to see where kids are at and create a road-map," Brea said. "First, I have a phone conversation to understand the individual's history and confirm their needs are within my scope of practice. Next, I have the family fill out a questionnaire detailing medical things to be aware of, history with water, and certain behavioral challenges. I use that information to do a pool assessment where we pick specialized goals and teach basic swim skills alongside water safety and competency."

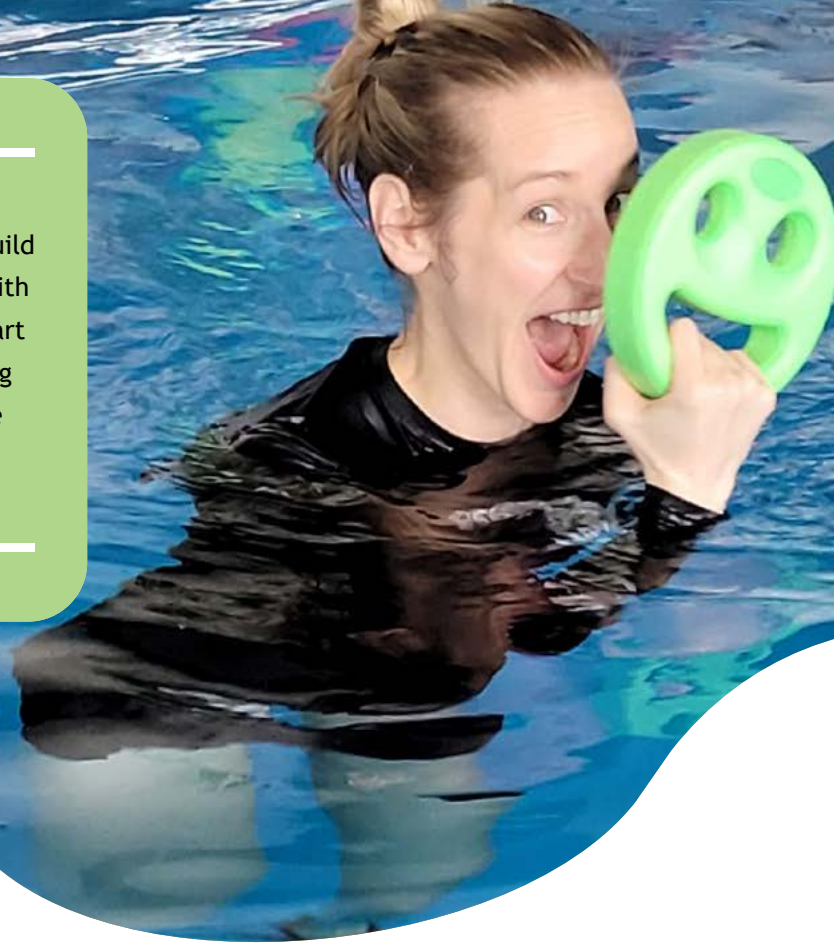
"Because of my background, I am able to focus on certain behaviors and why they are happening," Brea said. "This expands beyond the pool."



—“—

I hope to continue to build trusting relationships with people and help be a part of a solution for learning and inclusion within the environment.

—”—



For individuals with behavioral challenges, just coming to the swim lesson may be difficult. Brea wants to work with families to prevent those extra challenges to set them up for success in any water environment. That may mean coming early to look at the pool and get a sense of the surroundings. That may also mean meeting with the teacher before the first lesson or bypassing additional stress in the locker room by coming with a swimsuit already on.

“We want to see a transfer of skills in multiple settings,” Brea said. “That is more than just swim skills. It may be the benefit of physical activity, the practice of following directions, or the increase of language and engagement.”

The earlier the opportunity to start influencing those behaviors, the better.

“The youngest I’ve worked with is 6 months,” Brea said. “But I think a great starting age is 3 years old.”

Brea wants to support individuals so that they can have better success integrating into community water activities. Blended Aquatics recently began partnering with the Aquatics Division through Roosevelt Swim Center to help make that transition.

“I am so excited to be collaborating together,” Brea said. “I’ll be renting space to give specialized swim lessons

and support with the transition to community-based lessons with peers. We are both excited to work together and equip people to train others.”

