



to *THEM*? Sometimes the way we look at ourselves, and the way others see us, is entirely different! When the book first came out, my friends would text me and say that they were trying to figure out which villager they were to me. They were always shocked when I revealed how I categorized them—more often than not, they didn't think they were impacting my life as deeply as I feel they have. Challenging yourself to think about what you mean to people, and what they mean to you, is a beautiful and profound way to strengthen connection and relationships and continue an evolving journey of self-discovery.

Q: Your book is extremely well thought out. Can you share how you developed your introspective questions? I'm reflecting on them slowly. What is one big concept you want your readers to gain from going through them?

A: We have all read those personal growth or self-help books where you think to yourself: "No way am I going to do what's being suggested. It's way too hard and enormously time consuming!" I didn't want my audience to feel that the work I am challenging them to do was too heavy a lift or that it wasn't accessible to them in a realistic, doable way. The gut-check questions are meant for reflection after completing the chapter. Simply, what did I learn? What's my personal takeaway? And the action steps are challenges that you can do that day, small steps that lead to big results.

Build Your Village is truly meant to be used as a workbook—a place you can keep coming back to no matter what you're going through, no matter how big your life transitions are, no matter how helpless or lost you feel. This book is a place to come home to and take control of your life when you feel you don't know where to turn. Whatever season of life you're in, and regardless of your age, these lessons will always apply.

Q: I rewatched your favorite movie *Mary Poppins*. It's a delightful film! What's the most magical



Q: I loved learning that your family created Ferrara Pan Candy! I lived in Oak Park, Illinois for twenty years and have driven past the Forest Park building frequently. In the Healer Villager chapter, you include a lovely story about your Grandma Nonnie who started the company. Do you most identify with the healer villager, or another?

A: What a small world! I love that you are familiar with Ferrara and remember the factory—that sign is always something I look forward to seeing when on I-290. :)

When I look at the six villagers, I feel connected to all of them. However, the more powerful question for me is: *which villager(s) do my friends or family think I am*

part of the movie for you? For me, it's when the characters walk into the paintings and the scenes materialize.

A: I love Mary's line: "I stay until the wind changes." That always gives me goosebumps! As a child, I never realized the symbolism that had; but, as an adult, it applies to countless themes. The subtitle of my book references the stages of life, and change can be very difficult to navigate. However, it is a guarantee of life: **change**. Mary embraces that all things have a beginning, middle, and an end. Instead of fighting it, she accepts it. The work you do within the book will help you as well to embrace and accept the seasons changing.

Q: Publishing a book is an involved process! When did your book idea arrive and how is the completed book the same and different from your first concept? How did you keep all your thoughts organized in the beginning?

A: It was during the covid-19 lockdown that the idea for the book practically poured out of me! On a global level, we all knew what it felt like to lose our support systems, lose our people. I would constantly hear people talk about the old proverb: "it takes a village to raise a child." I love that saying, and it's true, but I believe it is too narrow minded. What if you don't have children? Do you not deserve a support system or a community? Of course, you do! And, with that, my book started to take form.

I always knew I wanted to create village archetypes; I just wasn't sure of the number. I ended up with six by accident, actually! I started listing the top qualities I look for in relationships, and when reviewing the list, I realized I could group certain qualities together. And, with that, six villagers were born!

Q: What did you learn about yourself writing *Build a Village*?

A: I learned that I am not exempt from taking my own advice! I preach letting love in and asking for

help, but sometimes I fail brilliantly at that. I am victim to the same thoughts we all have: that I am not worthy, that I am weak, that I am a burden, etc. We are MEANT to connect, meant to live a life in service of others, meant to walk next to one another. We are human and this work is not meant to be done perfectly, nor will we ever be perfect! What is demanded of us, however, is to be our own solution, to take control of our lives, and to be accountable to ourselves and one another. €

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