

Ep #26: Black Women in Love with Karen Beverly



Full Episode Transcript

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C. René Washington

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The world needs strong women; women who will lift and build others, who will love and be loved, women who live bravely, both tender and fierce, women of indomitable will.

Welcome to Midlife Woman Redefined, a podcast for women near retirement who are ready to step into a new chapter of freedom, travel, and fulfillment. If you're ready to focus on figuring out who you are and what you really want, this is the place for you. Here's your host, master certified life coach, travel addict, and midlife maven, René Washington.

Hello, mavens, I am C. René Washington, your life coach and midlife maven and we are here for another episode of *Midlife Woman Redefined*. And today, I'm kicking off a new series that will be aired over the next few months, not consecutively, but I will be dropping in these episodes about black women in love. And I will talk to you more in a few minutes on why I am focusing on that. But it definitely connects to our focus on conquering fear, living life braver, bolder, and better. And I'm very excited about our first guest, Karen Beverly.

Before we get to that, what do we do? We celebrate. What can you celebrate that's unique to you, something you've accomplished or achieved? Remember, we are building that muscle to acknowledge ourselves, respect ourselves, and be able to celebrate the value that we bring to the world. So, what can you celebrate?

I'm celebrating kicking off this series because it represents not just complaining about something, but doing something about it. Let me tell you what I mean by that. There's a new Netflix series called Modern Love, and I'm sure that a lot of you may have seen it or at least heard about it.

And it's a wonderful series. It's taken from the weekly Sunday Times column also called Modern Love, where all these love stories are detailed in the Modern Love column. And they took several of those to create a TV series that's airing now on Netflix. Great series, love the series, but I notice two things.

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One, it's set in New York City, one of the most diverse cities in the world, and there are hardly any people of color in the background, not even walking down the street. They whitewashed New York City. And two, none of the female protagonists, the women in love, are women of color, black women in particular.

And that really bothered me because I am a black woman, if you didn't know, and I can tell you that, yes, black women fall in love. Black women love romance. There are two black men in two of the series that white women are in love with or are attracted to. That's fine. But also, black men do love black women.

So I did complain about it. I did this Facebook post about it. I posted on the Modern Love social media page about it. Then I decided, I'm not just going to complain about it. I'm going to do something about it, hence this series.

So, over the next few months, you will be hearing interviews that I am doing with black women. And I particularly love this too because they did feature an older woman on one of the episodes, and also, that to talk to black women in my demographic, we focus on midlife, who are coming around to finding new love or maybe they've been in long-term relationships.

But just to get you to see that love comes in all colors, races, demographic groups, we all fall in love. We all have love stories, and I just wanted to do my part to show that, as a black woman, that we are a part of that narrative. Today, the first guest in this series is a long-term friend of mine, Karen Beverly, one of my best friends. And she is my friend who I know that if I say, "Let's..." her next thing is, "Where are we going?" She is in.

She lives life as a renaissance woman. She travels around the world. She travels around whatever city she's in. She is a woman on the go and she never meets a stranger. She is just one of the best women I know, always down for an adventure, and I just love that about her. And I know you're going to love her story.

She's going to talk to you about meeting the love of her life at what we would consider a later stage in life, how to recognize what you say you

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want, even though it may be packaged differently, and how to adjust to merging your life with someone at this stage of life. So get your nice cup of tea, coffee, or whatever your beverage of choice is, or if you're riding around, tune out all the other noise and take a listen to Karen Beverly.

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René: Welcome, Karen. So glad to have you on the *Midlife Woman Redefined* podcast.

Karen: Thank you so much for having me, I am so excited to do this series with you.

René: I am so excited to talk to you. So, I know a little bit about your story and I know that you were divorced early. Was that in your 20s?

Karen: No, 30s. I didn't get married until 34. So it was a short-lived marriage.

René: Okay, how long did that marriage last?

Karen: Three years.

René: Okay, and the after that, you made a commitment that you would not marry again until you found the one, is that right?

