



# *Echoes of Ink:*

## A TAPESTRY OF LITERARY ENDEAVOURS

By Janine Verburg



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# *Introduction:*

Welcome to "Echoes of Ink: A Tapestry of Literary Endeavours" a compilation of written work that weaves together the diverse threads of three captivating series, each a unique journey through the realms of imagination as well as emotion.

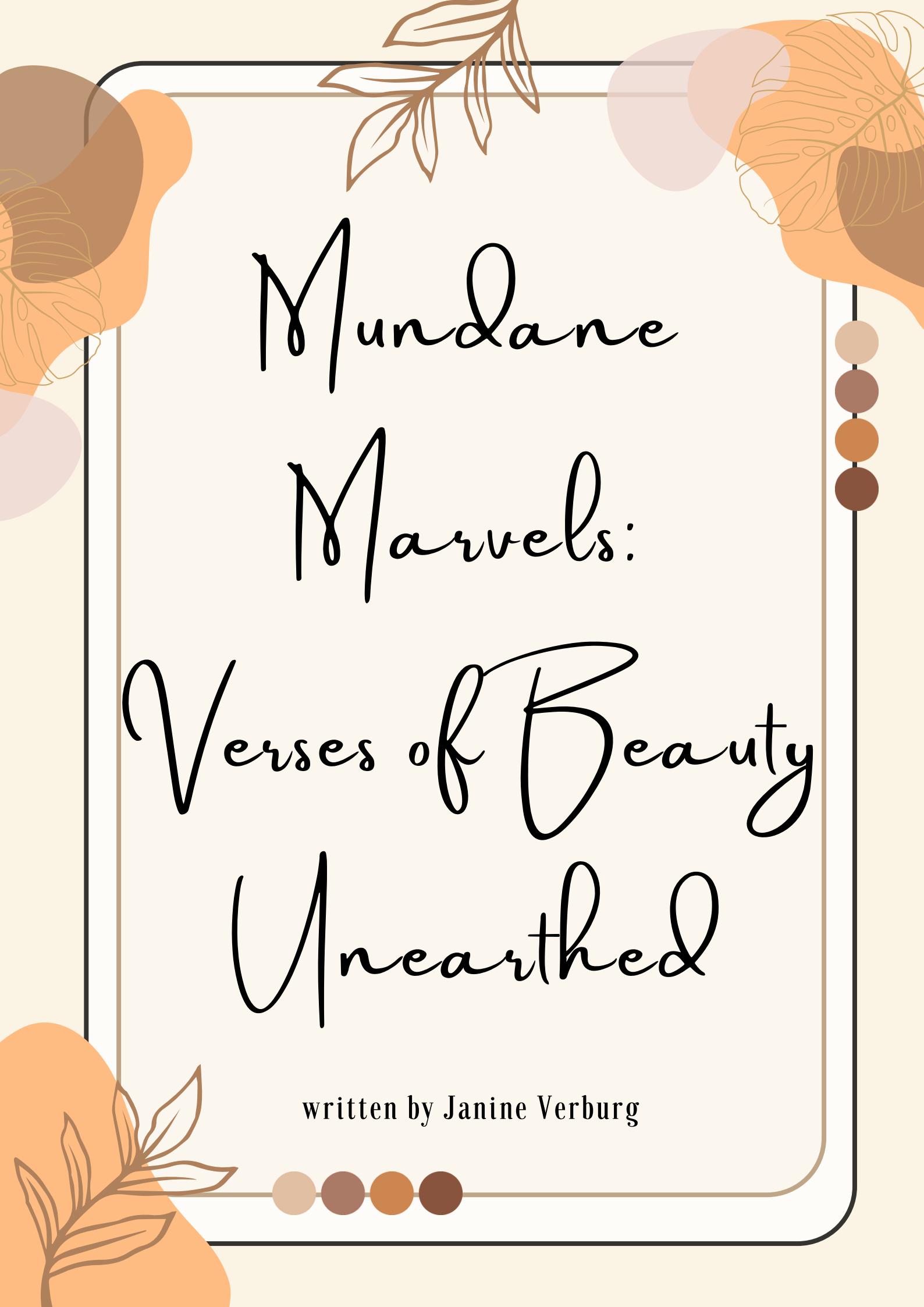
We invite you to traverse the landscapes of writing crafted by a kaleidoscope of voices, each series offering its own distinct perspective.

First, embark on a dance of words with "Mundane Marvels: Verses of Beauty Unearthed" a poetry anthology that explores the beautiful and the ordinary. From dystopian landscapes to bustling suburbia, everyday life to self-acceptance, these poems will stretch and provoke contemplation on the possibilities of the ordinary.

Next, experience the raw, unfiltered emotion of "Threads of Emotions," a flash fiction series that delves into the intricacies of human connection, exploring love, loss, and the myriad emotions that shape our lives. Through poignant prose and heartfelt narratives, these stories resonate with the universal experiences that bind us all, reminding us of the power of empathy and shared humanity.

Lastly, empower yourself and be a catalyst for positive change in the world around you. "Empowering the Youth: a series on personal development and success," is an article series delving into the transformative journey and untapped potential within each individual. Through introspective narratives and practical guidance, this article series aims to equip young minds with the tools needed to navigate challenges, unlock their true potential, and contribute meaningfully to a brighter future.

As you turn the pages of "Echoes of Ink," let these series guide you through a literary journey that spans emotions and worlds. Each story is a brushstroke, contributing to the rich tapestry of human expression and the boundless possibilities that lie within the written word.



# Mundane Marvels: Verses of Beauty Unearthed

written by Janine Verburg

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## Introduction:

“Mundane Marvels: Verses of Beauty Unearthed” will take you through the journey of finding beauty in the ordinary, providing various points of views and controversial opinions on the topics at hand.

Beauty that varies from nature to society as well as within oneself. Just like life, it is a little chaotic yet it will still make sense, going through the ups and downs.