“Collaborate” is a word Brea uses frequently throughout conversation about Blended Aquatics and is central to the goal she hopes to promote going forward.

“I want to add to the community,” Brea said. “I hope to continue to build trusting relationships with people and help be a part of a solution for learning and inclusion within the environment.”

Her goals for the year ahead include becoming a more integral part of the community. She eventually would like to have the opportunity to add one (or more) BCBAs to the Blended Aquatics team. And in the meantime, she is trying to connect with as many people as possible in the area to raise awareness and encourage working together.

“There is a need for specialized swim lessons amongst individuals with behavioral challenges,” Brea said. “And I would just want people to know that I am not here to compete; I am here to collaborate.”

BHW



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## *Pet Pantry: Not Just Here for Pets* By Kayla Gahagan

The people are as important as the pets at Rapid City's Pet Pantry, says owner Laura Sumner.

"I'm so proud of the fact that we've been here since 1996," said Sumner, who has worked at the store for almost two decades.

Serving as a long-term business staple in the Black Hills means that generations of owners and their pets have relied on the store for more than just pet food and accessories.

"I spend a lot of time just listening," Sumner said, whether it is about the passing of a pet, a need, a concern, or questions.

"It's so endearing when people lose a pet and they come in and tell us. It's so sweet. I love what I do. I

love the animals, and I love the people."

Pet Pantry has been located at 1101 West Omaha Street since it's opening.

The three original Pet Pantry owners were Kathryn Johnson, Roy Dishman, and Joe Hamm. Johnson became the sole owner around 2006 and mentored Sumner, who started working at the store in 2004. In 2019, Sumner purchased the store from Johnson.

"We've faced a lot of challenges over the years," Sumner said. "COVID, inflation, changes in how we do things like social media. Here we are at the beginning of 2023, and we're still here and I'm so proud of that."

One of the walls at the store bears witness to the family atmosphere and the staff's commitment to developing





relationships with whoever walks through the door. For years, a former employee named Everett took pictures of animals who came into the shop and developed them and hung them on the wall. The collage is a sweet memory of the animals and of the man who took the pictures, as he has since passed away.

The store also has a resident cat, “Mama,” who has become a customer favorite after Sumner rescued her from a Rapid City parking lot after she had birthed kittens. She brought her to the store, where she raised the kittens and adopted them out.

“She was this straggly, stray cat,” Sumner said. “And now she lives at the store and gets so much attention. People love her. I think she has more friends than I do.”

Sumner said it’s all part of creating an atmosphere that is

fun, friendly, and welcoming.

“We don’t just focus on customer service, quality products, and a convenient location, but we really make sure this is a personal experience for people,” she said. “We have a genuine interest in the pets and their owners.”

Sumner said they also commit to multiple charities and service projects each year, including collecting donations of pet food for the elderly who receive free services through Meals on Wheels and own pets.

“We heard of some of the elderly actually sharing their food with their pets because they couldn’t afford pet food,” she said. “We want those seniors to be able to keep their pets because, for some of them, it’s a real companionship.”



Sumner said Pet Pantry also works to support local rescue shelters and programs, including the Black Hills Humane Society and the Oglala Pet Project.

“We’re really thankful that our customers help us support those projects,” she said.

She also works to support local businesses related to pet services, including her next-door work neighbor Heather Schuller at Wags to Whiskers Grooming Salon. Schuller has owned Wags to Whiskers since 2008 and they have been in business since 1999.

“Having a neighboring business and friend who is also in the pet industry has been really great,” she said.

Sumner said another unique aspect of the store is that she is very purposeful in what she puts on the shelves—a freedom that not all box stores have.

“All the inventory is hand-picked by me,” she said. “I have my customers in mind when I order.”

It’s a labor of love each week to stock the store with great items.

“We are women led and owned and there’s a lot of physical labor involved,” she said. “We hand cart everything that comes into the store and it’s thousands and thousands of pounds that we move weekly.”

There’s nothing else she’d rather be doing.

“I love it,” Sumner said. “Whatever it is you’re needing for your pet, we’re there for it and we’ll help you with it.”

