INTENTIONAL LIVING



THE COVER STORY

THE ART OF GATHERING

Make room for the people who matter.

STYLE

THE NOVEMBER WARDROBE

Texture. Presence. Ease.

HOME

A TABLE WITH SOUL

Style, warmth, and a reason to linger.

WELLNESS

REST BEFORE THE RUSH

Protect your peace this season.

LIFE

GRATITUDE IN ACTION

What we choose to give.

DR. KEITH HARLEY

THE GATHERING ISSUE • NOVEMBER 2026

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THE GATHERING ISSUE



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A NOTE FROM KEITH

Make Room for What Matters

There is something about November that asks us to slow down and look around the table. We notice the empty chair we miss, the friend who came a long way, the person who could use an invitation, and the ordinary moments that turn into stories we tell for years.

This issue is about the art of gathering, but I don't mean a perfect table or a flawless holiday. A beautiful room can welcome us in. Good food can bring us closer. What makes the evening matter is the care we show one another once we are there. We can listen longer. We can make space for a new voice. We can let someone know they belong.

As you turn these pages, I hope you find ideas you can make your own: a table with soul, food worth sharing, clothes that help you feel like yourself, and a little permission to rest before the season gets loud. Take what inspires you and leave room for real life. The best gatherings rarely follow a script.

Whether your November is full of people or quiet by choice, you deserve moments of warmth and connection. Start small. Set one extra place. Make the call. Share the meal. Say thank you while the person is there to hear it. That is intentional living to me.

With intention,

Dr. Keith Harley



THE PEOPLE WHO MATTER MOST

The Art of Gathering

A thoughtful invitation. An open conversation. A little more room for one another.

AN INTENTIONAL LIVING EDITORIAL FEATURE



AI-GENERATED EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION

Begin with a person.

Every gathering begins before the door opens. It begins when you think of someone and decide that time together deserves a place on the calendar. The invitation can be simple: Come for coffee. Bring your stories. Stay for an hour.

Consider who might enjoy each other, who has been quiet lately, and who would appreciate being included. A familiar face can help a newcomer settle in. So can a personal introduction that gives two people a starting point: a shared interest, a neighborhood connection, or something they both love.

Make the invitation feel easy.

Give people the details that help them say yes: when to arrive, what to expect, and whether they need to bring anything. Ask about food needs, access, or anything that would make the evening more comfortable. A clear invitation is a small act of care.

Keep the plan within your own energy and means. Four people around a kitchen table can create an evening worth remembering. A short visit can deepen a friendship. Choose a gathering you can enjoy being part of, then leave enough room to greet each person without rushing.

Let the first thing people feel be that you are glad they came.

THE ART OF GATHERING / CONTINUED

Leave room for the moment.

The evening comes alive when everyone has a part in it.



AI-GENERATED EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION

Give conversation a doorway.

A good question offers people something they can answer honestly. Ask what has been bringing them joy, what they are learning, or which small moment from the week they would like to keep. Share something of your own, then listen without planning your next story.

Let people pass. Some guests warm up slowly; others enjoy listening. If one voice fills the room, gently open the circle: “I would love to hear what you think, too.” Everyone deserves an opening, and everyone can choose how much to share.

Notice the edges of the room.

Look for the person standing alone, the guest who has not found a seat, or the friend whose glass needs water. Offer a simple introduction or a place beside you. Keep music low enough for easy conversation. These small adjustments let people settle into the evening.

Let the plan breathe.

Prepare enough to be present, then allow the gathering to find its own rhythm. A story may last longer than expected. Dessert may become a second cup of tea. If the evening is comfortable, you do not need to fill every quiet moment or move everyone to the next activity.

Give guests a way to contribute: choosing a song, bringing bread, or helping carry cups. Shared effort can make the room feel like something you created together.

Carry the connection forward.

Send a personal note the next day. Mention the story that stayed with you or the moment that made you smile. If you promised a recipe, a book title, or another visit, follow through. A gathering becomes part of a relationship through what happens afterward.