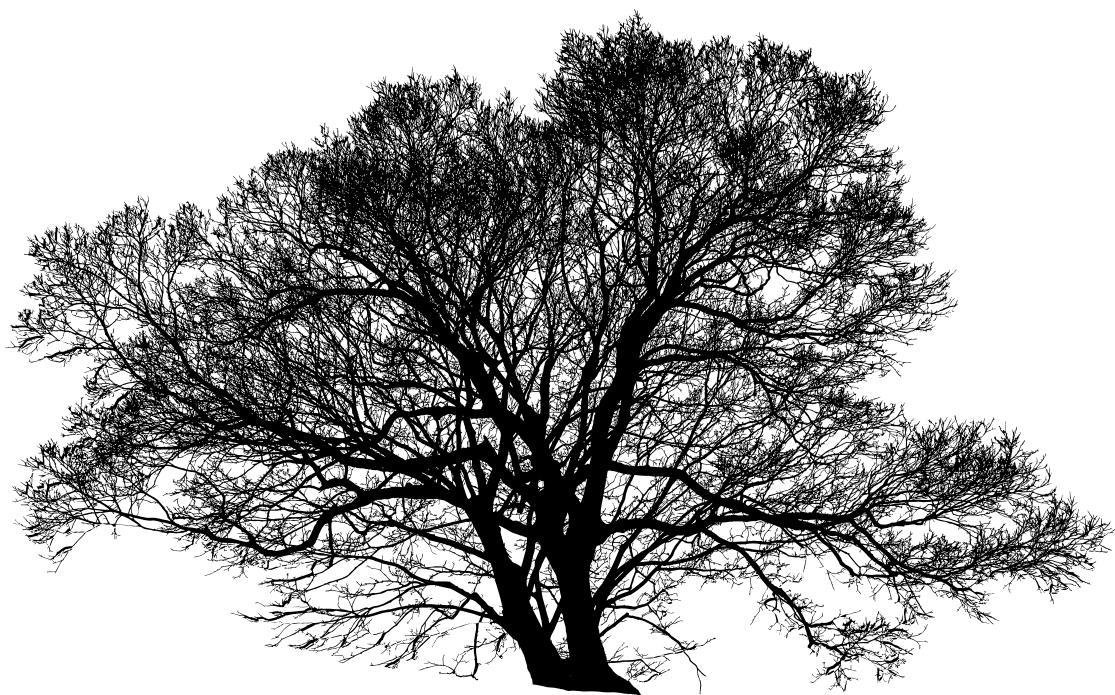
Each poem is a fragment of life’s beauty as well as its horrors and sorrows- the personal experience of a woman who grew up with the modern world and contradicting standards.





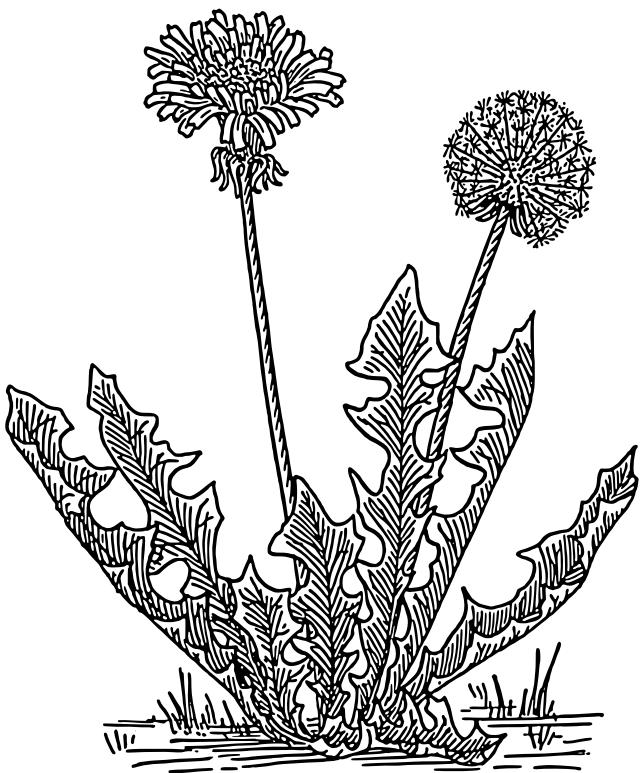
# Nature

Flowers singing loud.  
Their beauty surrounding me.  
Filled with such poise.



# Field of Happiness

Dandelions in a field,  
the serenity they yield.  
A refreshing breeze though my hair,  
Nothing compares!  
The sun warming my face  
like a comfortable embrace.  
I could live here forever,  
as long as we're together.





# Rolling Picture

Amidst the rolling field, a vast expanse.  
I sit and stare, trapped in a trance.  
How the world shows such romance.

Under the starry night sky.  
Trapped as time passes by.  
Wondering, how do birds feel as they fly?

Oh, what an ordinary place.  
Watching as beauty unfurls.  
Everything spinning in space.  
Embracing my curls.

A feature often seen as bad.  
Thoughts precautionary,  
it makes me mad.  
It is extraordinary.

# Societal Standards

Weed among the grass.  
Daisy blowing in the wind.  
Such beauty I can see.



# Intrusive Thoughts

Am I pretty?

I have the long hair and doe eyes.

I am tall and my legs are long.

I have straight teeth and full lips.

Am I ugly?

I have a belly and stretch marks.

My grades aren't as good.

My arms are flabby.

I am me.

It may be ordinary  
but I see beauty.

# Patriarchy

Fuck the standards of society:  
Fuck the patriarchy!



# Complexity of Life

Chaos all around me.  
Can I have serenity?  
Have Integrity!





# Bustling Suburbia

Amidst intricacy we will find,  
the ordinary, overlooked and unseen.  
Simplest moments that look so kind.  
Daily routine.

Life's complex design,  
a routine hum,  
the common moments shine,  
look before you become numb!

Beauty dwells in stories untold,  
yet we keep quiet?  
So many standards to uphold.  
I'm starting a riot!

In little moments we are free,  
with a morning cup of serenity.



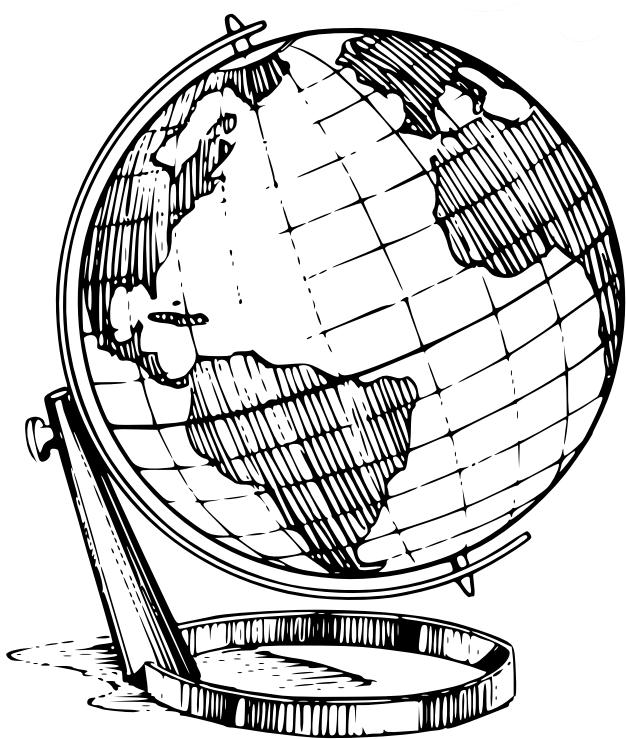
# The Struggle

Stuck in life's tangled threads.  
My hand hovers over a cigarette.  
Yet through the chaos I must strive,  
this complex life, I will survive!



