



# The Confident Woman

The Fabulous40Plus Portrait Series 2021



## Meet *Caroline Latona*

Agism in today's world is a concept that women continue to battle with but as artists, we have the power to create and paint the world in the light of what we want to see. My mission is to combat the false notion that many women imbibe that they don't photograph well or they don't look great in photos. This thinking often comes as a result of what someone might have said to them in the past, and it robs many women of existing in photographs that celebrate them and tell their stories for generations to come. We won't always be here, on this side of eternity so we owe it to ourselves to feel good about ourselves, in our time here and to plan ahead for the next generation.

In addition, I hope that the more we see images of mature women who are happy, confident and unafraid of aging, the more we are encouraged to feel better about ourselves at any age. I hope that the younger generation will embrace the wisdom and strength of these everyday women, and develop an appreciation of themselves as well.

It consider it an honour, meeting all of the Fabulous women in this edition, sharing your stories, learning from you and getting to know you. Thank you for trusting me to be a part of your legacy!

*Caroline is an award-winning portrait photographer. She helps women and their loved ones feel beautiful and confident in portraits; and loves giving the gift of memories to family through fashion-inspired portraits. One of her goals is to ensure we exist in our own stories with tangible art pieces that serve as a daily reminder of our beauty, resilience and restores self-confidence in children and women.*

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# Arnelia Ganesh, 61

*“My life motivation used to be living a better life than my parents, I worked hard, and I studied hard to be in a better position. I am generally a self-motivator!”*

My father was always my biggest fan and motivator. He encouraged his children to do well academically because he understood what it meant to struggle. This has certainly helped in my career choice in finance and I do believe that I have done extremely well in it. I have been financially able to assist my parents and siblings in achieving some of their goals. I am a giver, hence as part of my job, I train and help others to understand better what their tasks are, while showing them how to work smarter, not necessarily harder. Outside of work, cooking is my passion. West Indian dishes are my specialty including other East Indian dishes originating from Trinidad and Tobago (my home country).


Three major life challenges I've faced include poverty, relationships, and death. My parents struggled to make ends meet, so I vowed to do better for myself, and for them also as I disliked seeing them struggle. Relationships have not been easy for me, especially those with my family and siblings. I feel that I have been taken advantage of, given my generosity and forgiving nature and I have also struggled with personal relationships but I have learnt / am still learning to love myself enough to do the best for ME, and walk away from non-commitment. However, my friends have become my family, and I am grateful for them.

In December, 2020, I lost my husband Ian to Covid 19. I got married at 59, and became a widow just 20 months after being married for the first time (and last time). It was the best 20 months of my life. My husband loved me unconditionally, took very good care of me, and I miss him terribly. Ian was an adventurer and loved life, the outdoors, food, his children, and grandchildren.

Beauty to me is relative. My definition of beauty is a self-confident, independent and critical thinking woman who is a leader in her own right; one who uplifts others, and gives of herself unconditionally. However, taking non-leadership roles/tasks does not make me any less of a self-confident, independent and critical woman. I believe my true beauty is in my giving nature.

Aging used to be a scary thought! I certainly do not feel a day over 30 but I think I have aged gracefully and I am definitely enjoying this stage of my life. I do not want to be dependent on anyone as I grow older and that scares me. I do feel I have accomplished/achieved quite a bit. I am calm, collected and confident in the person that I have become, with God's help.

I have never been professionally photographed but the experience was interesting, yet fun! I really enjoyed it and have no regrets. Caroline made it worth the time and effort, from having hair and makeup to the photoshoot itself and she did miracles to show my outer beauty. Seeing the pictures, I feel pretty good! I have not done too badly at age 60+!



*“Sometimes, one just must let others shine because it takes nothing to be kind and helpful to another woman. You want to lift others to their full potential because you know the struggle it takes to get to the top.”*

*– Arnelia Ganesh*

# Bernie Saville, 58

*“I hoped to gain the beauty in ageing  
and live for the now and who I am  
and who I have become to be forget about  
my worries captive my most memorable  
times in my face, notice details of every  
line I have and to share my experience.”*

I am a health care worker and, also a gym rat who loves spending time with family and friends. My daughter, Camilla is my motivator because she works hard, has a family and still makes time for herself. Just watching Camilla makes me want to push myself to be better.

When my daughter was born, I was alone and that was hard, but she gave me the strength to overcome all the fears of been alone. Then my son was born with special needs and watching him go through all the surgeries he had to made me want to really help and support him.

I survived cancer. I was when my kids were 13, 8, 3 but thankfully, I had good friends, and my sister, who stood by me and are still with me to this day. At 58, I feel confident and more like I have been able take my life back. I have learned a lot about herself and how it's time for me to start taking control of been healthy eating right and looking after myself. I feel like 30 again!

People tell me I have great legs. I feel I have a great heart I always think and put others ahead of me it's been a problem with me all my life. I have

always been conscious about my tummy and I hate that I have one. Yes, I had 3 kids which I love and wouldn't change that for all the mine in the world. I also hate my scars from my breast cancer. I look at them and think I am alive thank you to God but the scars just remind me each day

If my friend ever struggled to see their own beauty, I would tell them to look in the mirror and tell me what they see and I would then tell them what I see. I would tell them I see a smart woman, a mom, a wife.

I feel amazing about my portraits. There's one picture really captures who I am and you can see the real feel in that one picture. I really love that one picture and I would never have said that before at my age but that one picture – Caroline knows that one picture captures me and how I am and how I feel.

I think it's fabulous that Caroline is doing this because nobody really pays any attention to women 50+ there's all these other magazines out there for 20+30+40+ but nobody ever sees anything out there 50 if it is for 50 it always includes men but I think this is fabulous for women.

*“Never change yourself for  
others always be you and be  
proud of who you are”  
– Bernie Saville*



# Brigitte Fontaine, 62

*“I am amazed that I am over 50 when I think about it, because I feel younger and I feel my best years are yet to come; I have a zest for life and I want to savor every moment, experience and challenge.”*

I was a Psychiatric Nurse but I am now transitioning into a unit clerk. When I am not working, you will find me enjoying nature while hiking or listening to music.


My greatest motivation is learning a new skill and self-improvement. I have no desire to give up on anything. I consider myself to be determined.