Karen: Sort of, kind of. I thought I would find the one quickly, but as life would have it, my son was sent to me and I adopted him. That's when I made the decision, because of his needs, that I would not marry until I found the one, but until he got in college.

René: Okay, so you had a very defined way of compartmentalizing how you were going to handle love.

Karen: Yes.

René: But in the meantime, how did that impact dating for you? Did you date while you were raising your son?

Karen: No, I didn't particularly – I went out to dinner, but I wouldn't call that dating. I had guy friends that I would do things with, but I made a

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commitment that I would raise my son because I did not want to bring a new relationship into my son's and my relationship. We were getting to know each other from the adoption, and he needed so much, and I just didn't have the bandwidth to be a fulltime mother a fulltime employer, be a fulltime friend and all the other things that I had on my plate. So I made a decision that that new man would have to wait.

René: Okay, yes, and so let me just tell the audience that when Karen says fulltime friend, she means that fulltime friend, that her commitment to friendship is stellar and second to none. If you have Karen Beverly for a friend, you have a friend for life. And her friendship spreads all over the world. I know from personal experience that if you go out with Karen, you will meet many new people, even the people that are waiting on you in the restaurant. She truly never meets a stranger. Okay, but back to your love story. And so, how old are you right now, Karen?

Karen: I am 63 and a half.

René: Okay, 63, and so Karen made this decision in mid-30s that she was going to put being serious about her love life on hold until she raised her son and until she found the one. Now, after your son became grown and left home, do you know how long it was between that period of time and before you met your true love?

Karen: Oh yes, definitely, let's see here. So, Michael graduated college in 2009, so now it's...

René: So it's 2019 and you've been Bev West for three years now?

Karen: It will be three years – well, three years in the dating and the marriage, yes, so complete three years, we made that November 18th, so this month.

René: Okay, so wow, so that was a long stretch. That was what, about 16 years? You know, I'm bad at math. Between 2009 to when you met Bev and became involved with Bev, there was still a long stretch. And I know that you never gave up, is that correct, that you never...

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Karen: Yes, and in my heart, I knew that I wanted to be married again, I knew that. But I knew also that I wanted the right man in my life and I knew what that looked like for me.

René: Okay, and tell us a little bit about what that looked like for you.

Karen: I divorced the idea of a man that was a certain type, all of the physical attributes of a man. I embraced the attitude of I want to find a man that has a heart. The inside qualities of him would be paramount to how he looked on the outside. Therefore, I repackaged my thing in my head of thinking that I'm supposed to be with this tall dark handsome man, and that's what I had dated in the past, but I just divorced it. And the light bulb went off when I became 60, because then I went on a journey to say yes to all the good in my life. That means opening up my heart to things that came my way that were good.

René: Yes, and so would you say that you kissed a lot of frogs before you met the one?

Karen: I would say yes. I even did a little internet dating, if you want to call it, so they were one-and-dones, you know. I'll never forget, one showed up in a warm-up suit and he was like a mack daddy. Drive a nice car and everything but he was just so – the insides just wasn't there; no compassion, no empathy, no sympathy, just out there living life. And that was a Starbucks date and I never saw him again.

René: Yeah, and I also know that there was a recurring man who had a lot of qualities that a lot of women would say, "Oh wow," because he was doing well in the world and had a lot of stuff and was someone, I think from listening to you, that knew how to treat a woman in a one off, but tell us a little bit about that and why you know that he was not the one.

Karen: Was that the one that I had dated in College?

René: No, that was the one that lived in Atlanta.

Karen: Oh yes, okay. Oh yes, yes, I'll just say briefly, because really, it wasn't a one and done. Yes, I've got it. You can bleep his name out.

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René: Yes, we won't say his name.

Karen: Yeah, so he had a lot of physical attributes, monetary attributes, stuff, property, everything. He traveled the world and all of that. But yet he was not truthful. So I never had the piece of being with him knowing that I meant the world to him. So when I was with him, he treated me like a queen. But it's out of sight, out of mind. From then on, I always felt like I was pulling in this relationship or waiting for something to happen and he never gave me the truth.