*BHW*

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# Things That Rock

A Hill City Gem | By Kari Nielsen

Things That Rock began as a creative outlet for Cori Gallucci and her mother Shari in 2012. With a combined passion for hunting rocks and making jewelry, they wanted to open a storefront that allowed them to share those interests with others. That idea has now morphed into a successful business owned by Cori and her husband Mike in the heart of Hill City. Taking ownership in 2018, the couple has expanded Things That Rock in more ways than one.

First tackling a shift in store space, they moved the business down the block from its original location and purchased a building built in 1902. Not only did the entire building have to be renovated, but Cori and Mike also added an addition off the bat. Now they have two stories to call home, with the upstairs housing offices and the main level being the shop itself.

And what would a customer expect to find inside Things That Rock? A hint in the name, the business focuses on carrying a unique collection of stones and crystals. The biggest part of business is jewelry, a testament to where it all began, offering gemstone pieces such as rings, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings.





“The best way to have an element on your person is to wear it,” Cori said.

“Other ways would be to put a stone in a particular place where it would promote the most benefit,” Mike said.

For example, putting a stone next to the bed that is supposed to influence calm or one on a desk meant to spark creativity. There are a variety of associated benefits available depending on the stone and its intended purpose.

Things That Rock also carries onyx lamps. These are composed of calcite which comes in a variety of colors and patterns. Onyx lamps are often used for protection and grounding, a great at home kind of stone meant to promote security and well-being. They also can be purely aesthetic in appeal with the display of new patterns and shapes, as well as, functioning as a unique accent light.

Things That Rock also houses a great apothecary section consisting of herbal teas, herbal extracts, and essential oils. They carry well-sourced skin products such as those with rose hip oil (which is very good for your skin) and soaps without palm oils (which are not). In addition, a customer can find meditative tools, books, journals, and candles. Things That Rock is most definitely more than rocks. But the stones they do carry are polished and beautiful, as opposed to the rough rock yards a person may tend to think of.



“What I want is for people to come into our store and step into a world out of time,” Mike said. “I want customers to leave the world behind and simply be in a place that is full of beautiful things and wonder.”

“We want to bring a little bit of the beauty of the natural world to the forefront of people’s minds,” Cori said.

And if you don’t have the opportunity to shop in person, Things That Rock offers not only an online storefront, but also conducts live sales to meet customers where they are. Regardless of how you acquire the merchandise, you can trust the quality to be unmatched.

“There might be a lot of aquamarine crystals in the world, but no two are going to be the same because they are organically grown and created,” Cori said. “We go to a lot of trade shows in order to put our hands on things and know their quality before we bring them into our store.”

Both Cori and Mike have a hand in selecting the rocks and jewelry, although Cori is the main purchaser. Mike is the man behind all the shipping, in addition to being on the floor most days.

“We are still the face of the store and plan to keep it that way,” Mike said. “We love getting the opportunity to meet and talk to people from all different walks of life.”

They hope to someday pass down Things That Rock to their daughters, Sophia (3) and Amelia (2).

“I can’t imagine being in business with someone else,” Cori said.

Things That Rock is open 7 days a week. Check them out in person at 257 Main Street, Hill City, South Dakota, or online at [thingsthatrocksd.com](http://thingsthatrocksd.com). BHW

## Cori and Mike's Top 5 Crystals to Carry

left to right

Clear Quartz - The universal stone; amplifies the energies of other stones and promotes overall balance and well-being

Amethyst - A stone of spirituality and healing, helping one connect to the world around them and emotionally uplifting

Fluorite - A stone of inspiration, insight, and clarity; facilitates focus and attention, while also raising spirits and instilling joy

Tiger Eye - The best stone for will-power and drive; promotes creativity and helps in the completion of goals

Malachite - Our favorite stone for compassion and empathy; helps one connect to and understand their emotions





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## 5 Relationship Communication Tips for the New Year

By Tracy Palecek

**1. COMMIT TO KINDNESS.** If it needs to be said, find a way to use "I feel" statements in a kind way. For example, instead of "You never want to spend time with me," try "I am feeling disconnected from you. I miss our time together."