I strive to live a healthy lifestyle as I have always been self-conscious about my weight. I would say my best features are my eyes and hair; my natural, joyous smile is also a beautiful feature because it expresses my heart. I would encourage my best friend to stop being so self-critical. Every person is unique and it

is that uniqueness which makes us all beautiful women.

I have never been professionally photographed. I was worried that the camera would not capture my natural smile and joy. I also hoped the experience would help me gain self-confidence. It did take me a while to relax and let myself engage with the camera because of my fears and apprehension that I am not photogenic. Overall, it was a fun and enjoyable experience.

The portraits are my gift to myself and I love the portraits as they capture a moment in time that I am happy to share with others.



*“Beauty is in a smile, the twinkle  
in an eye, kindness that comes  
from the heart. I believe beauty  
exudes from a happy, positive  
outlook on life”*

*– Brigitte Fontaine*



# Cherrel Reid, 49

*“All women are beautiful.”*

My life has been a direct reflection of my experiences. I grew up with an uneducated mother and while she has been a big influence in my life, her experiences made me strive to learn more. I got married and had children when I was very young; this made me appreciate life and work hard. I work with a population of people who are homeless, and suffer from mental health and addiction issues: this has humbled me and kept me grateful for everything I have in my life. I am motivated by my career, co-workers and patients every day.

I love to cook, travel, and garden, work out, and socialize with friends and family. I am excited about retiring to the Sunshine Coast with my husband and travelling more in the future.

As a mother, I used to be self-conscious of my stretchmarks, but not anymore. I am grateful for my two beautiful children. Being over 40 feels

great! I love the woman I am today. I am so proud of myself for joining Oxygen Yoga and consistently working out 3 to 5 days a week over the past 3 years. I am also very proud of my career and my beautiful family.

I believe a person's beauty is most apparent when you see their spirit shine through. On aging, I say embrace it! Love yourself and continue to do the things that make you happy.

I took part in this project because I hoped to see myself in a different light. I had been photographed professionally before, but I had a great time at the photoshoot with Caroline. I had no fears before the session and the pictures make me feel glamorous and beautiful.

The Confident Women project by Franctal Studio made me realize that all women are beautiful. They just need to do their hair, get some make-up and beautiful clothes on, and strut their stuff!



*“Having beauty doubts?  
Surround yourself with  
wonderful people and learn  
to love yourself.”  
– Cherrel Reid*

# Chiara Missalino, 51

*“I’m a single mother of 3 and I feel blessed to be doing what I love. It has not always been easy but I’ve never given up on my goals and dreams.”*

I feel that I have a lot of life and business left in me. I have been in the life insurance field for 18+ years, took a few years sabbatical due to family issues and when I came back I had to start from scratch. Nevertheless, I came back stronger, more confident and laser-focused. I can't wait to see the future holds! I've accomplished quite a bit in the past and the best is still ahead of me.


If you could go back in time and give advice to my younger self, I would tell her to not to listen to the nay sayers, to believe in herself and trust in her abilities. I will tell her to not let cultural limitations define who she is and to surround herself with women that have the same drive and ambition and work together to make ourselves accountable for each other.

Beauty is not just physical. I define beauty by ones caring compassionate soul; how you treat others shows your true beauty. Also, how you respect yourself, shows true beauty. Doing what's right, no matter how hard the situation, shows true beauty. That being said, a smile shows a lot about a person as do eyes that are full of life.

My kindness and compassion I believe are my best features. These are not qualities that can be learned. I've been told my smile reveals my kindness and puts people at ease around me. My knowledge and expertise is due to always wanting to learn more professionally and continue growing personally.

Being the centre of attention is both scary, yet exciting. Public speaking is something I am striving to master but I still am very nervous about. Personally I would say I am self-conscious about my weight. I have never been "skinny" but this is the heaviest I've been. I have come to accept it for now.

I hope to push myself out of my comfort zone. The share my experiences in hopes of inspiring others that of you dream it you can do it. As well as being a role model to my daughter and other young women that age should never hold you back. Dreams and goals do come true if we believe in ourselves and always strive to be our best. Women helping women is definitely key reaching our goals. This was first ever photo shoot! I've changed so much since the photographs were created and I love that this was the start of my transformation!



*“True beauty is not just physical  
or one trait; it's your whole  
presence and integrity.”  
– Chiara Missalino*

# Cindy Zdenka, 56

*“My children have taught me never  
to give up and to always  
feel young and beautiful.”*

When I was younger, I constantly compared myself with other women and it drastically affected my confidence. Now that I am older and wiser (LOL!), I realize comparison is a thief and it's important for all women to understand that we are all unique and special in our own way.

I am a retired Hairdresser who loves yoga and sight-seeing. My greatest life motivations are my children. Some major life changes I went through enabled me to see how awesome I am, because as an immigrant, regardless of how difficult things were, I was able to accomplish my goals. Menopause was another challenging phase but I am grateful for the plot twist as I get to be in my first photoshoot that could get me on the front page of a magazine.

This phase is an exciting one as I get to enjoy life with my husband as a couple again. Since becoming empty nesters, my husband and I have decided to enjoy ourselves by travelling the world together. This opportunity has given me a whole lot of confidence about my age and made me comfortable in my skin. Embrace who you are, you are beautiful

in your own way

I am passionate about helping people. I have gone out of my way to be kind to strangers and friends just to ensure their quality of life is better. Overall it's important to note that everyone has imperfections, it's how we embrace them that makes us confident.

This is my first experience with professional photography, so of course I was nervous at first as I was worried on how to pose and what to expect but the photographer made me feel confident and taught me to have fun with the shoot.

At the end of the shoot, I really enjoyed being photographed it was a very uplifting moment in my life and I hope that women see my photos and feel that it is never too late to feel beautiful.

When I look at those photos, I see a strong beautiful woman. I think that every women in their 50+ years needs to experience this. Not only does it lift your spirit but it also lifts your self-esteem. Women need to be reminded to show their beauty and understand that age does not define you.



