

Beloved Yoga community. As you know the corner stone of our community is the deep and authentic way we share our lives together. Every day on the mat we show up our authentic messy selves. We share our stories of hardship and joy. We connect over our shared ups and downs. Each day we are there for one another and there is no greater work to do in the world. I am beyond blessed to be a guardian of this community and always supporting you and sharing in life with you is the highlight of my life.

As you are used to by now, being a yoga student of mine, you know that I share alot. I use my struggles and joys to teach you about yoga wisdom and philosophy. I am always an open book, but 2023 was a year so challenging for me, I retreated within myself, put on a brave face for my community and suffered deeply...in silence. I went through a lot in my personal health and through every bump I never felt comfortable sharing.

But life is meant to be shared, our hearts are meant to open to each other. I now stand on the other side of the hardest year of my adult life and the dust has settled, my health is back on track and better than ever. The road was rocky, but as always has, in between the bumps, tons of wisdom, inspiration, insight and my favorite...evolution!

So, now I feel the tug of my soul that has always existed. That soul spark that makes me a great teacher. That little voice inside that says -“Yes, share your story with others, open your heart to receive theirs. Connect to your collective wisdom, see your shared humanity and walk this path together.”

So here we go, I have BIG, BIG visions for what is to come in 2024 and beyond and it has been molded in the fire of my personal struggles last year. I feel a desire to help other with a similar story so grand I don't know where to begin. So I take a deep breath and begin the only way I know how. With my storyteller roots. Today I share my story and see where it leads. I trust in the unfolding of everything else.

365 days later, I still struggle to find the words to begin to tell you about my 2023. I guess to tell you about the last year, I should take you back a few to the early pandemic days so you'll have some context. You remember those...when we were afraid of the air we breathe, when we would wipe down amazon boxes. When we didn't know what to think or feel and we never left our home.

I bring us back here for a moment because it was (I learned in hindsight) the catalyst to where I find myself now. I, like many of us struggled, cooped up in my house, cut off from everyone that I loved and everything I enjoyed that gave my life meaning.

Life halted.

Slowly I stopped moving my body and my years of daily exercise became a thing of the past. I no longer cared about eating well and started finding joy in too many door dash nights with my family. We binged everything Netflix had to offer and I found more comfort than normal in alcohol.

I wanted to escape so badly because add to all this stress, I was also forced to embark on the biggest battle of my adult life - the battle to keep this precious yoga studio I have poured every ounce of myself into afloat, despite all odds against it. I was not prepared, not ready and not equipped for this.

So I, like many small business owners, sacrificed my well - being in the name of survival. I entered a dark night of the soul that first year of the pandemic. But I put on a brave face for

the community I serve. This also happened to be the year I turned 40. What should have been a joyous time, was a deeply depressing one and I stepped into this new decade of my life not in a good place. I was unaware of the implications turning 40 would have inside my body and mind.

I didn't know it at the time, but I have learned it the hard way now. All those years of pandemic life, not taking care of myself were slowly colliding in a perfect storm of destruction in my body and mind. Mainly because now it was all taking place in a 40 year old body.

At the time what I didn't know is that Estrogen begins to decline. Starting slowly around 35 and then skyrocketing at 40. This vital inflammatory protecting hormone has receptors in every system of the body, so as it declines, it takes with it the body and mind you thought you knew.

Before the pandemic I had my shit together. I was floating through some of the most fabulous years of my life. I was in the best shape, my mindset was the best it has ever been. I was having the most fun raising Addy (those late elementary years are the best). I had some epic moments leading yoga classes to hundreds of people at the world's largest yoga festivals. I had started the studio also, so life leading up to the pandemic for me was at an all time high.

In full transparency, I just had to take a little break from writing. I re-read the previous paragraphs back to myself and the grief is pretty fresh. It lives in my body and it brought tears to my eyes to read my words and go back there in my mind. Our life can be so beautiful, yet there is still so much mystery about what is unfolding next. Getting older can be tough when we aren't prepared for the steps along the way. But in the difficulty comes so much wisdom and I share my story with you now because I have learned through my work that my imperfections are very comforting to people and the insights I discover are useful to the community I serve.

So that should get you up to speed on what was leading up to 2023. Finally, finally, after years still in limbo post pandemic, the yoga studio bounced back and thank god she did, because my health was about to decline rapidly and I would unknowingly need the studio to take care of itself so I could rediscover how to take care of me.

Now a few years into my 40's, I was unaware this whole time of the storm slowly brewing in my body. As things started to equalize in the business, I finally felt like I could take a breath. I would say out loud often "I'm so glad that's over." It was the hardest 4 years of my life.

Then it started...first thing to go was my sleep. I have always been a good sleeper, I fall asleep fast, stay asleep all night and wake up rested. Well, I was now in for a year of shit-tastic sleep.

Every night my sleep was disturbed, some nights I couldn't get to sleep, others I would pass out only to wake up drenched in sweat, others I would be up 4 fucking times to pee. From there the heart palpitations and dizziness started. At first I thought nothing of it, but one particular episode, while driving my car, spooked me so bad I went to see my doctor. She sent me home to do some maneuver for vertigo. When that didn't help and my vision started getting blurry I asked for a referral to get things checked out. This would become a theme for almost 9 months.