René: Yes, and so was there anybody in this period of time that you came close to considering marrying but, you know, you didn't?

Karen: Yes, there was a guy, that you know, in Birmingham. And I dated him for a year and a half. And he was total my opposite, and that's when I realized that opposites attract, and then they attack. So, from then, I knew I couldn't be with a man that was so opposite of me that we didn't have things in common. And there it goes again, pulling a person your way all the time, and that is so annoying to me. And that takes up too much of my energy.

René: Ooh yes, and I love that, first you attract, then you attack. I got that from you and I share that with many women because it's so true.

Karen: They love me because of my outgoing nature, and that's the very thing they attack once they get in a relationship. "Well, why you got to go all those places? Can't you just sit down? Why you have so many friends. Why we can't just stay home? Why we got to go to this type of restaurant?" So I said nuh-uh, I've got to have somebody that can meet me where I am and I can meet him where he is.

René: Yes, and another thing that Karen says is she gets tagged, I've been tagged this too, high-maintenance. And I love Karen's response because she says, "Yes, I am and I maintain, I am my high-maintenance. I'm not asking you to maintain my highness, I maintain it." Yes, and she does. Karen travels alone. She travels with friends. She takes full advantage of any location she happens to be living in, to explore, see, do. She lives life

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with gusto, truly, truly. And so let us now get to how you did meet the love of your life.

Karen: Oh, the most wonderful story that I have to tell was introduced to me by my hair stylist. And it's a funny story because she had actually given me a bad haircut. But she has the most kind sweet spirit, 29-year-old beautiful woman. And so when she gave me the bad haircut, I had been going to her for about six months or whatever, she was so sorrowful and this and that and the other and she even offered to come by my house and make it right.

But in the meantime, she was working on another aspect of her career. She wanted to get into insurance. And she took a class so that she could get her license. And my now husband was in the same class and so she recognized his knowledge in insurance and asked him to tutor her because prior to that, she had failed the exam. And he agreed and he started tutoring her. And so she said the more she talked to him, the more she thought of me and what I said that I wanted in a man, the inside of a man.

And so she called me up one day, she said, "Miss Karen, I think I've found your husband." And I said, "Really? Oh good, this is wonderful." She said, "Are you still open, because he doesn't look like what we as black women would want, or what we say we want in a man." And I said, "Oh yeah, I'm very open." She said, "Can I show him your picture?" I said yes, and she did.

And at the time, my hair was longer and that kind of thing. He was attracted to my picture. And he agreed to go out on a date with me. So he called me up. We had our first date. And I showed up in a hat because my hair had been cut by the beautiful hairstylist, and it was a bad haircut. So I wore a hat, so I looked nothing like my picture that she showed.

But when I walked into the restaurant, he was sitting at the bar. He approached me at the door, grabbed my hand, and said, "I am so honored to have this date with you." I knew then, my goodness, that had never happened before.

René: Yeah, okay, so how old were you at this point?

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Karen: 60.

René: 60 years old and this man comes into your life and it sounds like a lot of serendipity was involved with the way it happened, from a bad haircut to a beautiful relationship. But I know that you had a little trepidation about how quickly things were moving. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Karen: Yes, and remember, I was on this journey from the beginning of that year to say yes to all the good in my life. And that came from Shonda Rhimes' book that I read, *The Year of Yes*. I'm not going to be objectionable about things. If my friends call me up and say, "I'm going on a business trip in Chicago, can you join me?" Even if it's for one day, I said yes.

And that year, I took 23 trips in one year. And I was still working fulltime. So I took two international trips, the rest were one-day trips, weekend trips, two-day trips, or week trips or whatever. And then, when I took the last international trip, which was to Italy, Bev had just moved back into the country. And she introduced us and I said I was open to saying yes to a different relationship than I had ever had in my whole life. The trepidation came because it looked so different. So I second guessed, is it too good to be true? And I'll never forget when I told you on the phone...