*“Beauty is not in the face  
or how your body looks,  
beauty is the light that is  
inside your heart”  
– Cindy Zdenka*

# Diella Siemens, 53

*“My greatest life motivation is letting go of what you can’t control; raising my son who struggles with mental health put me in a place where I had to let go and entrust him to God.”*

I love my job because it enabled me work from home and take care of my kids for over 27years. When I am not working, I am involved with outdoor activities like hiking, cycling, long distance running, and triathlons. I take at least one hiking trip a summer and I love long walks with my 18-month old puppy.

Over the years, I had a few challenges with my eating habits but I have discovered that a healthy diet is far more empowering than binge eating. Raising my son has also taught me to be less controlling. Going through a friendship betrayal was a tough one but I choose to believe it helped me by making me stronger.

My aspiration is to combine my cycling with seeing all parts of the world. So far, I have ridden across Canada, down the pacific coast to Mexico, and in Majorca, Spain. I also want to improve my

swimming so I can race an ironman. Finally I look forward to seeing my children raising their families and living in the future

I am self-conscious about the fact that I lack so much confidence in myself. I am always hard on myself and want to be perfect at everything which often makes me fearful to try something new. I guess I am my own worst enemy.

Being over 40 has been quite challenging, I am yet to know how to deal with the hot flushes, menopause, and the changes in my hair. I am yet to embrace those changes because I still feel so young. I would say the most exciting thing about this phase is how I get to be selfish with my time. I miss my little ones but I am excited to see them grown and independent.

My best features would have to be me being physically strong, my hair, and my gift of empathy.



*“I see beauty in kind women.  
Those who put others first and  
take time to listen and show  
interest in others.”  
– Diella Siemens*



# Evelyn Levy, 53

At this time of my life, I have never been happier. I love myself and I look great for 53. If I could go back in time and advise my younger self, I would tell her not to be so hard on herself, that she is beautiful and perfect, that she should love herself no matter what and I will tell her that she is worthy.

I define beauty as confidence – good energy. A confident woman exudes sexiness without having to be half naked, and a woman who knows her worth and knows what she wants isn't afraid to ask for it. With the understanding that beauty is not only on the outside, I have a big heart, I love deeply and am very loyal.

I'm also cultured and well read, I like to think. I love my legs and my arms; actually I love my whole body. If my girlfriend struggled to see her own beauty, I'd tell her that we are all unique and different and those differences should be celebrated and admired they make you beautiful who needs a cookie cutter of Kim Kardashian? Not me gf!! All my girlfriends are 50+ curvy and beautiful. We dance burlesque and we enjoy our bodies. We raise each other up if one of us is having a bad body day and there is no body shaming here.

My hope from this experience was to regain some empowerment and to look at myself and say “Damn, I look good!”



# Funke Oyewale, 50

*“Be happy, be positive, aim at looking good at all times. You don’t really have to spend so much money to look good.”*

One word that describes me: Open mind. I enjoy helping people as much as I can, both for work and outside work.

My greatest influence is God. I always seek directions from Him. Being positive in all I do, I take up challenges and just hope for the best. I always feel content with what I have. I love hard work and I am always determined.

As an immigrant, major challenges I have experienced include taking up a challenge to travel abroad alone, to get settled and bring my family. I don't really pay attention to negativity. I focus on what I want to achieve. This made me who I am with the help of God.

I am self-conscious about the fact that I don't like to make anyone feel unhappy. Being over 40, I feel fabulous.

I believe things are getting better and my dreams are coming true. I am absolutely looking forward to be a grand mum. I am super proud of being a mother, a housewife, and a blessing to people around me.

Beauty to me is looking good inwardly and outwardly. I would give positive compliments to my girlfriend who struggles to see her own beauty.

I went for the portrait session because I wanted to see myself looking good. Seeing the pictures, I feel great about my looks. It's a huge privilege to be a part of this. This is a great form of diversional therapy.



*“Aging doesn't bother me.  
I just try to enjoy and live  
life to the fullest.”  
– Funke Oyewale*

Irene  
Rimar, 50





Itzel Roblero  
Aguilar

# June Granat, 62

*"I just retired recently, so I am still getting settled into this new way of life. I most enjoy thrifting with my girlfriend Kim of fifty years! I also like to walk and participate in exercise and dance classes with others my age."*

My grandmother's death on March 4, 1981, followed by my mother's death on March 7, 1981 marked the most devastating period in my life. I had to find courage that I did not know I had to make it through the grief, as I was getting married six weeks later, on April 25th, 1981. The saying "what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger" is very true. Separating from my husband in 1993, and subsequently going through a divorce, was the next most difficult time of my life. Once again, I had to find the strength to move forward with life as a single mother.

My biggest challenge yet came on January 20, 2016 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was challenging because the outcome at this point was unknown. Encouraged by my family and with their support and care, I had a lumpectomy, chemotherapy, radiation, and naturopathic treatments, and I just celebrated 5 years of being cancer free!

As a woman, I have always been conscious with regards to my figure. For most of my life I have been happy with my shape. It was not until recently that I have become unsatisfied with my bulging midsection and flabby arms. My already thinning hair got worse after chemo, so I wear a wig most of the time. Being over 40 is a great season in a

woman's life. I was much more knowledgeable about life and many things. It was getting to be 60 that was a challenge for me. I had to actually admit to myself that I was now a senior! I have however, become somewhat comfortable with aging, and I am excited to spend more time with my family and pursue new things in life. At 62, I still hope to grow and learn as a person. My husband, Brian and I wish to move to a smaller community and retire there in a few years, spend more time together, travel and get some new hobbies.

I am very proud of my continual strength in the face of adversity, my two children, Cale and Chandra, and the fact that they have both turned out to be hard working, good people. They are, definitely, my motivators along with my husband. They help me to stay strong and to improve myself the best that I can.

Beauty to me is to be the best person that you can be by always trying to improve yourself as a person, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

I decided to be a part of this project by Franctal Studio in order to have some photos of myself at this point in my life. The Confident Woman Project has helped bring me out of the aging rut. I am looking forward to meeting other women who have participated.