# Freedom

Daring to explore.  
Free thinking knows no bound.  
Free thoughts pave new roads.





# Obscured View

Beauty hides in plain view.  
In the ordinary, where dreams come true.

Beneath the city hum.  
Where buildings loom, in cracks of concrete,  
flowers find a way to bloom.  
For in simplicity we can gain.

In simple moments,  
a masterpiece for the eye,  
a world of wonder can be seen.  
Discover beauty in ordinary.

As sunrise paints the morning view.  
A cozy corner of a coffee shop.  
In the scent of rain falling to earth  
and the sound of laughter and a wrinkled smile.

In nature's rhythm we're set free,  
an essence of freedom enthralled.

# A Ballad to the Good Ones

There bloomed a tale of wonderful grace.  
A ballad of freeform, beauty's embrace.

In the heart of every soul longing to be free.  
-Free to be me.

Where caged birds yearn to touch the sky,  
like stars that twinkle in velvet so high.

Thoughts stirred and took hold.  
A quest for freedom, oh so bold.

A spark did ignite,  
yearning for freedom so bright.

Let this ballad be a song,  
for those who knew right from wrong.  
Its power restored.

# Self-Love

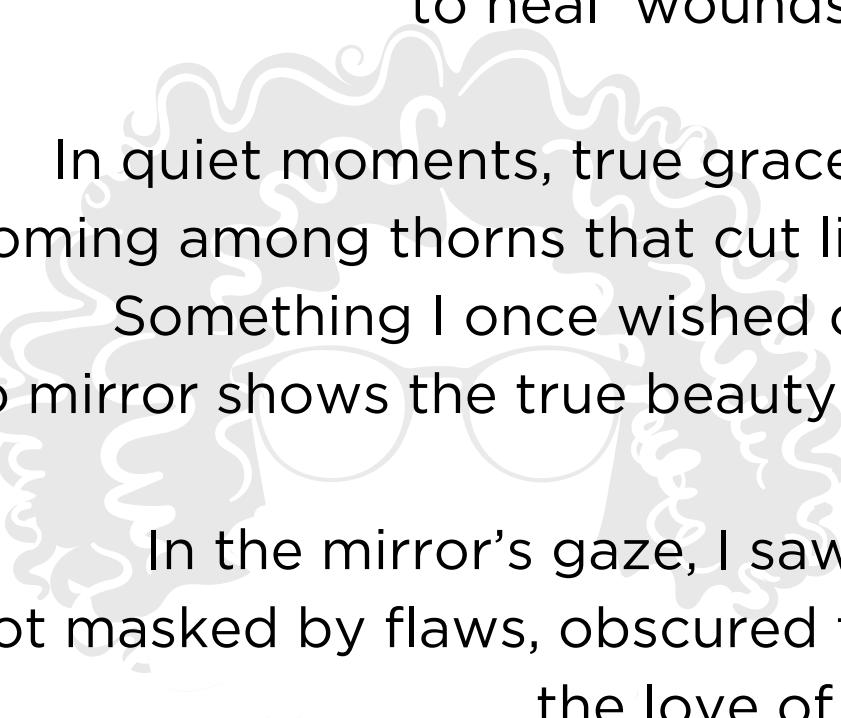
Embrace flaws and all.  
Self-love blooms like wildflowers.  
Ordinary, divine.



# The Story My Body Tells

In shadows deep, where self-love seemed but dust.

    My spirit tired of being misled,  
    yet in the ordinary I found lust,  
        to heal wounds of regret.



    In quiet moments, true grace revealed.  
Blooming among thorns that cut like a knife.  
    Something I once wished concealed.  
No mirror shows the true beauty of my life.

    In the mirror's gaze, I saw my truth.  
Not masked by flaws, obscured from view,  
    the love of my youth.  
        My daily debut.

    Through struggles self-love finally won.  
In the ordinary, a journey has just begun.

# ‘A Ballad to Myself’

In a world of shining stars so bright,  
I've searched for beauty day and night.  
But I found it in the familiar.  
The naked body I see in the mirror.

My thighs thick and defined,  
How have I been so blind?  
I once saw myself a sinner,  
but i finally see the bigger picture.

My body sculpted by age,  
now it will take centre-stage!  
What I once saw as a thriller,  
now laid out to praise like scripture.

I will grab attention like a thunder-crack.  
No ideologies will hold me back!



# THREADS' OF EMOTION



by Janine Verburg

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# *Introduction:*

“Threads of Emotion” takes readers on a journey through the life of a young woman learning the intricacies of love and relationships.

From harsh realities to newfound friendship, follow our protagonist through various relationships as she learns to navigate the world.

This flash fiction series follows a timeline from kindergarten to adulthood, the most important time in a person’s life to learn who they are and who they want to be.



**Threads of Emotions**

# Breaking Patterns

In a small town, nestled between rolling hills, and heavy hung clouds, lived a little girl named Charlotte. Her world was painted in shades of grey and shadows cast by her stern father.

Father was a man moulded by the harshness of a military-like upbringing. His strict unwavering, uncompromising discipline was etched into Charlotte's daily life, his words (more like barked commands) would make any soldier quiver from fright.

Love was a foreign concept when it came to Father. Every day was a battle, a rigid cold routine. Each command served as a reminder that nothing was ever good enough. Charlotte failed to meet the standards of the stern patriarch as did the rest of the family, even Mom.

But Charlotte had a spark of resilience, a determination to break free because like Father had said many times before, "Tears are for the weak."

So she sought for comfort in books, losing herself in tales of love and adventure. They were more than just stories, they were a beacon of hope. She found sanctuary in the quiet embrace of reading, a place where she could be her truest herself.

As Charlotte grew older she realised that Father is just a lonely, miserable man. She mustered the courage to assert her self-worth to Father and demanded the respect she deserved. It was an uphill battle but Charlotte would have her way because without her, the family would fall apart and Father would be truly alone.

Over time, the ice around Father's heart began to thaw, recognising the pain he had caused to the entire family. Though their relationship was already severed, Father tried to change, in his own way, through much-deserved struggle and earned healing.

The little girl had now grown up, she emerged out of a broken household, resilient and strong—a testament to the transformative power of conditional love.

# Princess for a Weekend

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Charlotte. She had thick curls as wild as the wind and a heart filled with boundless curiosity.

On a sunny Friday afternoon, Charlotte's mom drove her to the picturesque town of Germiston, to the castle-like house that belonged to her granny. The house seemed to come straight out of a fairytale, with ivy-covered walls and a real secret garden that promised a weekend filled with laughter and adventure.

As Charlotte entered the enchanted castle, the sun streamed through the stained glass windows, painting rainbows on the walls. Charlotte raced up the carpeted staircase, "Granny!"