YOUR NEXT GATHERING

Choose one person you have been meaning to see. Offer a simple invitation and a time you can keep. Before they arrive, ask yourself: What would help this person feel at ease?

Make space. Pay attention. Let being together be enough.

SOUTHERN HOLIDAY TABLE

Holiday comfort.
Homemade touches.
Smart shortcuts.





THE HOMEMADE TOUCH

Creamy potatoes. Fresh chives.



SMART SHORTCUTS

Prepared favorites, thoughtfully served.



A WARM WELCOME

A beautiful table. Time together.

HOST WITH EASE

A generous meal does not require making every dish from scratch. Pair prepared turkey, biscuits and cranberry sauce with homemade chive mashed potatoes and vegetables. Use the time you save to enjoy the people at your table.

MAKE ROOM FOR YOURSELF

Set the table ahead. Check package directions. Share the small jobs. Keep serving dishes within easy reach, then give yourself permission to sit down.

A TABLE WITH SOUL

A North Carolina-inspired Sunday supper, served with warmth and room for one more.

BY DR. KEITH R. HARLEY, JR.





A beautiful table begins with a welcome.

The table is not a test of how much you own. It is a place to make people feel expected. Start with the pieces you already love, then add a few details that bring the evening into focus.

BUILD A CALM FOUNDATION

White dinnerware lets the meal take center stage. Natural linen softens the setting; a touch of gold adds warmth without demanding attention.

MAKE ROOM FOR THE FOOD

A generous Southern spread needs breathing room. Move extra dishes to a sideboard and replenish as you go. Leave guests an easy path to pass, serve and settle in.

KEEP THE CENTER LOW

Choose flowers and light that leave faces visible. Let conversation travel across the table, and keep flames well away from fabric and foliage.

FINISH WITH CARE

A handwritten place card, water within reach and a gracious welcome do more than another decoration. Set the table early, then give yourself permission to enjoy it.

NEXT: THE 10-PIECE TABLE EDIT →

By Susie, Editor-in-Chief | AI-generated editorial visualization

THE INTENTIONAL TABLE

Set the mood. Make room.





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NEXT: THE 10-PIECE TABLE EDIT →

THE 10-PIECE TABLE EDIT.

A considered mix. A generous welcome. Click any piece to shop.



01

Aspen Rimmed Dinner Plate

Crate & Barrel | $6.95 each

White porcelain keeps the meal in focus.



02

Rush Brushed Gold Flatware

CB2 | $119 / 20 pieces

Four five-piece settings. Hand wash.



03

Marta Double Old-Fashioned Glasses

CB2 | $8.50 sale / set of 6

Clear glassware for water or a signature sip.



04

Eve Coupe Glass

CB2 | $6.50 sale / each

A graceful coupe for a celebratory pour.



05

Marin Natural Linen Napkins

Crate & Barrel | $120 / set of 8

Warm Natural linen softens the setting.



06

Barre Gold Napkin Rings

CB2 | $44 sale / set of 8

Rectangular gold-finish accents for linen.



07

Marin Matte Black Serving Bowl

Crate & Barrel | $32.95 each

A dark stoneware contrast for the sideboard.



08

Mercer White Rectangle Platter

Crate & Barrel | $34.95 each

Organic edges frame a family-style dish.



09

Annona Brass Pillar Candle Holder

CB2 | $35 sale / single

Unlacquered brass. Candle sold separately.



10

Brushed Gold Place Card Holders

CB2 | $10 sale / set of 4

A handwritten welcome at every place.

US prices checked October 29, 2026. Sale prices and availability may change. Tax and shipping extra.
Direct retailer links; affiliate commissions not verified for this table edit. Product photos: retailer reference images.



Southern Holiday Table

Holiday comfort. Homemade touches. Smart shortcuts.

THE INTENTIONAL TABLE | WITH DR. KEITH R. HARLEY, JR.

Bring back the welcome

The spirit of Sunday dinner does not depend on making every dish from scratch. It lives in the invitation, the welcome and the time we make for one another. Dr. Harley wants to carry forward the gathering rituals practiced by his mother and grandmother. This table translates that intention into a meal a busy host can actually manage.