*"Baby steps to start. Pick one small thing and start with that. Keep good company and keep your spirits high. Be around people who care about you and will give you encouragement and honesty."  
- June Granat*



# Kathy Scull, 53

*“I enjoy helping people; guiding them to see that they matter, that their voice is important, and that their dreams are possible. I also enjoy reading, writing, traveling, puzzles, friends, family, cats, and chocolate.”*

In April of 2012, I found myself without a job in the space of a weekend because a client became unexpectedly ill. I had no backup plan, so I lost my car, was months behind on my utilities and phone bill, filed for bankruptcy, and ended up on Income Assistance. Thanks to child care subsidies, rental assistance, school lunch programs, food banks, the Salvation Army, and support from family and friends, I was able to provide for myself and my daughter. By June 2013, I had a part-time job and was on PWD (Provincial Disability), which allowed me to slowly get out of debt and into a better place emotionally, mentally, and financially. Today, I use my experience to help others. Debt-free since 2017, I work 3-4 days

a week as a Community Resource Specialist and I love the flexibility of my schedule and the variety of the calls. I've also been a writer for many years and am finally taking that passion to the next level. I would love to spend a month or two (or six) in Italy, and perhaps even jump back into the dating pool.

I think my greatest joy, influence and life motivation has been my daughter Paige. She taught me about living in the moment, finding beauty in simple things, about the necessity of laughter, love, and deliberate communication. My

greatest strengths are my resilience, my resourcefulness, and my sense of humour.

Over the years, my extra weight has been the thing I'm most self-conscious about; that and my lack of style. Being over 40 gives me the freedom to be myself. I don't have to apologize for who I am. I am excited that it's finally going to be all about me, as I've spent most of the last 15 years as a single mom, ensuring my daughter's needs are met, supporting her in her passions, and raising her to be a strong, confident, intelligent, and kind young woman. Now, it's time to put me first. I can't wait to see what the future has in store!

I feel that beauty is not just about looks, so I challenge myself to look past the outside of a person. Aging is inevitable and a privilege, so it's up to each individual to decide how to feel about it and what to do with it. If my best girlfriend struggled to see her own beauty, I would validate what she's feeling, but also share with her what I see when I look at her.

I wanted this portrait experience to honour and celebrate me, as a woman and as a person regardless of what size or age I am. I have very few pictures of myself that truly capture the essence of me, my personality, and my inner and outer beauty. Now that I've seen the portraits, my confidence is boosted because I realized that I can look amazing in a picture. This project by Franctal Studio is truly beautiful! There is something regal and wholesome in women who have lived their lives a bit more, who have had careers, run businesses, raised children, and grandchildren; showing grey hair and skin rolls, wrinkles of lives well-lived. It gives me hope and further builds my confidence that I, too, can be beautiful and confident.

*“As a woman of size, I've spent a lot of time putting life and activities on hold "until I was thin". As it turns out, my size is the least interesting thing about me.”*

*– Kathy Scull*



# Kim Downey, 50

*“I am finding more time for myself to pursue my dreams and interest. I feel healthier and younger, I understand how to use my time wisely and how to surround myself with the right people and how to let go of people or things that don’t serve me.”*

I spend my leisure time with my kids, running, writing, and reading or walking my dog. I am highly motivated to do my best in anything I am pursuing at the moment; I am a lifelong learner who cares deeply about treating others well. Taking running as a sport has been a major shift in my life, and I plan to run a 10k marathon race in the spring (2021). Running makes me challenge myself and seeing myself succeed in it gives me pleasure.

I am super excited about my future, this is the year I get to fulfill my childhood dreams but I am not sharing that yet LOL. I am absolutely thrilled to be in my 50’s as it has given me a clear picture about who I am. I am in a better space physically and mentally. I now understand what works for me and what doesn’t.

Every woman who has had a baby feels self-conscious about her body, specifically her mid-section and thighs, but I am working on this by eating well, exercising and taking care of my body. Even though there are no physical changes yet, my feelings about my body have changed.

I am not certain I have a “best physical feature” but I do love my face and people always compliment my hair. I absolutely love the fact that I am calm,

thoughtful, and not quick to react. I see beauty in everyone and will have no problem expressing how beautiful any of my girlfriends are. I will also be quick to remind my best friend that she is funny, kind, smart, and fun to hang out with, if she ever needs reminding of that.

My first experience with professional photography was in my late 20s when I tried my hand at acting. I learned a lot from my attempt as I had professional headshots done. The headshots were absolutely beautiful, but the photographer had trouble capturing me. He kept telling me that I was hard to photograph. I’ve been quite camera-shy ever since. After signing up for this photo shoot with Caroline, my biggest fear was that the camera would not be able to capture me as I really am. Luckily, this didn’t happen! Seeing my pictures didn’t change the way I feel about myself, it only affirmed what I feel about myself and it did make me consider wearing dresses more often. I think that for any woman who is uneasy about “getting older”, the Confident Woman Project can help her shift her perspective on what a woman of a certain age looks like, and, more importantly, what they can do in life.



*“Beauty is confidence. This doesn’t necessarily mean being bold, loud, fierce, and having a take-no-prisoners attitude. That doesn’t necessarily suit everyone. Confidence can be quiet. It’s just knowing and loving who you are, and always adhering to your principles in your actions and words.”*  
– Kim Downey

# Laura Leask



**You are**  
*purposefully created,*  
*intricately woven and*  
*absolutely beautiful*  
**just as you are!**

**Step into your Power!**

*Caroline Latona*

# Leslie Sagert, 60

*“Honestly, the last 10 years of my life have been so difficult that I find it hard to look back and see positive things. With loss after loss however, comes a motivation to rebuild, pulling from those experiences for the strength and persistence I need to be stronger.”*

Despite the difficult times we live in, I find joy and relaxation watching movies, teaching preschool kids, getting lost in a novel warmed by the sun, and spending time with my adorable grandchildren. I am looking forward to a bright future surrounded by people who love and support me and coming out the other side even better! Growth and change can be positive experiences so I plan to leave a legacy of love behind me. Even in loss, we grow!

Healing from an extra marital affair, separation, and subsequent divorce was a major life challenge. Those years were hard years. I lost my relationship with my son and his family. This past year has been full of grief after losing my soul sister. I'm not sure when I will feel okay again but I do know that I am strong enough to walk through this and come out better, stronger and more confident!

As a woman, our body image often comes with the struggle with self-confidence. These last 10 years have taught me that I am beautiful!