A familiar voice, filled with warmth and love, floated down to meet her. "Charlotte, my precious child, you're here!"

In the cosy TV room, Granny set up a play area fit for royalty. All of Charlotte's favourite toys were laid out, including a tea set with Granny's biscuit jar only for the most refined of gatherings.

The weekend was a whirlwind of adventure. Charlotte and Granny explored the secret garden, imagining fantastical worlds waiting to be discovered. They baked batches of cookies, the scent of vanilla filling the air. And as bedtime approached, they sat in bed reading stories she would later dream of.

On Sunday morning, as the first light of dawn painted the sky pink and gold, Charlotte's mom had arrived to take her home.

"Mommy!" Charlotte ran into her mom's arms, bubbling with excitement as she recalled all the weekend's adventures.

As they drove away from the castle-like house, Charlotte clutched a crown they had made over the weekend, wearing it proudly, just like a princess should.

Charlotte's mom watched her baby girl in the rearview mirror, her heart brimming with love. The weekend now served as a reminder of the magic that can be found in simple moments spent with loved ones.

Charlotte left with a heart full of love and laughter, memories that will be cherished forever.

# Parting Ways

The late summer air hung heavy with the scent of blooming Jacaranda flowers as Charlotte sat on a school bench, her heart heavy while beside her sat her childhood best friend and confidante, Wilma. The mood was gloomy for one possible reason, they had to say goodbye.

“We’ve been through so much together. You were my rock, W,” Charlotte said quietly.

Wilma smiled with sadness in her eyes. “You’ve been mine too, Charlotte. Unfortunately, things are changing. I mean, we’re going to different high schools and our interests...are leading us in different directions,” Wilma said with quivering lips.

Charlotte’s heart sank into her shoes.

Wilma was right, their paths were leading them in opposite directions, but it didn’t hurt any less. They have been friends since before she could remember.

That night, Charlotte confided in her mother, her throat tightening and her voice catching on the words. “Mom, it’s not fair. Why couldn’t we like the same things anymore? Wilma and I have been friends forever, I can’t imagine not seeing her every day.”

Her mother, a beacon of strength and wisdom, wrapped her arms around Charlotte. “Darling, change is part of life’s journey. It’s never going to be easy but that’s how we grow and discover new parts of ourselves. Isn’t that exciting?”

“But I don’t want to grow apart from Wilma,” Charlotte’s voice trembled.

Her mother’s gaze was gentle, “People go down different paths and that’s okay. It does not take away from the fact that you were amazing friends and shared many memories and love for each other over the years. It’s just a chance for both of you to explore new things and make new friends.”

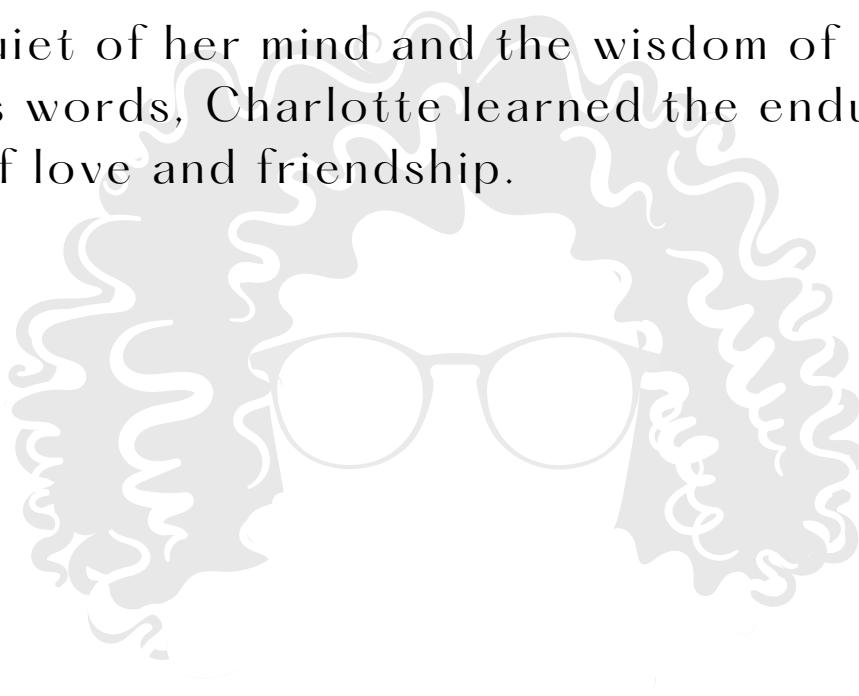
As always, Mom’s words ring true. Over the following weeks, Charlotte and Wilma spent as much time together as possible, cherishing every moment. They laughed and cried, knowing that time was slipping through their fingers.

The last day of primary school arrived, and the sky exploded with a ray of oranges and pinks. Charlotte and Wilma stood with their hands intertwined, hearts heavy with the weight of finality. As the last bell rang, the grade 7’s said their goodbyes, tears streamed down the girls’ faces, a mixture of grief and love.

When Charlotte's mom arrived to pick her up, they sat in silence, her mother's presence comforting her wounded heart. "I'm going to miss her, but I know she'll always be a part of me and that's okay," Charlotte admitted.

Her mother smiled with pride, "That's my girl. You see, that's the beauty of friendship, darling. It leaves a lasting mark on our hearts."

In the quiet of her mind and the wisdom of her mother's words, Charlotte learned the enduring power of love and friendship.



# Echoes of Love

In a small town, where skies were painted in hues of gold amongst the dreary twilight, two hearts found solace in each other's company. The star-crossed lovers met in a library, where the scent of old books often mingled with whispered dreams. Their love story would often be considered a delicate flower pushing through concrete to defy all odds.

Charlotte, with her stack of books and a craving for the fantastical, caught the attention of Finn, with his unruly hair and smile that could light up a room, sitting in his corner with his earphones in. They bonded over their shared love of words in music and books, exchanging worlds and dreams they held dear for the longest time.

As months passed, their love grew stronger and deeper. Their relationship served as a beacon of light when the world felt like a never-ending abyss. They navigated life, hand-in-hand, their faces illuminated by the glow of shared ambitions and stolen kisses.

Until one fateful morning, tragedy struck.

Finn had taken his own life.

Charlotte was now alone in a terrifying world with her heart in shambles. Charlotte struggled to find her way in a world that was once so beautiful, but now it was drained of colour.

Amidst the weight of grief, Charlotte overlooked her tokens of their love, discovering a letter Finn wrote when they first started dating. His handwriting danced across the thin weightless pages that could never encompass the love once shared. The love letter was beautiful, it spoke about a future that was now lost and a love that once had saved him.

Tears streamed down Charlotte's face and she found solace in the memories they created together. As the years passed and Charlotte graduated high school, the thoughts of Finn became less painful, rather it became a beautiful reminder that she survived.