Thanksgiving Express pairs prepared turkey, biscuits and cranberry sauce with homemade chive mashed potatoes and a vegetable side. The goal is not to disguise the shortcuts. It is to use them thoughtfully, leaving room to sit down, listen and enjoy the people who came.

Style the feeling, not the expense

Start with what you own: cream plates, a cloth runner and glasses that feel good in the hand. Add burgundy napkins, a little olive-toned foliage and low flowers. Keep sightlines clear. Leave space for serving dishes, elbows and conversation. Luxury here is attention, not excess.

THE THANKSGIVING EXPRESS MENU

The centerpiece

Cuisine Solutions Sliced Roasted Turkey Breast with Citrus Herbs.

The homemade touch

Keith's mashed potatoes with butter, half-and-half, milk, garlic powder, onion powder and chives; salt and pepper to taste.

The color

Kirkland Signature frozen stir-fry vegetable blend, cooked according to its package directions.

The comforts

Costco butter biscuits and prepared deli cranberry sauce.

The welcome drink

Pomegranate margarita, with water and an alcohol-free option offered alongside.

TABLE IMAGE: AI-GENERATED EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION; NOT A PHOTOGRAPH OF KEITH'S DISHES.

A gracious meal, without the rush.

A flexible plan for keeping the host at the table.

THE HOSTING TIMELINE

Two days before

Confirm the guest count, food needs and accessibility. Check the turkey and biscuit labels for storage, equipment and heating instructions. Build the shopping list around the actual package yields.

The day before

Set the table, select serving utensils and clear refrigerator space. Assign small jobs: water, music, coats or cleanup. Chill drink ingredients and offer an equally considered alcohol-free choice.

Before guests arrive

Work backward from serving time using the package instructions, not a universal countdown. Start the potatoes early enough to allow for cooking and mashing. Prepare the drink station and water.

Near serving

Finish the vegetables, heat the biscuits as directed and transfer food to serving dishes. Keep the menu simple enough that the host can join the table.

After the meal

Invite help, pack leftovers promptly and send the promised recipe or a thank-you the next day. Connection continues after the dishes are cleared.

KEITH'S CHIVE MASHED POTATOES

Peel and cut potatoes into even chunks. Cover with cold salted water, bring to a boil and simmer until fork-tender, typically 15-20 minutes depending on size. Drain well and allow steam to escape briefly.

Mash with butter. Add warmed half-and-half and milk gradually until the texture is right for you. Season with salt, pepper, garlic powder and onion powder. Fold in chives at the end.

This preserves Keith's existing method. Exact ingredient quantities and serving yield have not been supplied; this is a cooking guide, not a measured recipe.

A small ritual worth keeping

Invite each guest to share a memory, a moment of gratitude or something they are looking forward to. Let anyone pass. Ask about a treasured dish without assigning one person the work of reproducing an entire holiday. Share the labor as generously as the food.

Serve with care

Follow the turkey, biscuit and vegetable package instructions. Refrigerate perishables within two hours, or one hour above 90 F, using shallow containers. Reheat leftovers to 165 F. Keep refrigerated foods at 40 F or below.

Food-safety reference: FDA, Safe Food Handling. Cocktail quantities are intentionally omitted pending verification of the existing card. Adults 21+ only; enjoy responsibly.

Make the meal manageable.
Make the welcome memorable.



A Table with Soul

A North Carolina-inspired Sunday supper, served with warmth and room for one more.

BY DR. KEITH R. HARLEY, JR. | THE INTENTIONAL TABLE

There is a difference between setting a table and making people feel welcome at one.

You can choose beautiful plates, fold the napkins just right and arrange flowers that make everyone stop and look. I love those details. But the table I want to create does more than photograph well. It invites people to settle in, pass a dish and stay long enough for a real conversation.

For this North Carolina-inspired Soul Food Sunday, I want both: a beautiful room and a generous meal. Fried chicken, collard greens, baked macaroni and cheese, candied sweet potatoes and skillet cornbread. A pitcher of iced tea. And, because this is a table with room for a holiday-sized appetite, a big golden turkey and sweet potato pie.