Being 60 is so exciting! I'm excited to move into this next decade with a stronger resolve to impact my family, my friends, other women and even people I encounter along the way. I am most looking forward to reinventing who I am;

stripping away the layers of hurt, trauma responses, past experiences, and relationships to bring out a positive woman that has her shit together. I am so proud of my 40 years in the Early Childhood Education field. I also stand proud knowing that I walked through the most difficult times of my life, on a path I did not choose, managing all of that emotion without hate, slander or bitterness.

Beauty comes from the inside. Women are stronger than they know and we all possess the strength we need to do the hard things. If my best girlfriend struggled to see her own beauty, I would remind her that no matter what or who she encounters she possesses all the beauty inside. On aging, I am excited about growing into the best version of myself. I'm ready to step out into the world embracing my age and my beauty. Just look at what I'm going to do!

My portrait experience helped build on the new-found confidence I had discovered in myself. I am worth it. I have had some previous intimate photo sessions but Caroline made me feel so relaxed and confident. Thank you Caroline! My biggest fear was that my negative body image would come through rather than my vibrant personality but seeing the pictures solidified the fact that I'm so pretty and empowered.

*“Chin up, chest out and  
take it a step at a time!”  
– Leslie Sagert*





# Linda Clement, 54

*“Beauty is energy; vibrant energy.  
All life is beautiful, all valiant attempts,  
reaches, and tries...in that is beauty.”*

I am an author and parenting coach. I also edit and speak publicly, I am a former professional softball umpire, and long-time La Leche League Canada volunteer. I love to draw and paint for fun, and enjoy cooking, eating and travelling. I adore the outdoors and have been a water baby my whole life. At 15, I became involved with a funny, charming older man and my ideas of joining Katimavik and going to university for mathematics and computer science were ridiculed or simply erased. For almost all the 34 years we were together (30 of it married), I endured emotional control, physical intimidation, and social isolation. Having children (2 now-grown daughters) changed my whole focus in life, as I found deep and lasting joy in the privilege of getting to watch them grow up as k-12 homeschoolers. Parenting was largely solo as my (then) husband was a navy sailor. My divorce came as the biggest and most overwhelming shock of my life, and cost me most of my family, friends, and the city I grew up in and loved.

Now 54, I am continuously motivated by my own curiosity which has resulted in a weird and cool resume: I worked in a fine French restaurant, a big department store's china department, a tacky gift store, a printing press, a provincial hydro corporation, a pool hall, an office supply store, a


day care, etc., I have also been a softball umpire, volunteered as a group facilitator, as a public speaking coach, as a data entry and financial admin clerk, and started my own business, Raising Parents Inc., in 2002.

On aging, I am looking forward to being over 80, quite honestly. I finally feel like I have enough experience and wisdom to confidently sell my services and books. I am also excited to have gorgeous silver white hair.

I have always loved my hands and the colour of my eyes. In some light, my eyes are weirdly green, and my hands are flexible and I think, well-proportioned and strong. I have an outrageously quick wit and strong memory. If my best girlfriend struggled to see her beauty, I will ask her to learn to draw, paint herself, or take selfies or videos often. Looking at such image later will help her to see herself in a new way.

I am self-conscious about a lot of thing: people's thoughts about my work, and my weight. I am however, deeply resistant to joining in on the suffering-to-be-thin game, and since it doesn't bother me often, I just relax and live with it.

I will continue to write, speak to groups, travel, and help families reach their own high standards. I expect not to retire, actually. Why would I stop doing what I love?

A close-up portrait of a woman with short, dark, wavy hair, wearing a white tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a dark bow tie. She is also wearing a white hat with a black band. She is holding the hat with her right hand, partially covering her face. She has a slight smile and is looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light color.

*“I decided in my early 20s that I wasn’t going to adopt the ‘old woman’ behaviour of chasing youth, but that I would enjoy it as it happened, so when it was over (if it is ever really over inside), I would have fond memories of BEING young, instead of long, long memories of trying to stay young.” – Linda Clement*



Linda  
Kenick

# Linda King, 66

*“Moving forward, breaking patterns, illuminating and embracing the imperfections of being human and embracing those, while advocating for myself and others these are the things that motivate me”*

My family is most precious to me: my husband Marti, our sons Christopher, Steven, and David, their wives and partners Katie and Shelagh, and our grandchildren Katherine and Ryker. I feel my work and career has been like my calling. I've worked for the Pacific Post-Partum Support Society for the past 30 years. Outside of work, I enjoy gardening, art projects and creative tasks, nature and the outdoors, and animals, and reading.

My wise and nurturing grandmothers Lily and Jane and my Uncle Frank have been great influences in my life! They helped me grow as a person, heal, and understand how important it is to be present with others, to care, and to contribute in this world. I am super proud of being my kids' mom, my career, and being a decent human being overall. Early in my career, I had to overcome my fear and anxiety about public speaking or leave my work. My passion and conviction for my job motivated me to take public speaking courses and joined a supportive group of women who met weekly. Overcoming my original family dysfunction laid the foundation for working at, and creating a more healthy family, and an environment of growth and safety for my children, with my husband.

I am living my future right now :) I have learned to be content which is a wonderful as I have dealt with anxiety and depression over the years. I am developing more skills and having fun in gardening and art, I'm learning to relax, to do nothing, to meditate and be mindful. When possible again, I want to do some travelling with my husband Marti and friends and family.

I have been self-conscious about being photographed the older I get. However, my interest was piqued about the Confident Woman project, and although having Caroline do my photos was a big reach for me, and I almost talked myself out of it, she was so encouraging, kind and supportive all through the process. Sometimes I'm self-conscious about my education. I always wanted to have higher learning and I did, but it wasn't at the level I had hoped for. However, education and experience are more than the reality of my educational level and so with self-compassion I easily dismiss the feeling of loss and embrace my accomplishments.

Aging has given me freedom and the ability to look at my body with less vanity and more practicality such as health concerns. At this stage in my life, I am happy, settled mostly and that's pretty solid. I am grateful for the strong sense of contentment I have in my older years.

*“Beauty is not always what society says. We're way more than our outer appearance. Always remember who you are. You are a beautiful soul.”*  
– Linda King



# Lydia Houle, 58

*“I am super stoked that I’m retired and don’t have to work!!!”*

All experiences, good or bad are lessons. They influence your choices and actions in the future. I am a strong proponent of the saying that, “once you’re down, you have to get up again.” Bringing a child up to be a good human being is always a challenge but doing it alone can be very difficult. I persevered though. Currently, physical issues are slowing me down on doing the things I love. Despite this, I’ve become a go-getter; I feel you have to work hard to get what you want, and when you do, boy do you appreciate it!