**2. CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE.** Learn and practice the "Repair" process when things go south. Begin with "When this happened, I felt (hurt, angry, sad, betrayed)," commit to listening intently to your partner, and reflect back their feelings; "It sounds like you are saying you felt....." Next, apologize for any wrongdoing in a clear manner: "I am sorry that I snapped at you and made you feel dismissed and unappreciated." Lastly, spend some time problem solving: "In the future I will try to take a time out before speaking that way."





**3. CREATE SPACE FOR POSITIVE EXPERIENCES.** Aim for connection points daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. Come together daily when the kids are in bed to enjoy a game of Scrabble or watch a show together. Strive for weekly alone time where you can laugh and relax. Avoid hot button issues and opt instead for choosing some date night questions to connect. Agree to monthly outings, sharing a hobby together or special tradition like a meal or class. Finally, plan out several small or a few large outings during the year that you can plan and look forward to together.

**4. BE VULNERABLE.** Sharing your struggles, fears, and hopes and dreams is essential to connection. We often keep things that bother us to ourselves. How freeing to share fears like growing older or sadness at the loss of a friendship.

**5. ASSUME THE BEST.** When your partner is struggling, it can be easy to label them as selfish or uncaring. Likely what is happening is disconnection. Recommit to loving kindness and make them aware that you want to support them. If things are not improving, consider the investment of a couples therapist to help get things back on track. BHW









## WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED! THE BEST MARRIAGE ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED WAS...

“Don’t love someone the way you want to be loved. Love them the way they want love!” - Andi L.

“Never stop dating each other!” - Kari N.

“Prioritize date nights, especially if you have kids!” Alicen D.

“Honest communication is KEY!” - Steph M.

“Decisions you make together should be filtered through ‘is this what’s best for us/our family?’” - Krista L.

“Lead with kindness - even through arguments. Listen with both ears.”  
- Murray L.

“It isn’t 50/50, it’s 100/100. You’re a team and sometimes you have to carry the weight of your spouse.” - Lana P.

“Don’t just hope for a great marriage, decide!” - Becca K.

“Be 100% open and honest. Also, always work as a team.” - Mike M.



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By Kelsey Parker  
Photos by Riley Winter

Rowan Grace graced us with her voice and presence on *The Voice*, wowing superstars like Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani, and so many viewers around the world. Making it all the way to the Top 10, it's clear Rowan has an exciting future ahead.

Rowan's music choices on *The Voice* were diverse. She sang songs from a variety of genres: "Hopelessly Devoted to You" by Olivia Newton John, "i love you" by Billie Eilish, "Traitor" by Olivia Rodrigo, and Rowan's favorites to perform, "Landslide" by Fleetwood Mac and "Vienna" by Billy Joel.

Behind her amazing performances, Rowan worked tirelessly to give the audience (and the judges) just what they wanted. "I wish the audience could have seen just how much hard work we put into it." Behind the scenes, contestants had band rehearsals, vocal lessons, staging, and then hours of practicing in their hotel rooms. "I also just loved putting everything together piece by piece."

Working with Blake Shelton was a treat, too. Blake offered Rowan advice that she'll use forever. "The best advice I received from Blake was to put it all out there and be honest with everything I was doing. ... Blake showed me that it's not always about the biggest belt or the coolest runs. It's really just about what makes you as an artist special, and for me, that was my softer end, my honest emotional side. ... He really wanted me to showcase that on stage and just be honest and true to myself, and who I am as an artist."

Although her time on *The Voice* is over, this is just the beginning for Rowan. "I'm so excited to see where the future leads." Rowan looks forward to jumping back into performing and writing and recording her own music. "I'm so excited to release my music and show people my songs. I'm going to continue to work on my craft and work on my dreams."





If given the opportunity to sing a duet with any person, Rowan would sing with Stevie Nicks. "Her voice is so beautiful and timeless and her career has been so inspiring to me. I'd like to think that our voices would sound good together and it would be the honor of a lifetime to get to sing with the iconic Stevie Nicks." The Beatles and Adele are two of Rowan's favorite artists. "I've been inspired by specifically Paul McCartney and George Harrison's songwriting and lyricism. I'm also very inspired by Adele and who she is as an artist in general; I feel like she leads with love and kindness."