This is an invitation, not a rulebook for Southern cooking. No single menu represents every North Carolina household or every soul food tradition. Your table may look different. What matters is making it meaningful to the people gathered around it.

Let the food feel like a welcome

A generous menu needs a little planning. Turkey and fried chicken can share the spotlight for a larger gathering, but a smaller Sunday dinner does not need both. Choose the dishes your guests will enjoy and the amount of cooking you can comfortably manage. Abundance should not leave the host exhausted or the refrigerator full of food nobody can finish.

The welcome is what lasts.

Think about the whole plate. Let tender greens sit alongside the richness of baked macaroni and cheese. Give cornbread a place beside the savory dishes, and let sweet potato pie be its own occasion after dinner. Ask about dietary needs before you shop, rather than leaving someone to quietly work around the meal once it arrives.

And do not apologize for accepting help. Someone can bring a side. Someone can pour the tea. Someone can clear the dishes. Hospitality is not a test of how much one person can accomplish alone.

Dress the table, then let people use it

For this spread, warm wood, cream dishes, burgundy napkins and restrained gold accents give the meal a polished setting without losing its comfort. Low flowers add color while leaving faces visible across the table. Serving bowls should be easy to reach, with enough space around each place setting to eat comfortably.

Use the pieces you already love. A familiar platter does not need to match every plate. A simple water glass can sit beside a more decorative one. The aim is a table that feels considered, not untouchable.

Set out the serving utensils before the food is ready. Decide which dishes belong on the table and which can stay on a nearby serving surface. A full table looks inviting; a crowded one makes every passed bowl an obstacle course.

Then give yourself permission to sit down. Your guests came to spend time with you, not watch you disappear into the kitchen all afternoon.

Bring back a ritual, not a burden

I want to bring back the Sunday dinners and holiday gatherings my mother and grandmother practiced. I do not need to invent a perfect version of the past to recognize what is worth carrying forward: the decision to make time for people.

That can begin with one manageable ritual. Invite everyone to share something good from the week. Ask about a dish they remember fondly. Put the phones aside for part of the meal. Let a story unfold without rushing toward the next task.

Leave room for quiet guests, too. Not everyone wants to speak to the whole table. A thoughtful question, a patient listener or a seat beside someone welcoming can make participation easier. Connection should feel offered, not demanded.

If Sunday dinner every week is too much, start with one Sunday a month. Choose a rhythm you can keep. A smaller gathering that happens is more valuable than an elaborate one that remains an idea.

Make room for the family you cultivate

I often speak about the difference between relatives and family. Relatives are connected through kinship. Family can include those relationships, and it can also grow through friendship, commitment, trust and consistent care.

The Sunday table can hold both. Invite the people who show up for your life. Make space for the friend who would otherwise eat alone, the neighbor you want to know better or the person who has become part of your circle of care. An invitation is a beginning; the relationship grows through what follows.

Keep the promise to call. Share the recipe. Check in when there is no celebration on the calendar.

That is the soul I want at this table. Beautiful food, certainly. A little style, absolutely. But most of all, people who feel there is a place for them.

Bring out the turkey. Save room for the sweet potato pie. And when everyone finally sits down, be there with them.

Bring out the turkey. Save room for the pie.
And when everyone sits down, be there with them.

GATHER IN STYLE

Modern looks for the moments that bring us together.





THE MODERN HOST

Relaxed tailoring. Rich texture.



DINNER, ELEVATED

Color with confidence.



ARRIVE BEAUTIFULLY

A statement coat. A polished finish.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Small details. Lasting impressions.



INTENTIONAL LIVING — NOVEMBER STYLE





THE ACCESSORY EDIT



THE SCULPTURAL PEARL

AGMES · $510



THE POLISHED CLASSIC

G.H.BASS · $195



THE MODERN TOP HANDLE

FREJA · Check availability

MAKE EVERY DAY AN EXPERIENCE

THE FINISHING TOUCH

10 considered details for a beautifully dressed season.