I enjoy walking, talking with people, playing in my garden and enjoying time with my family.

However, I’m also hoping for a surgery this winter for my knee so I am working hard physically and

mentally, to be prepared for that.

On aging, I embrace it! Everything I’ve gone through is worth it all now. The things I’ve learned in my life are priceless. I believe in aging with grace and empowering younger women to achieve their dreams.

I’m proud of my son first, I’m proud of the education I have received and my work with seniors for over 30 years. My girlfriends know I am a bit of a tough cookie. If I had a friend who felt insecure about her beauty, I would bluntly ask her to snap out of it!!!

This portrait experience was for me. I had no fears before the project. The experience was awesome and the portraits were beautiful.



*“I think a lot of women feel  
conscious of the size or lack of  
size of their bodies. I think  
women have to realize beauty  
comes from within.”  
– Lydia Houle*

# Marina Gallagher





# MaryBeth Buchanan



# Marissa Perez, 52

*"Live life to the fullest."*

My greatest life motivation is my family, especially my three daughters. They give me a reason to hang on and continue living. My mother is the person I consider to have the most influence on my life, as she has taught me values and skills that enable to cope with life's challenges.

Two of the major life challenges I have had is the breakdown of my marriage and a car accident; those incidents taught me how to be resilient in the face of conflict and struggle. Nowadays, I enjoy working and serving people, and everything nature! I also spend some of my spare time volunteering. I look forward to living comfortably after retirement while continuing to help in the community. I love travelling as well and hope to do more of that in the future.

Being over 40 is great! Aging is nothing to be afraid of. We just need to accept that all of us will reach this milestone at different times. Although I miss when I was more agile, I love the life lessons, therefore wisdom that come with older age. What excites me most about this stage in my life is the knowledge that despite the many challenges I've had that have inadvertently impacted my parenting, my children continue to work through tough trials and ultimately thrive.

Two personal achievements that I can share are reuniting my family (I sponsored my mom and brothers from the Philippines to come here to

Canada) and having been blessed with three beautiful daughters. I was also involved as a volunteer in a fundraising for Philippine typhoon victims in coordination with SPIDS, other organizations, and the Canadian Red Cross, as well as the Motion (M-155) Passage of Filipino Heritage Month. You can check it out on <https://www.facebook.com/salmazahid15/videos/281913065756495/>

We are all beautiful! Beauty is how human beings appreciate and perceive a person's intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics. Beauty is: loving and accepting oneself despite flaws and imperfections.

I'm self-conscious about my belly fat and arms.

Going for my portrait session, I wanted to gain confidence and acceptance of my flaws, with lovely photos to hang on my wall! I was afraid that the photos would not turn out well due to my insecurities with my body. After the photoshoot, I learned how to pose and feel nice in my own skin.

My portraits make me happy.

The Confident Woman Project helps women be comfortable in their own skin and gain confidence in what they perceive as flaws. Caroline is a good photographer who was open to suggestions and willing to help me feel comfortable in a foreign environment. She taught me tips for posing for the camera, which I greatly appreciated! Thank you Caroline!

*“See your flaws, not as imperfections, but as lovely as your assets. Only then will you see how pretty you are to other people.*

*– Marissa Perez*





Melanie  
Andriessse



*You deserve to be a work of art!*



# Michelle Poulsen, 52

*“Loving the person I am, and the body and mind I have has been years in the making but that has really helped and given me an inner peace.”*

I work at BC Children’s Hospital for two Otolaryngologists (Head and neck surgeons). I play volleyball twice a week in the fall and winter season and in good weather, I bike four times a week, and walk with weights and my chocolate lab. I also enjoy hiking, kayaking and watching my 3 boys do their activities.

At the age of 4, I was involved in a very bad car accident that damaged and scarred my face, teeth, and some body parts. With that came lots of insecurities as a young teenager and adult. At the age of 18, I moved away on my own to the big city with little to no money to be closer to a guy who convinced me Vancouver was the place to be. Sadly, I soon found out he was abusive, addicted to drugs, and eventually I ended up in jail. Picking myself up, I worked a full time job and a part time job to just pay rent and afford food until I was financially stable enough to afford some college courses.

Now 52, I am motivated by a love of life, trying to stay healthy knowing that genetically or at any time our bodies may not be able to do the same things. Aging has been a beautiful thing even as I sometimes struggle through each year of ailments

as my body changes with getting older and wiser. My children, love for sports, and amazing friends motivate me to get outside and enjoy life.

My future is to ensure and guide my boys into having a post-secondary education or to a career they love. Eventually, I hope to retire and travel to some tropical islands. I would love to start up a bar/pub/ restaurant/ coffee shop/ combination of all three where local artists can play, sing, or display their art!

Before the portrait session, my fears were about relaxing to be able to pose for the camera, how disappointed I might be in how I appeared in the photos, and of not having the right clothes.

Caroline made things relaxed and had many outfits for me. A make-up artist was on hand to help with make up and touch ups. She

communicated with me and was open to any conversation leading up to the session. It was a fun experience, and as much as it was hard to look at the photos and not criticize all the little things about me, I love that I did this and these are pictures of the ME I’ve learned to love and accept exactly as I am. Everyone should do this for sure. I think I will love the photos even more later.

*“Life has taught me that each healthy day is a gift. My partner and father to my 3 boys had a stroke in 2019 and could have died or had severe brain damage.”*  
– Michelle Poulsen



# Namrata Thandi, 43

*“My biggest motivations have been my own life experiences, my family and my trusted circle of childhood friends.”*

I survived brain tuberculoma in 1997 and it was like I was given a second life. As a young teenager, it was devastating when I gained 11kg in a week due to the steroids that saved my life. I learned to stay positive. I then went on to survive 2 miscarriages and a failed IUI before I was blessed with my second son. All these experiences just made me stronger as I am a fighter and an extremely positive person who doesn't give up easily.

The future looks extremely beautiful and promising in this wonderful country with lots of hopes for success and a good quality of life. I enjoy time with myself as well as with friends and love exploring the outdoors.