It would go like this...wild crazy symptom would show up out of nowhere...go to a specialist chasing relief from the symptom...run every test only to be told "you are fine"

This pattern carried on for months. I was hooked up to every machine, draining countless vials of blood for testing. Getting scans and ultrasounds, you name it. From the radiologist, to the ENT, to the gynecologist, to the cardiologist. I sat in every office looking for an answer to the

long list of symptoms that showed up in my body in 2023 all over night. The list is long, but here are the ones I dealt with daily, that I NEVER experienced before and now was being suffocated by.

- Heart palpitations
- Dizziness
- Blurred Vision
- Headaches
- Shortness of Breath
- Brain Fog
- Hearing Loss
- Breast Pain
- Bladder Pain
- Frequent Urination
- Joint Pain
- Weight Gain
- Heavy Bleeding and Blood Clots
- Night Sweats
- Disturbed Sleep
- Insane Anxiety
- Depression

To say it sucked was an understatement and to continuously be told “you are fine, all the tests are normal, there is nothing wrong with you.” sank me further and further into a dark depression. In all honestly if I didn’t get an answer about what was wrong with me, my mind actually thought about not wanting to continue living if it was going to be like this with no way out. My life had been taken over, my mind had been hijacked, my body falling apart, but I put on a brave face for the community I serve. I drowned in a silent sorrow in myself for almost an entire year, until a conversation with my acupuncturist changed it all.

I have the most life changing acupuncturist who has been instrumental in my life for many many years. She has become a cherish friend and confidant and I love her so deeply. She unknowingly gave me my life back that day.

Ok...stepped away for one more break, these tears were tears of joy for the people placed on your path to powerfully impact your life and shape it’s direction. My acupuncturist Dawn has continually been that for me. Her home office is 5 minutes from the studio if you need some support. Here is her site, please tell her I sent you. www.dawnacupuncture.com

That will surely be the last break I take to let my emotions flow because this is where the story turns a corner. A fire gets lit and I managed to get educated and empowered enough to pull myself out of the darkest hole I have ever climbed into in my 40+ years.

For months over 2023 I went to my normal acupuncture sessions, Dawn always treating what was fresh in my obnoxious list of symptoms. Gently putting my energy back into balance with needles, herbs and wisdom.

One particular treatment session we were talking about what I had been going through and this particular session I was seeking support for an insanely heavy menstrual cycle with huge scary blood clots. She said “Jes, that’s not normal, go to your doctor.” She looked over the records from my past several appointments. She saw the first thing I started talking about at the beginning of the year that was bothering me was my menstrual cycle. From there my sleep, heart palpitations, brain fog, depression followed like an avalanche. She saw all the dots connect. She wondered - could this all be related. I had an a-ha moment there in her peaceful

treatment room. All this suffering had its roots in my female reproductive system. So she gave me an herb to support my heavy bleeding. She also gave me soft insight that I am not alone, she had been seeing these kinds of conversation all over the internet lately.

So I went home and took to the internet too and got smacked in the face with a word I have never heard of before in my life.

Perimenopause.

Yup, turns out there is a lot I don't know about my own body. I have never been taught this was a thing. We learn all about our menstrual cycle and then know there is something on the horizon called menopause when your cycle stops, but that happens when you are older . (national average 52)

Perimenopause (symptoms can start as early as 35) is the 10ish year journey when Estrogen begins to rapidly decline. Some women are fine, other gets knocked over by a tsunami in their body and mind (that was me).

Turns out there is the whole massively important phase of your midlife called perimenopause and I was drowning in it for almost a year and had no idea.

Well, I'll save you the messy details, but I cycled through some heavy emotional swings in those early discovery days.

First came immense anger - why...WHY has no one told me about this thing that happens in my body. Why does knowledge for women fall off the cliff after 30 and we are left in a dark hole, ignored.

Next rolled grief for that old me who was thriving...I had to mourn her. I'm still mourning her in many ways. Then my familiar friend depression came through for one more final wave and I laid around sad for weeks. Then, finally came the fire in me. Well, fuck if I am gong to lay down and suffer. If perimenopause starts in your 40's and can potentially last for 10+ years, there must be something I can do.

Holy SHIT ladies, it turns out there is so much you can do, the Fall of 2023 launched an all things menopause obsession in my house. I went deep, deep down the rabbit hole, arming myself with all the knowledge I could. I became a student of midlife, majoring in menopause.

My mind was so blown away. I learned soooo much, that fueled me, inspired me, gave me such hope. All the things I was learning about supporting the Estrogen evacuation that is your 40's, I began applying to myself. I became my own person BETA test. After almost a year of suffering, I turned the most miraculous corner in every facet of my health. Slowly as I implemented what I learned to my own life, I saw all my crippling symptoms decrease and some are completely gone. Second to giving birth, I have never been more amazed of what my body can do in my life.

Then came my favorite part. A thought, "Well if I am going through this, but had no idea I was, there must be countless women in my community going through it as well." So as the laves fell off the trees and Fall settled in, I settled into education mode. If you have passion for something you can totally share it with others, but if you really want to safely and deeply be impactful and truly HELP, I believe you must be educated. So I went back to school for the 3rd time in my adult life and got a Menopause Coaching Certification.

And I am bursting at the seams to support the women in my life and my community with knowledge, tools and sisterhood on the menopause journey. We are not alone and we don't have to suffer.

So if you are a women over 40, I am filled with the most amount of plans, visions, dreams and goals for my life's work and I can't wait to unleash them in 2024 and beyond.

Cheers to finding menopause mastery and making this our best chapter yet...together!