01 / AGMES Baroque Juliette Earrings

Gold vermeil · $510

Freshwater pearls; wear with swept-back hair.



02 / G.H.BASS Larson Weejuns

Black · $195

Penny loafers to polish tailored trousers.



03 / Freja Miro Bag

Black · Check availability

A structured top handle for evening tailoring.



04 / By Malene Birger Henna Brooch

Black · $80

A sculptural flower for a substantial lapel.



05 / Madewell Essential Leather Belt

True Black · $68

Gold-tone hardware sharpens a simple silhouette.



06 / Quince Mongolian Cashmere Scarf

Burgundy · $54

Soft texture to enrich cream or camel layers.



07 / Quince Cashmere Lined Leather Gloves

Black · $50

Lambskin and cashmere for cold-weather polish.



08 / Nordstrom Panel Silk Pocket Square

Blue · $45

A color-blocked silk accent for a dark jacket.



09 / J.Crew English Silk Dotted Tie

Burgundy White Dot · $79.50

A quiet pattern with a crisp white shirt.

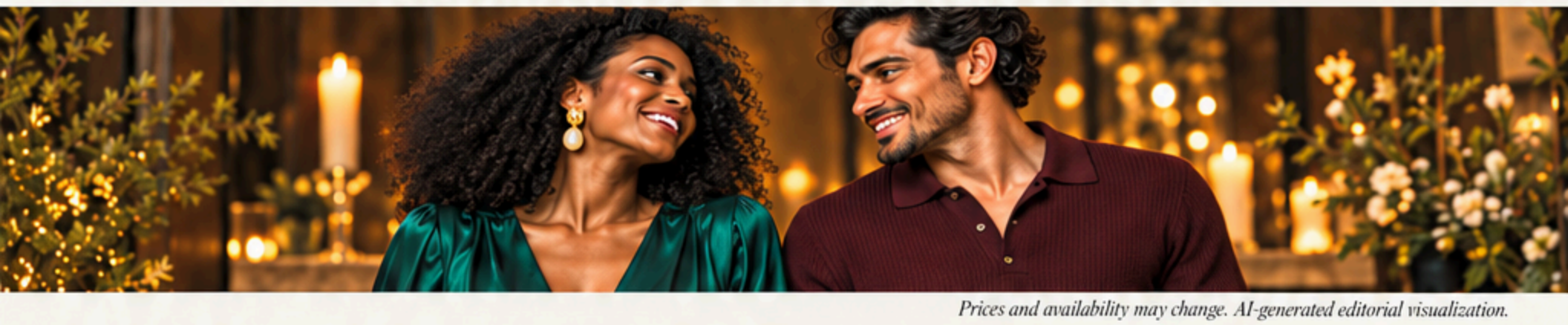


10 / J.Crew Sterling Silver Cuff Links

Rectangle · $128

Clean silver lines to finish French cuffs.

Choose your ten. Make the season intentional.



Prices and availability may change. AI-generated editorial visualization.

SHOP KEITH'S EDIT

Scan the code or click here to shop all 10 accessories.

I may earn a commission from eligible purchases, at no additional cost to you.
Prices, colors and availability are subject to retailer updates.

INTENTIONAL LIVING

Family *vs.* Relatives

The woman the world knows. The sister I know.

By Dr. Keith R. Harley, Jr.





A friendship that became family

More than twenty years ago, I became Gloria Mayfield Banks's hairstylist. We became friends, traveled the country, explored business ideas, and created a show called Secure the Bag. Today, Gloria is my best friend. She is like my sister. She is family.

"We did not inherit a shared family history. We built a history of our own."

The woman behind the accomplishments

A Howard University graduate with an MBA from Harvard Business School, Gloria built a career spanning corporate business, entrepreneurship, speaking, and leadership.

In 2016, Mary Kay recognized her as the first African American woman to rank number one in its U.S. independent sales force based on year-to-date earnings.

Honor the family you come from. Cherish the family you build.