I am physically, mentally and spiritually at my best at 43 and I am grateful for everything in my life! Although I have always struggled with weight issues especially after my steroids treatment, I am finally comfortable and in love with the body and soul I am in now. I have learnt to appreciate just being healthy and alive now.

Being over 40 is wonderful. I feel fabulous and I am living proof of "Life begins at 40", as that is when we migrated to Canada to start a new life here. Nowadays, I am excited about all the new friendships and experiences I am having and look forward to everyday with a lot of hope and positivity. I am proud of how far I have come in life despite the ups and downs and still so hopeful and positive about the future.

Beauty is what makes me look and feel good about myself and the world around me. I always ask my friends to focus on their strengths and work on any weaknesses they may have.

For my portrait sessions, I wanted to flaunt the body I am in after it has gone through lots of struggles and survived it all. I had never had a professional studio experience but I had no fears about the session. Caroline had everything nicely organised and I just went with the flow. All the pictures were stunning. It was tough to select the best from the best. Nothing can fade my smile and the sparkle in my eyes and that is evident from my photo session.



*“I am looking forward to ageing gracefully and believe age is just a number. I shall remain 18 till I die!” – Namrata Thandi*



# Pia Perkins, 53

*“Do more for yourself while you physically can, it will make your life easier and more pleasant as you get older.”*

One word that sums me up nicely: Fighter. My biggest motivators for getting through life's toughest moments were my children and the love I have for them. In 2008, I went into the hospital for what should have been a routine day surgery only to be woken from a coma by a surgeon 10 days later and told I was very close to death and had to have 4 emergency surgeries to save my life. I spent the rest of the month in extended ICU and experienced a very difficult and long recovery. This one event changed my life and my family forever and it was worsened by the fact that the doctor that caused this walked away and continued to serve the public until she took an "early retirement" a year later due to hospitalization on the grounds of dementia.

Going through this event made me more sensitive to people that are wronged, taken advantage of, abused, or hurt physically or mentally. I feel the need to use my voice whenever possible because I know how difficult it can be to find inner strength and bring to light, anyone in a position of power e.g., doctors. I try to teach doctors to stop, take a minute to reflect if they are questioning something, and listen to that inner voice not to negatively alter someone's life forever. Actions have consequences, and should not be done out of spite, greed, pride, cockiness or ignorance. As a patient looking for a surgeon, do not just accept everything blindly, and have the confidence to ask questions. Doctors are human too.

I am self-conscious about my lack of ability to put myself first and do more for my own needs. Being over 40, I feel ok but wish I had done more when I was younger. Hence, I have to commit to doing more as I get older. Now, I have more time for the things that make me happy, such as my two children who fill my heart every day. I am still here because of them. Beauty is Inner strength, confidence, and modesty. Everyone has something beautiful, you just have to find yours and love yourself! I wanted to celebrate myself with this portrait session at Franctal Studio. I wasn't sure I had what it takes to do a photo shoot but the end product was amazing. I'm kind of proud of myself. I wish everyone could do something like this. All women deserve to be pampered for the day and showed off.

Outside work, I love cooking for my family and friends, and painting. I also joined a few support groups related to my situation and I continue to use my voice to help others. I hope to one day be able to volunteer at Children's Hospital or Ronald McDonald House and continue fundraising for Cancer Society.

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*“Cherish your loved ones, especially the moments with your children, don't spend all your time thinking only of the future but enjoy the present. It can all be taken away in an instant.”*  
– Pia Perkins

# Rachel Ferland, 50

*“I am ready for all the good that life is about to throw my way.”*

I fell into retail very early and never got out of it. So I worked really hard and have now been a District Manager for almost 10 years. I work for a great company which gives me freedom outside work and travel opportunities. I also make a small side income from network marketing and I plan to grow that into a retirement fund.

Taking care of myself, exercising, and eating right is a big focus in my life. My three kids are my reasons to live. There's no greater joy than being a parent. Every struggle I've made it through is because of them. I have spent the last 26 years raising and teaching kids, and now I find myself learning from them.


My mother died when I was 8. It was just me and my two brothers who were 7 and 6. She was a wonderful woman and her death forced me to grow up and take care of everyone. I also got married too young at 19 which subsequently led to a divorce after three kids. After living with an alcoholic and a drug addict, I chose to stay alone and raise my kids for the next 15 plus years. I don't regret any of my choices. My kids have turned out extremely well.

One of the hazards of being in retail is job loss. However, I have picked myself up and faced it head on. I am more confident in who I am, what I have to offer, and what I'm worth at this stage of my life so I don't worry about what's next. I see myself retiring in 5 to 10 years as I am working hard on my secondary income. I want to always be close to

where my kids are if possible and be close with future grandchildren.

Growing up, my small boobs were a focus for many teasing moments. I went through many years where I entertained getting plastic surgery but now that I'm 50, I now OWN who I am. I actually wasn't totally thrilled about turning 40 but I am totally and completely in love with who I am today, and it is solely because of whom I was yesterday.

My idea about beauty has definitely changed over the years. I was blessed with a great outward shell by God and my parents. However, it wasn't until I was much older, and had two girls that I really understood how deep beauty and self-love needs to start. I love my eyelashes, my arms and shoulders, really listening to what you can't hear, and giving gifts to people that truly mean something to them. I have been professionally photographed a number of times for various things but I think this photo shoot was good. Before the session, I was scared I might not look like I think I do. However, I went in with a really open mind. I can say that doing this, adds more confidence. I am now more determined to continue to dream big and push on no matter what. I discovered that I am worth it and OK. I was drawn to this project and what you were doing for women. I really felt compelled to reach out and be a part of it. This spoke to me and I am looking forward to getting to know another great group of women.

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is shown in profile, looking upwards and to the left. She is wearing a vibrant red, off-the-shoulder dress with thin straps. Her right hand is raised, touching the fabric of her dress near her shoulder. She is wearing several black bracelets on her right wrist and a delicate necklace. The background is a plain, light-colored wall, and the lighting is soft and even.

*“No amount of creams,  
lotions, or surgery can make  
someone beautiful if they  
don't work on the inside  
first.”*  
– Rachel Ferland.