In the early hours of the morning, Charlotte would remember the bittersweet beauty of loss and hear the echoes of her first love pounding in her heart.

# Shattered Trust

Charlotte's heart raced as she approached the school courtyard, breathing heavily, and clutching her phone in her trembling hand. While the early autumn breeze whispered through the trees and carried the scent of fallen leaves, she could sense imminent change.

She spotted Phillip sitting casually in his usual spot, his eyes fixed on something in the distance. The sight of him sending a pang through her chest, a mix of fondness and dread.

"Phillip," Charlotte whispered, her crackling voice barely audible over the rustling leaves.

He turned, smiling at the sight of her. Standing up, he enveloped her in an endearing hug. However, the hug suddenly didn't have the same effect it usually did. Charlotte's heart ached because of the text messages. The betrayal, a constant reminder in her mind.

As she pulled away, looking into his eyes, she said, "I know what you did."

His smile faltered, replaced by a look of concern.

Charlotte took a quivering breath, gathering the courage to say the words that felt like anchors weighing her down, the words that shattered her world. “I know about you and Erica.”

Phillip’s eyes widened, his face paling. “It’s not what you think.”

Tears stung Charlotte’s eyes, her vision now swimming. “I saw the texts.”

His gaze falls to the ground as he lets out a sigh. “It was a stupid mistake, we were drunk.”

Her heart imploded, a rush of pain and anger seeping through her whole body in engulfing waves. “How could you do this to me? With my best friend of all people!”

Philip, “Wait let me explain...”

“No,” Charlotte’s heart wavered, torn between the love she felt and betrayal she couldn’t ignore. “This...it...it changes everything. I can’t do this.”

The weight of her words settled heavily between them, the silence only punctuated by the laughter of other students and the rustling of the leaves. Phillip took a step back, eyes filling with regret. He nodded slowly, reluctantly understanding that his infidelity was unforgivable.

As he walked away, Charlotte's face crumpled, the painful texts chipping away at her already fragile heart, serving as a reminder of the trust lost.

As days turned into weeks, the school halls seemed isolating and her world, hollow. Charlotte was just trying to piece together the shattered fragments of her heart and it seemed no one understood her mourning soul. Not even her closest friends.

Still battling the effects of grief, one afternoon, when the autumn leaves swirled around her, Charlotte found herself in the courtyard once more. Lifting her head she saw Erica standing in front of her, eyes red-rimmed and sorrow etched on her face.

"I'm so sorry, Charlotte," Erica whispered, her voice raw with guilt.

Charlotte's heart ached for the friendship now lost, betrayal weighing heavy on her heart.

"I can't forgive you," Charlotte said stoically, leaving no room to argue.

Erica nodded with tears streaming down her face.

Charlotte faced the bitter truth that even the deepest love and the strongest friendships can be shattered. In the courtyard filled with laughter, as Erica walked away, that painful autumn Charlotte fought the hardest battle within the chambers of her own heart.

# Resilient Hearts

Charlotte was a woman with eyes that held both heartache and strength. She sought refuge in solitude, hoping to heal wounds that life had cruelly inflicted upon her soul.

She had known love once. A love that disintegrated under the flames of betrayal and broken promises, leaving her heart guarded behind layers of caution. But she believed in the resilience of her human heart, prepared to give love another chance.

Even if it meant it could be taken away from her again.

It was on a warm summer's night, at a friend's birthday bash, when she met Connor. His smile held a warmth that gradually melted the ice around her heart and his eyes had a depth of understanding that spoke of his own hardships.

His eyes told more than a story, his eyes spoke of a journey that resonated with hers.

They spent hours talking and sharing stories of loss and recovery, discussing life and everything they held dear. It was then that Charlotte found a renewed sense of hope and unyielding comfort in his presence.

As the seasons changed, their relationship grew. Their hearts beat to the same rhythm, and each shared smile and gentle touch became a testament to the power of love.

One evening, when the sky was painted in the hues of the setting sun, Connor took Charlotte's hand and looked into her eyes with sincerity that touched her soul, and said, "Forever with you sounds pretty amazing."

Charlotte's eyes glistened with tears, feeling a mixture of overwhelming love and newfound trust, "Forever with you sounds pretty amazing too," she agreed, smiling.

As life brought its trials and tribulations, Charlotte and Connor stood side by side, their love a shield from any harm. They learned that love born from misfortune, was a love that could conquer anything...if not everything.

In Connor's arms, Charlotte found not only a lover but a partner in every sense of the word.

In the embrace of love born from the ashes of past hardships, Charlotte and Connor built a love that was meant to be, a testament to the power of the human heart and finding your home in the arms of another.

# Whispers of Friendship

In the bustling city of Johannesburg, Charlotte stood on the threshold of a new chapter in her life. College. The one world filled with endless possibilities, a chance to start over, and new friendships. Trust did not come easily to Charlotte, it felt like a wildflower struggling to bloom in rocky trenches because her heart carried the weight of past betrayals.

Her first day on campus was a whirlwind of unfamiliar faces, names, and hurried introductions. Yet among the sea of strangers, she would call fellow students, one person stood out — Sethu.

Sethu had kind eyes and a warmth that radiated throughout campus. Extending a hand of friendship, Charlotte was hesitant to accept at first, her heart was guarded but something in Sethu's demeanour reassured her and calmed her anxieties.

As the weeks went on, Charlotte and Sethu became inseparable, sharing their dreams and laughter, building a bond that felt like the first rays of sunshine after a long and cold winter. Charlotte dared to trust a blooming friendship, and she found solace in being her true self.

But whispers of doubt crept in. Other students, jealous of their closeness, spoke half-truths and spread rumours, trying to harm the newborn friendship between the young women.

Charlotte's heart was torn between the fear of past betrayals and the warmth of something beautiful and true blossoming.

It was on a refreshing spring day that Charlotte confided in Sethu and as a friend, she listened.

Her eyes filled with understanding and empathy. "Trust is a delicate thread that can be easily frayed. But I am here for you just like you are for me and those halfwits can try to separate us but they won't succeed," Sethu said with a reassuring smile.

At that moment, a spark of hope ignited within Charlotte.

Together, they stood as a united front, their bond forged in the fires of difficulty. As semesters passed, Charlotte and Sethu navigated the challenges of college life together. They celebrated hard-earned victories and supported each other through their heart-shattering failures, growing together as individuals.

While Sethu became a friend as well as a beacon of light in a journey towards healing and happiness, Charlotte learned to have the courage to believe and trust in someone despite previous betrayals.

Their friendship became a testament to the power of love and trust, a strength found when leaning on someone in a time of need.