René: I'll never forget that either. Oh, let me tell that story. So, a couple of things about how I found out about Bev. One, you had just had surgery and you were recovering. And you called and told me that this man you had just met was being very solicitous, very helpful, you know, just really being intentional about taking care of you, someone you barely knew.

So I was like, that's wonderful. And then you kept saying to me, "But he didn't vote for Trump." And I thought that was so odd. I said, "Huh?" You said, "I asked him and he said he didn't vote for Trump." And so something clicked for me and I said, "Is this man Caucasian?" and you said yes. I said, "Well why didn't you just say that?" Okay, now I'll let you jump back in.

Karen: Okay, and I didn't introduce him like that to several of my friends because I didn't want that to color anything...

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René: Color anything, that's so funny.

Karen: I just wanted you all to meet him and be shocked. So yeah, so after we had our first date – well, while we were on our first date, November 18th of 2016, we're sitting at a table at one of our favorite restaurants, and we go back and revisit the scene of the crime, and we get our same table and this and that and the other. So we talked so long, three and a half hours on that first date, the table next to us turned over four times while we were still there.

We closed the restaurant. We could have talked and talked and talked. And so we noted, during those conversations, we like the same music, he loved to travel, he loves to dress, he's a very compassionate man. That day, he said, "I can see that you are a quality woman and I will treat you that way."

I have a test in relationships and I say, "Okay, I need to take the temperature of the relationship and I need to know what happens when someone's upset with you. Say that someone tells you that they're going to pick up your cleaners on Tuesday, but on Sunday, you have an argument about nothing to do with the clothes in the cleaners. Will they pick them up on Tuesday, like they said they were going to do? Or because they're upset with you, they don't pick them up? To me, that speaks volumes.

René: Yes.

Karen: So I try to live my life saying what I mean, mean what I say, doing what I say I'm going to do, and that's very important to me. Those are values that I have and I want the person with me to have those values as well.

René: Oh, I love that. I love that so much. And this speaks to all women. I'm focusing on black women in love, but this speaks to all women that Karen did not give up on love. You know, this show speaks to women in midlife, and midlife, as I say all the time, is a state of mind. It could be anywhere from mid-40s up until in the 80s if you're able to live life on your terms. And I know that Karen is a woman who lives life on her own terms.

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So, what would you say, Karen, to women who may be in their 50s, 60s, or whatever the age is and who are still looking for the one, that one relationship that is not going to – because I know that you are someone who this is the icing on top of the cake for you, that your life was not dependent on finding a man. You were living your life anyway.

Karen: Yes, fully.

René: Fully, and so now you've met this man. So what would you say to encourage women who still want that to be a part of their lives?

Karen: That is a very good question, and I think you remember, one of the Beverlations, I spoke to that and I spoke to that, not at my retirement, but I said, at the Beverlation, "Open up your heart to the possibility that you could have been wrong in the past and that now this different person is coming int your life. So you are mature. We're over 50. You're mature to know that there are red flags. See the red flags, move on, but when there are no red flags, it could be that this is a true genuine person that truly wants to be in your life."

And I got some things like, you know, some prejudices from different people, you know, that white people are serial killers and all kinds of crazy stuff like that. And of course, you go through the slavery thing or whatever. But Bev never once, even to this day, projects – you know of being around him. He is of love. So even if his ancestors had slaves, which we don't know, I know he didn't have any and I know his parents didn't, and I know his grandparents didn't, you know. So am I going to hold him hostage about that?

And just open up your heart. And if this person is exhibiting love to you, then receive it. And that's what my surrogate mother, who all of us dearly love, when I brought him home the very next month after meeting him, for Christmas. And she met him, she connected with him. Everybody there connected with him, about 30 people in the house. And they're like, "Oh my goodness, where did he come from?"

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So, February of the next year, he decided to let me know that he loved me. And I was at work, he sent these flowers, he did all of the romantic thing. And because I live in Atlanta and I live in the Midtown area where I can walk to work and that kind of thing, that just shook me. And I walked home at lunchtime, which I often did. But I walked home with a purse because I was like, “What is going on?”