# Rosie Cerna, 49

*“My greatest motivation are my two boys, everything I did and do is so they have the tools to create a bright future for themselves.”*

I love cooking for my family, especially Peruvian food from my native country, which they enjoy. I also like outdoor activities like off-roading, snowmobiling and boating specially. At work I enjoy the interaction with my customers the most. Major influences in my life are definitely my Dad and Mom, who taught me to believe in myself and work hard to achieve my dreams. My husband is also a great source of support and influence; he is always by my side giving me strength and helping me carry on with our plans. My plan is to keep working until my husband and I retire, hopefully early, so we can travel the world. I just hope my boys get to live a happy life.


When I was 19, my whole family was involved in a big car accident. I had to take care of them while learning how to run a home and family. It was an instantaneous growth experience as I had to step up and become an adult in one day. When I immigrated to Canada, I left my family, work, and profession to start a new life at the other side of the world. Aft immigrating, the second challenge was to learn the language. This was very difficult

for me. All these challenges taught me that everybody has a force inside that we don't know about until we face a difficult event or decision; we have to let that force take over as this is our power to keep going and do our best to success at the end.

I have always been self-conscious about my weight: I am pretty sure most women deal with it. About being over 40, I feel fantastic! Aging is a natural phase of living and over the years, I have learned a lot about life, and family, including work, and people. I can say I am at where I always dreamt to be at this age. I am lucky because I have all I need to be happy. I am also proud of myself and my husband for running a successful business.

People's nice gestures are beautiful, being a good person is beautiful, helping others is beautiful, and always being nice is beautiful.

Before my portrait session, I was scared that I wasn't going to look good. Seeing the pretty portraits now, I have gained more self-confidence. The Confident Woman project is a great project. It's a good way to make older women feel confident and content about our age.



*“Focus on the things you are good at, positive attributes, and make those the main part of your personality; take care of yourself, eat well, exercise, and do things that make you happy.”*

*- Rosie Cerna*

Sarah  
Justa





*She was powerful,  
not because she wasn't scared  
but because she went on so strongly,  
despite the fear.*

*-Atticus*

# Sharon Kilby, 53

*“When I was 17 years old, I had  
Already decided that I didn't  
wanto be doing the same  
thing at 40 years old.”*

I enjoy listening to the sound of water and the joy of my pets. I enjoy laughter, friends, and gardening; volunteering and family. Music is my life.

I am a survivor of childhood neglect, domestic abuse and several other life challenges. I am an advocate for mental illness. Living with mental health issues, I truly understand the complexities and struggles one goes through. I don't live by labels; if I did, I would have a very long list. I have lived through 3 car accidents in a 6 month period and 7 years of a law suit which allowed me to buy my own car and home in full. These life changing moments have influenced me to dig very deep within and become a survivor. My future is much quieter and less chaotic than it once was. I don't miss the drama of toxicity that I lived with.

40 didn't start off very well. Now that I'm in my 50's and I have a few aches and pains (including some grey hairs lol), I feel like I am starting to come into myself as a woman. I feel like in a lot of ways, I am relearning who I am without the trauma of childhood abuse. Sometimes it's an easy day,

some days it's a hard challenge. I am super proud of finally receiving a credit card after 30 years of always being denied. I am excited to have a therapist who understands me and helps me see things I sometimes am not able to.

Beauty to me is what you have on the inside that comes out genuinely on its own. Aging is a part of the process, but I take care of my skin as aging gracefully is important to me.

I hoped to gain positive memories from my portrait experience. I have been professionally photographed before and each photographer is very different. There is nothing that I needed to be improved upon during the session with Caroline. I had so much fun and felt elegant. My past experience with my photos being used without my consent caused some unease before the portrait session. I was also scared I would have no say in the process. Now, I am in awe of the pictures captured my essence and personality. I am reminded that I am more than my past; and that I am not 1-dimensional in description. I would definitely encourage other women to go through this experience.



*"I want women to understand that when the little negative thoughts creep in when you are trying that dress on, push yourself and see within. Reach out and explore having a photo shoot. Explore how you look and feel when you see that you are more than what you think you are."  
- Sharon Kilby*

A black and white portrait of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair. She is wearing a dark, sequined, short-sleeved dress with a white fur stole draped over her shoulders. She is looking slightly to her right with a gentle smile. The background is dark. The name 'Shirley Kumar' is written in a gold, serif font in the upper right corner.

Shirley  
Kumar

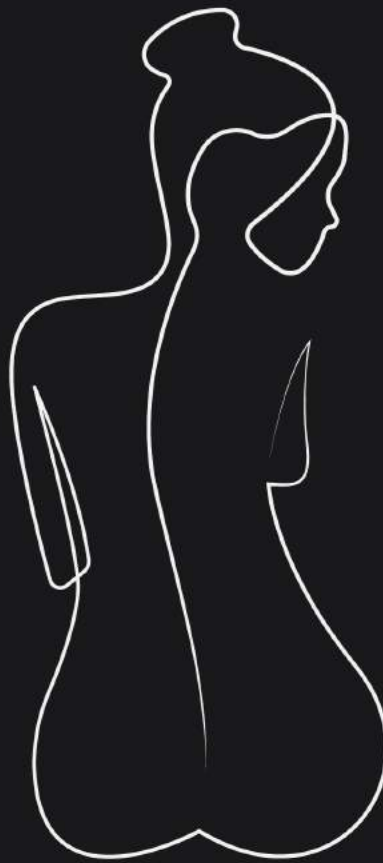
Veronika  
Semora



*Thank  
you*

*Much appreciation to everyone who has helped along the way.  
Huge thanks to my makeup artists, especially Karilee Hagerman and Kara Dafnis.  
To my Admin Assistant Marie Samson.  
To Carol Harrington for your donation.*

*I love living in my divine female body. I combine femininity and intelligence beautifully. My exquisite female body radiates loving kindness to the world. I give permission to my inner goddess to work her magic. I embrace being a woman. I empower myself and all women in the world. I appreciate the female cycles that my body experiences. Being a woman is the greatest gift the universe has given to me. My body is a tremendous gift, and I will treat it with love and kindness. I am a wonderful daughter/mother/sister/partner to my mother/children/siblings/partner. I am confident in my sexuality.*



*You are worthy!*

*affirmation*

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