# *Paws of Unconditional Love*

In the heart of a quaint suburb, lived a young woman named Charlotte. Her spirit was a blend of wildflowers and determination, yet seeking something deeper than fleeting romance.

Charlotte's days were filled with a quiet longing for connection, not a romance but the yearning for genuine, boundless love.

On a sunny afternoon, as Charlotte was wandering around a farmers' market, Charlotte's gaze fell upon a pen filled with puppies and a sign that read: "Puppy Rescue."

Her curiosity was piqued as she took a closer look at the wagging tails. Among the joyous chaos, Charlotte found her calling, a puppy in need of a home. That's it, that's what I need.

She knew then and there, that's what her heart was yearning for.

Her puppies, Charlie and Tyson, brought a newfound purpose to her life. Their eyes were filled with trust and devotion, mirroring the love she had been searching for. They didn't judge or demand, they didn't crucify nor betray, they simply just...loved.

Charlotte's days were filled with smiles and laughter as well as cuddles that could warm the heart of even the coldest man. However, the journey was not without its challenges.

Charlotte learned the intricacies of puppy care, juggling training sessions, vet visits and a multitude of mishaps. Charlotte found a kind of love she had never felt before. It was messy, demanding and utterly beautiful. Her puppies taught her about sacrifice, frustration, and the boundless capacity of the human heart.

It was one evening when the sun painted the horizon in shades of gold, Charlotte sat in her garden, watching her two boys run in circles. Her heart swelled with pride and joy. She had given them a forever home and in return, they had given her a sense of purpose and a deeper understanding of love.

In the rays of the setting sun, Charlotte realised that love wasn't always found in romance, it could be found in the late-night cuddles and the joyful chaos of wagging tails. It became a testament to the remarkable growth of caring for another being and the beauty of selfless devotion of the heart.

# DAILY SKINNER

*Empowering the Youth:*



*A Series on Personal Development and Success*

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*Empowering the Youth:*

*A Series on Personal Development and Success*

- 1. Female Empowerment in Youth.*
- 2. Power of Representation: Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders.*
- 3. Nurturing Youth through Adversity.*
- 4. Empowering Youth in the Digital Age.*
- 5. Guiding Youth Towards Success: The Power of Mentorship.*

# DAILY SKINNER

## *Female Empowerment in Youth*

**By: Janine Verburg**

In a world full of possibilities, it is imperative to ensure that every young girl knows that she can shape her future. Female empowerment is a movement that paves the way toward a more inclusive, progressive, and equitable society. In this article, we will explore the various angles that contribute to the importance of female empowerment, what the concept entails, and how it nurtures the potential of young women.

Roughly 1.2 billion women are restricted from getting safe abortions. Why? Because despite the new age, women still do not have full ownership of their bodies because of the “patriarchy’s” slow progression. The harsh reality is that: the fight is still not over for women, and we need to continue paving the way for the youth of today as well as the youth of tomorrow to end generational gender bias.

Unfortunately, gender bias comes with misconceptions such as the menstrual cycle affects women’s capability to make critical decisions. However, the truth is...a period does not affect decision-making (besides eating one too many chocolates),

so why can women not make decisions that are beneficial for their own lives and bodies?

Why are women still fighting for equal wages and the luxury to be taken seriously in formal sectors such as employment and health care? When equal rights are brought into general conversation the word feminism is bound to follow close behind with a negative connotation and it often leaves a sour taste in people’s mouths. Lowery (2022), we are not talking about feminism, we are discussing the fact that women earn roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  for every dollar a man earns.

The reality is that women continuously get the shit end of the stick in mostly male-dominated conversations, from opportunities to wages, and finally health care.

The question remains, how do we inspire young girls to strive for equality?

129 million girls, between 6 to 17 years old, are not in school. By empowering these girls to stay in school, it can set them up for better futures.

When girls are educated, they can have better health care, earn higher salaries, and live a longer life. As Aditi Sharma said, "Most importantly an educated woman offers better nourishment, health care, and education for her family."

As adults, we should empower young girls to continue their education, demonstrate to them the kind of life they may lead, and never stop supporting their aspirations. A period just demonstrates that women may face challenges and govern entire countries at the same time; it does not imply that a woman is any less capable of hard work or leadership.

If we show them the boundless possibilities they have, we can empower them to dream bigger and reach higher than they thought possible.

Unfortunately, so many girls do not know that there are barriers that have been broken down by previous generations, therefore they do not know that they can be more than a wife or a mother. We are not condemning men or the role they have in everyday life, we simply want to be able to stand confidently without having to depend on a man and choose love over security.

Empowering young women in their formative years can be instrumental in dismantling deeply ingrained gender stereotypes. By challenging these societal norms, we can pave the way for a more inclusive future.

*"If one girl with an education can change the world, what can 130 million do?" - Malala Yousafzai*

The primary reasoning behind empowering youth is to drive them to take control of their lives and the future. Empowering young women instils a sense of resilience in them that also equips them to navigate challenges. When these girls are provided with equal access to resources and education, they can develop the skills to confront obstacles.

The empowerment of young women is not just a cause, it is an investment in the limitless potential of half the world's population.

*"The stats show when you educate a girl, you educate a family, a community, a country." - Michelle Obama.*

# DAILY SKINNER

## *Power of Representation:*

### *Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders*

**By: Janine Verburg**

In an era characterised by rapid globalisation, the role of representation in shaping the perspective and aspiration of the youth cannot be underestimated. This article delves into the importance of diverse representation, not only in terms of gender and race but also in abilities and experiences.

As a young girl, I did not have a Disney princess that looked like me, because very few princesses have tanned skin and dark, curly hair. Representation matters; it's a profound and fundamental truth that significantly influences how young people perceive their place in the world. The increasing recognition of diversity and inclusivity as cornerstones of a thriving society highlights the urgency of this issue.

When young individuals see themselves reflected in the media, from leadership roles to various professions, it sends them a powerful message: "You belong. You can achieve anything."

Witnessing individuals who resemble them succeed in various fields ignites a sense of self-assuredness.

It instils the belief that their aspirations are not only valid but achievable, bolstering confidence during those formative years. This validation is crucial in combating feelings of isolation and alienation that arise when people feel undervalued or invisible in the world. It creates a sense of belonging that contributes to self-image and self-worth.

Representation plays an important role in fostering inclusivity by ensuring that every young person, regardless of their background, feels valued and seen. This inclusivity extends beyond race, ethnicity and gender to abilities and sexual orientation.

Furthermore, the diverse representation of role models in leadership positions helps shatter stereotypes, leading to more informed and open-minded individuals. Prime examples of representation include Julia Gillard, who became the Prime Minister of Australia, and Barack Obama, who became the first African-American president of the United States.

These individuals broke barriers that previously seemed insurmountable and dispelled the notion that certain paths and professions are reserved for specific demographics. Seeing role models in powerful positions instils a sense of possibility and ambition in the youth.