And so I called my surrogate mother and she told me, she said, “When you got divorced, you told me, in 1994 what kind of man you were looking for. I have met him. He is here. Open up your heart and receive it.”

René: Yes, I love that. And just so the audience understands when you mention the Beverlations, let me explain to them what that is. And so Karen’s last name is Beverly, and she married John Beverly West. And so two Beverlys. Beverly is her last name and Beverly is his middle name. And we call him Bev. And so when they got married, they had celebrations in different cities, because as I told you, Karen’s reach extends long and wide, deep and wide.

And so she had five different celebrations in four different cities, because you had two in Atlanta, right? Yes, and so the Beverlations was a combination of both of their names and instead of a celebration, it was a Beverlation. Yes, we had so much fun. I attended all of them.

And I also want to share with the audience, because what she said about, you know, divorcing yourself from the past of your shoulds and oughts and what you think should be and staying open to what you really want, what you say you want. And I know she and I had the conversation about the package and that it came packaged differently than what she thought it would look like. And so being open and aware enough to connect to, okay, this is what I said I wanted.

Because those of us who are women of faith, we pray and ask God for the thing to come, and then, sometimes we can miss it because we think we know what it’s supposed to look like. And I also know that Karen is really a strongly committed person as far as – she said that she says what she means and she means what she says, and even to herself.

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So we had a conversation. She happened to attend one of my coaching retreats. And we had a conversation because she has been in the midst of learning how to fly a plane. And when she got involved with Bev, of course, it's that whirlwind romance, it's just so exciting. And it sucks up a lot of your time. And she got a little off-track on her pilot lessons. And that was bothering her. And I just looked at her and said, "Karen, you are flying."

Karen: I love that too.

René: Yeah, you know, you are flying. Maybe this is how you're supposed to be flying right now. And so yes, so again, what do we really want? And are we going to allow ourselves to receive it? And I just love Karen and Bev's story. And their story is ongoing because another conversation she and I have had over the years is living outside of the country. And I have been really fixated on Lisbon, Portugal. And you've heard me talk about Lisbon on the show. And Karen and Bev will be moving to Lisbon in December. And they have a five-year visa, don't know when they're coming back. I just love that.

I'm only going to go for three months. I'll be joining them next summer. So my husband and I will be joining them. But I just love, again, how open she is to experiencing every good thing that life has to offer. And Karen, I also love how you talked about being able to see that people can be different. And you know my husband, so you know he is totally different from what I thought too.

So differences come in all different kinds of ways. Karen's main difference was this man is a different race than she is. But differences can come in many different packages. And again, it's about connecting to who you are, and Karen is very grounded in who she is. And that lets her know what she wants. And so she didn't let this good thing that came packaged in the form of John Beverly West pass her by. And I don't know – everybody who knows Karen says there is no other man on the planet that could be more perfect for her than John Beverly West.

Karen: That is so true.

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René: Yes, okay, Karen, I also wanted to ask you about the merging of two lives. You know, we're older at this stage of our lives. We get kind of set in our ways about things. So talk a little bit about the adjustment that you and Bev made in merging your separate lives together. And I know that you started out living separately. So how long did the two of you live separately and why did you make that decision?

Karen: Well, let's say we lived – we would come together every night, but we had two separate residence. And while I was working, I chose the perfect apartment for me; the perfect location. I walked to work and it was just ideal for the seven years that I've been here in Atlanta. And I did not want to give that up.

So I would tell people that – I knew that I would get married again. But when I got married, if it happened here in Atlanta, I was not giving up my apartment. And they would say, "Well let's see how that works out for you." So, sure enough, when Bev and I met, I presented the idea that I want to keep my apartment. And he lived 10 miles from me in the Vinings area. And he was working like five minutes from where he lived.

So his location was ideal for his work. Mine was ideal for me. So that started our adventure. He agreed. He said, "Okay, no problem. You keep where you are and I'll keep where we are." But how will we handle the marriage, because now we're married, or getting married, and that kind of thing? So I said, "let's treat it like an adventure."