Rowan is grateful for the experience. "It was so much fun meeting new people and getting to do really cool new things like interviews, photo shoots, wardrobe, and band rehearsals, throughout the experience. ... I gained so much knowledge, and I'm so grateful for Gwen and Blake for giving me the opportunity to share my voice and my story." She's full of gratitude for the love and support she received while she was away. "Your love and kind words and all your messages helped me so much during this fun but stressful time. I can't thank you enough. I'm so excited to continue to share my journey with you!" BHW



The advertisement for Moccasin Springs Natural Mineral Spa features a top-left photo of the outdoor hot spring pools. The main text area has a light green background with a sun logo. It lists services like Spa & Massage Therapy, Yoga, 3-in-1 Sauna, and Hot Spring Pools. It also provides contact information, including the website MoccasinSprings.com and the phone number 605.745.SOAK. The bottom of the ad has a blue banner with the website and phone number.

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GAINING  
WINTER  
INSIGHT

By Chasity Wilde Marcus

Hello. You've reached the winter of our discontent.

Any other Gen Xers recall this quote from the '90s movie *Reality Bites*? Shakespeare's original words intended "winter" as a metaphor for weathering life, but let's hang out in Ethan Hawk's grunge version to strum up energy around our current season of discontent, er uh, I mean dormancy, which simply means sloooowing dowaawn.

Hey, what's the temperature? Lemme guess: cold. Not to mention, the holidays have passed and you're likely to wonder what you can look forward to. My daughter creates checklists to initiate each season, but winter doesn't inspire like the others. So, what to do while swirling in the frigid flurries of January, with Love's efforts to warm us in February?

I invite you to make another cup of coffee or tea or toddy and gift yourself with time and space to read about survival of the sluggish months. While the labors of humanity keep us mammals from hibernating, I believe we all possess permission to decompress. The rest of the natural physical world does, so if we're interconnected, then humans require idle time too.

Get comfy, get cozy, and know thoughts count as action. Oh yes, they do. In fact, you can tackle your toughest conundrums just by sitting with your thoughts. Think about that! And the focus of your thoughts determines how your life unfolds via Law of Attraction, mind-bending! You in?

To direct my thoughts, I'm adopting the habit of asking myself:

What kind of human experience do I want to be/have?



I know, it's like a snowball thrown in your face; sorry not sorry, not meant for a fight, but allow the question to flicker a light on the inside. How? Okay, I'm going to say it, here goes, the M word... meditation. I'm not kidding, folks. If you still think meditation is only sitting cross-legged and chanting "Om," then please allow me to introduce you to another way of cultivating this superbly beneficial practice that I, and most people, simply don't make time for. But let's do it, because it's winter, and dark, and cold, and why not? You ready to commit to a healthy habit with me?

My preferred routine involves a question or focused thought. Use the one above or concoct your own about a very specific situation or a creative spark. Then, next time you shower, go for a drive, go for a walk, zone out from a conversation or show, work out, hold a plank, wash your face, watch the sunrise or sunset, look up at the moon, or just whenever the heck you want, I invite you to unpack that question. And when your mind veers (because it will and that's okay, default mode matters too); steer back onto that wide-open road of endless options. Exit when necessary.

Conversely, and carefully, also ask: what kind of human don't I want to be? Warning! Don't hang out here long. You're aiming to BUILD not deconstruct. Please be kind to yourself. And when you're ready: What baby step can I take right



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now to be closer to that desired human version of myself?

Hint: make room for self-care, seriously. The more you tend to your Self, treat your Self, listen to your Self, the more you'll feel like your Self, and less like someone else. Upgraded and more adept to ask: What does/n't serve me? What does/n't nourish me? (i.e. habit, relationship, material item, etc.) Does this need a boundary, good-bye, or fresh start?

Maybe time with your Self will find you snuggling with the cold, maybe it'll liberate your curiosities, or it could overwhelm with your deep introspections. Or maybe you'll go watch *Reality Bites*, triggered to download "Add It Up" if not already on your playlist, spiraling you into memories with Violent Femmes as your freshman college year soundtrack, singing aloud or within: "Day after day, I will walk and I will play. But the day after today, I will stop and I will start."

Nothing profound by the Femmes, but the simplicity makes me smile. Stop and start, yes we can, this blessed game of life. Who wants to play?

You can find more of Chasity's rants @ Dakota Soulshine. **BHW**



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