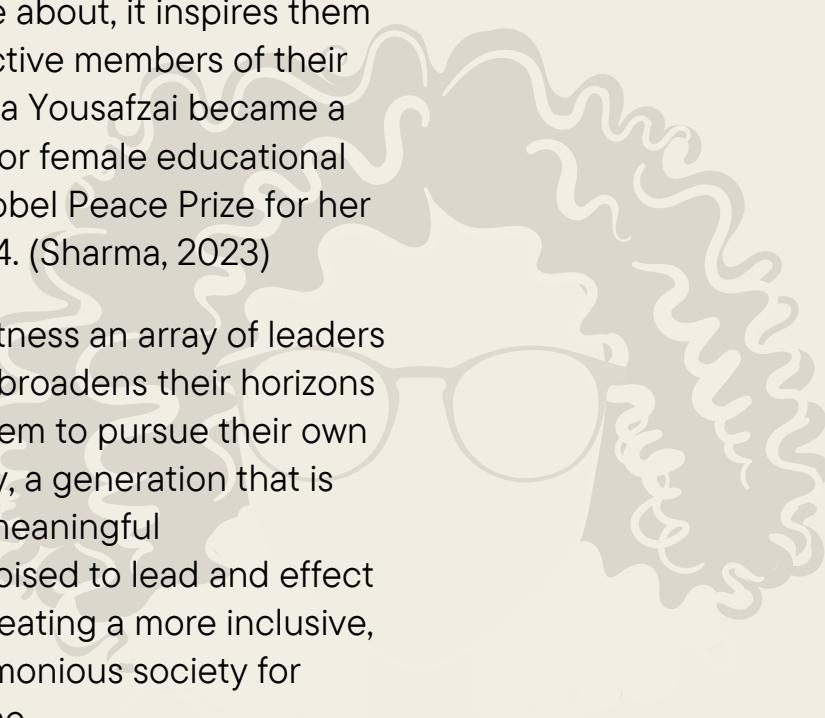
Representation serves as a catalyst for engagement and participation. When the youth witness leaders champion causes, they are passionate about, it inspires them to become more active members of their communities. Malala Yousafzai became a leader in the fight for female educational rights, winning a Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution in 2014. (Sharma, 2023)

When the youth witness an array of leaders and role models, it broadens their horizons and encourages them to pursue their own passions. Ultimately, a generation that is nurtured through meaningful representation is poised to lead and effect positive change, creating a more inclusive, confident, and harmonious society for generations to come.

In addition to fostering inclusivity and confidence, representation also plays a role in promoting empathy and understanding. When young people are exposed to a diverse array of perspectives and experiences, it cultivates a greater appreciation for the richness of human diversity. This exposure leads to a culturally literate generation that is capable of respecting the experiences of others.

It is imperative that we, as a society, continue to prioritise and celebrate

representation in all its forms, recognising the transformative potential it has in shaping tomorrow's leaders. By doing so, we pave the way for a more inclusive and harmonious society, one where every young person can truly believe, "I belong, and I can achieve anything."



# DAILY SKINNER

## *Nurturing Youth through Adversity*

**By: Janine Verburg**

From embracing failure as a stepping stone to success to providing a safe space for expressing emotions, there is a myriad of ways to instil resilience. This article focuses on strategies to foster resilience in young individuals, equipping them with the tools to navigate challenges with grace, knowing they possess the inner strength to conquer any obstacle.

Adversity is an inevitable part of life, and for the youth, it can be a formidable force that shapes their character, aspirations, and future. Navigating challenges during formative years is not only normal but a crucial aspect of personal growth and development. By empowering youth, we create confidence that makes them feel more powerful, and self-determined, making them more willing to take risks. (Spiller, 2023)

Adversity provides a unique opportunity for the youth to develop resilience that can serve as a foundation for their future success and well-being. Resilience creates the capacity to adapt to change and thrive despite difficulty.

For example, a child experiencing academic difficulty learns the values of

persistence and self-discipline.

Someone struggling with conflict hones their communication skills to better enhance their conflict resolution. These experiences contribute to the development of a mindset that is ready to face the complexity of adulthood.

Overcoming adversity creates a sense of assurance. When young people successfully navigate challenges, they build a belief that they can overcome future obstacles. This confidence can become a powerful tool in facing future struggles, as they are now armed with the knowledge that they can effect positive change on their own.

According to Jess Baker's Empowerment Model, there are three ingredients to the perfect empowerment recipe:

1. *Self-awareness*: To feel empowered, one needs to understand their core values and be committed to self-improvement. By knowing what motivates them and recognising their strengths and weaknesses, they can achieve greater success in life.

2. *Self-confidence*: Believing in one's

skills and abilities is essential. Instead of doubting themselves or thinking about what they "should" do or think, they should trust their capabilities.

*3. Intention:* Setting clear goals creates a path to success. By following this path, individuals can change and improve themselves in the process. (Baker, 2023)

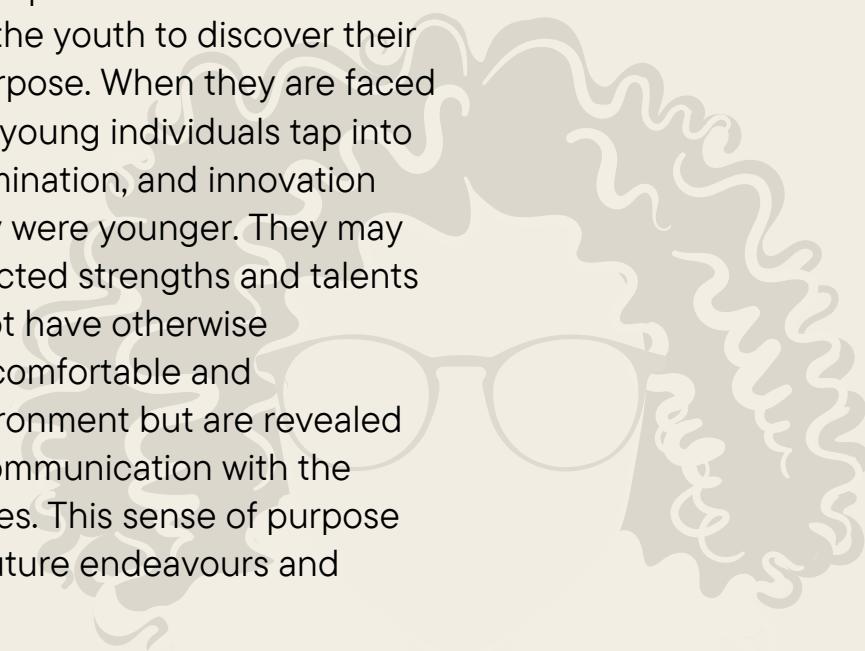
By nurturing youth, we can empower them to realise their full potential. This can serve as a catalyst for the youth to discover their passions and purpose. When they are faced with challenges, young individuals tap into creativity, determination, and innovation learnt when they were younger. They may uncover unexpected strengths and talents that they may not have otherwise discovered in a comfortable and predictable environment but are revealed through open communication with the adults in their lives. This sense of purpose can drive their future endeavours and aspirations.