So we wake up in the morning, where will we be tonight? And we'll say where will we be, and either he would come to Midtown or I would go to Vinings. And I work from home some of those days, so those days where I work from home, I would work from the Vinings location. Those days I worked in the office, I would work in Midtown.

So that gave me another aspect of him working out problems, meeting me halfway, taking in consideration my feelings and the fact that, you're right, I had not been in a relationship for years and I had my own. So what do you do when you have your own, he has his own, how do you merge together? And that's the way we worked it out.

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René: I love that because again, as I mentioned earlier, I am really big on letting go of all these shoulds and oughts and what other people think we should be doing, and even that's been ingrained in us that we think is facts about how we should be living, when no, it's just somebody's choice that either works for us or it doesn't. and I am so happy to hear you talk about how you and Bev worked out what worked best for the two of you individually and as a couple.

Karen: Right, and another thing, we didn't quickly merge things together, you know. I still have my bank accounts, he has his, now we're moving and we're merging some of those things together, not all of them. And I think that's an individual choice.

I'll tell you a funny story. He came over to my Midtown place when we were dating. And I noticed that he was running around, like, fixing the pillows. And I use coconut oil and I sometimes leave the top off the coconut oil. You know, I live by myself, no big deal. He's wiping down things. And I looked at him one day and I said, "Now, you see what you're doing, it's okay. If you want to wear yourself out by straightening things, because it doesn't matter to me, just don't expect that from me."

René: I love it, absolutely.

Karen: And he was okay. he's been that way ever since.

René: Yes, because at this stage of life, we pretty much are who we are. And yes, we can make accommodations, yes, we can compromise, but we pretty much are who we are, and learning how to accept those differences in each other is key to having a non-friction relationship – well, as little as possible. There will be friction, but yes, the quicker you can do that, the better. Yes, okay, thank you.

Karen: You're welcome.

René: Anything else you want to share with us, Karen?

Karen: I think that what's bubbling up with me no, and you said it, is to continue living your life. Don't anticipate this man coming in your life where

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you stop living. So, prior to me meeting Bev, I'd run three marathons, full marathons. I drove a racecar around the track, which was over 100 miles an hour.

René: Yeah, I was there to watch that.

Karen: Yes, the adventures of life, you know, I've skydived and just all the travels that I've had and flight lessons, flying a plane and being a private pilot. And that's still on my list, it's just put on hold. And you did help me with that and I appreciate that because it has helped me in all aspects of my life, that you don't just get fixated on one thing. And just because you're not doing that one thing that you were fixated on, look at what has come into your life and grab hold to that as well.

And in that aspect of thinking, I retired with 41 years, I thought it was going to be 46. But because I could see my future living outside of the country with this man and taking that adventure, I was able to retire just last year, July of 2018, after being there for 41 years.

René: Yes, yes, yes and so you absolutely are the poster woman for living like you're alive. Yes, absolutely. And that's why I love you and that's why I am so happy to introduce the audience to you. Do you want the audience to know anything about you as far as keeping up with you? You don't have to I'm just asking, you know.

Karen: Yeah, so I'm just going to be living in Portugal as our home base, traveling all around Africa, Asia, Europe, just being adventurous every day.

René: Yes, yes, yes and I can't wait to join you. Karen and I have already gotten tickets for a concert in Lisbon next summer, so it's on like popcorn.

Karen: It is. I can't wait for you all to get here. And my husband and I wake up every day and tell each other that we love each other. And there's not a day that goes by that he doesn't tell me how beautiful I am.

René: Oh, I love that. That is so sweet.

Karen: And I will tell him how handsome he is, because you know he's got swag.

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René: Yes he does, yes he does, yes he does. So I just want to thank you so much for sharing your beautiful story with our audience, and for representing a fabulous black woman in love.

Karen: Thank you for having me. I appreciate your friendship too.

René: Thank you.

Karen: Okay, bye-bye.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Midlife Woman Redefined. If you're ready to learn more and reclaim your time, head over to crenecoach.com.