Nurturing youth through adversity sharpens their adaptability, therefore enabling them to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of society. Additionally, it can foster their sense of empathy towards others who are struggling. When young people witness the power of empowerment in their own lives, they can extend their support to those facing similar challenges.

As a society, it is imperative that we create environments that support as well as challenge young people, allowing them to confront and overcome obstacles with confidence. By doing so, we equip them

with the tools to prosper and thrive in the world at large.

Nurturing youth is a strategic investment in a brighter future.



# DAILY SKINNER

## *Empowering Youth in the Digital Age*

**By: Janine Verburg**

In an increasingly interconnected world, digital literacy and empowerment are essential skills for youth. Empowering young people in a digital landscape is crucial to their ability to navigate the complexities of a globally connected world. This article delves into the opportunities as well as challenges that come with growing up in the digital age.

The digital age is having access to knowledge and resources at one's fingertips. Technology offers a wide range of opportunities for connection, expression, and creativity. By encouraging involvement in technology, we can empower the youth to shape the future as well as ensure a more inclusive and advanced future for all. (Duberry, 2023)

Young activist, Malala Yousafzai harnessed the power of digital platforms to drive the conversation on girls' education, showcasing how technology empowers youth to become catalysts for positive societal change. (Sharma, 2023)

However, there is a downside to this digital age. The youth of today grow up around technology and are constantly seeking stimulation and instant gratification.

Excessive use of technology can have a profound impact on the youth's self-esteem, identity and body image. While technology is a way of engagement between people, the lack of face-to-face conversations can leave children with a gap in their relationship development. Technology desensitises people with studies showing that 36.5% of children feel like they have been cyber-bullied because people forget they are talking to another person, with feeling, on the other side of the screen.

According to Dr Twenge: *"All screen activities are linked to less happiness, and all off-screen activities are linked to more happiness. Eighth graders who spend 10 or more hours a week on social media are 56% more likely to say they are unhappy than those who devote less time to social media. Admittedly, 10 hours a week is a lot. But those who spend six to nine hours a week on social media are still 47% more likely to say they are unhappy than those who use social media even less. The opposite is true of in-person interactions. Those who spend an above-average amount of time with their friends in person are 20% less likely to say they're unhappy than those who hang out for a below-*

average amount of time."

Technology is a powerful resource that can change the world if used correctly. It offers a wide range of opportunities for connection, expression, and creativity. By encouraging involvement in technology, we can empower the youth to shape the future as well as ensure a more inclusive and advanced future for all. (Duberry, 2023)

The use of technology has a great impact on the youth's self-esteem, identity and body image. While technology is a way of engagement between people, the lack of face-to-face conversations can leave children with a gap in their relationship development.

So how do we keep the youth safe when using technology?

To keep young people safe when using technology, here are some key steps:

- Protect their privacy and express confidence in their ability to know right from wrong otherwise, there will not be a bond of trust if things go askew.
- Avoid age-inappropriate content with parental control for younger viewers.
- Manage their screen time when they are young.
- Teach children about predators as well as information that is not to be shared online. This includes school names, cellphone numbers or their home address.
- In the event a child is being cyber-bullied, support them, after the child understands that they are safe and you are "on their side", you should block

and report the bully's account as well as have an informed discussion about online interactions. (Kyla, 2023)

By empowering youth, we promote digital mindfulness and balance with technology. Encouraging healthy offline activity and fostering open communication about online experiences are vital components that nurture their well-being as well.

With the right guidance and support, young individuals have the potential to shape the future and become more informed, engaged and innovative leaders.

# DAILY SKINNER

## *Guiding Youth Towards Success: The Power of Mentorship*

**By: Janine Verburg**

Mentorship is a powerful force in youth empowerment, and this article emphasises the profound impact of positive role models in a young person's life.

As a young woman, I turned to my mom for guidance. She steered me through multiple emotional breakdowns and self-doubt by steadfastly believing in my capabilities. If I aspired to be an author, she handed me a notebook and pen. If I aimed to become a professional swimmer, she drove me to swimming lessons every Thursday and patiently observed my practice. Without her mentorship and unwavering confidence, I wouldn't be the person I am today, nor would I have accomplished the feats I hold dear.

Guiding youth towards success is a collective responsibility. The formative years of adolescence and young adulthood are pivotal in shaping an individual. As a society, we must acknowledge and appreciate the profound impact mentorship has on the youth.

The invaluable role of a mentor cannot be overstated. Mentors offer support, and insights, and help navigate the intricate pathways of personal and

professional development.

Mentors play a transformative role in building confidence in youth. Through their encouragement, young individuals can gain newfound confidence, empowering them to pursue their dreams, take risks, and step outside of their comfort zones. When a mentor believes in a young person's abilities, it conveys a powerful message that their dreams are valid and attainable. This assurance can help the youth overcome doubts and unlock their full potential.

Mentors share their wealth of knowledge and experience, guiding youth toward success. They assist young individuals in setting and achieving goals by helping them identify priorities and offering strategic guidance. Mentors also encourage the youth to take ownership and pride in their achievements, no matter how small. In this way, mentors create a framework for the youth's success under their guidance.

Mentors serve as role models for the youth, embodying qualities that young

individuals aspire to emulate. By imparting their wisdom, mentors guide the youth to become leaders in their own right.

The empowerment that stems from mentorship extends far beyond immediate goals. It cultivates a mindset of continuous improvement and self-belief, laying the foundation for the youth's future success.

You might be wondering, "How can I be a good mentor?" It's as simple as:

- Helping a young individual explore their interests.
- Offering a trusting space where they can learn and explore autonomy.
- Being honest and direct when they ask questions about the world around them.
- Sharing knowledge (Spiller, 2021).

To empower a young individual once you start mentoring them, you should:

- Foster self-awareness: A person seeking empowerment must understand their core values and have a desire to improve themselves. By knowing what motivates them and recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, they can achieve greater success in life.
- Promote self-confidence: Belief in one's skills and abilities is essential. Instead of doubting oneself or thinking about what one "should" do or think, self-doubt should be set aside.
- Teach intention: Setting clear goals can create a path to success. By following this path, individuals can change and improve themselves in the process (Baker, 2023).

As guides for the youth, we should create a network of support that empowers every young person to reach for the stars and achieve their dreams. By investing in a future generation of empowered leaders, we ensure a brighter and more promising tomorrow.