Rest Before the Rush

A gentler way to enter the gathering season—with room for the people and moments that matter.



AN INTENTIONAL SEASON BEGINS BEFORE THE CALENDAR FILLS

THE ART OF PAUSING

Before the season begins

There is a particular kind of hurry that arrives before the holidays do. An invitation comes in. A menu grows. A simple visit becomes a production. We say yes to the next thing while still recovering from the last. By the time the people we love gather around the table, we may be too tired to enjoy them.

The answer is to decide what deserves your energy before everyone else begins deciding for you. Rest can be an early choice: a quiet morning, an open evening, or a smaller plan that lets you arrive as yourself.

A pause before the yes

Before accepting an invitation or volunteering to host, ask three questions: Do I want to do this? Do I have the time and energy for it? What will this yes require me to give up? The answers may change from week to week. That is information, not failure.

A gracious boundary can be simple: “Thank you for thinking of me. I cannot make it this time, but I would love to catch up next month.” You can care about someone deeply and still be honest about your capacity.

Keep the meaning. Lighten the load.

A more intentional season is built through choices small enough to make in real life.

Keep one thing

Choose the ritual you would genuinely miss: the family recipe, the walk after dinner, the handwritten note, or an unhurried conversation. Give that tradition room to breathe. If everything is special, everything becomes another task.

Protect the quiet

Put restorative time on the calendar before the invitations arrive. A morning without errands, a walk after work, or an evening at home is easier to honor when it has a place in your week. Think of that space as a promise to your future self.

Simplify one thing

A beautiful gathering does not need seven homemade dishes. Ask guests to bring something. Set the table with what you own. Order dessert. The point of hospitality is the welcome people feel, not proof of how hard you worked.

Let people help

If you are hosting, share the work plainly: one person can bring bread, another can arrange flowers, someone else can handle cleanup. Connection grows when people contribute, and the host gets to join them.

Release one thing

Let a less meaningful obligation go. Decline the extra event, the elaborate favor, or the expectation that every tradition must look exactly as it did last year. Making a different choice now leaves space for what matters now.

Arrive with yourself intact

There will still be busy days. The aim is enough steadiness to notice the faces at your table, taste the meal, and hear the stories. That is a generous way to show up—for others and for yourself.

THE 15-MINUTE SUNDAY RESET

Take a pen and your calendar. Before the week begins:

01 Notice the commitments already asking a lot of you.

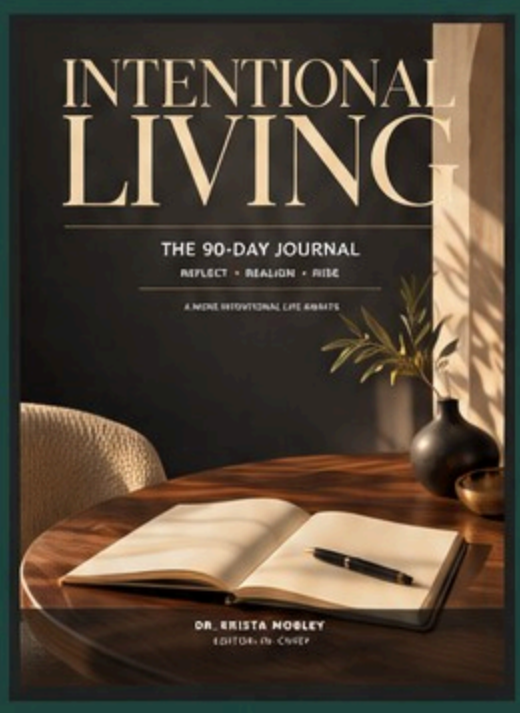
02 Keep one gathering or ritual you truly value.

03 Simplify one meal, errand, or expectation.

04 Reserve one small block of uninterrupted rest.

05 Reach out to someone you want to be present with.

JOURNAL PROMPT What do I want to remember about this season?



The Life You Write Into Being



The enduring power of journaling—and an invitation to begin with the Intentional Living Journal.

BY DR. KEITH R. HARLEY, JR.

We spend so much time keeping up with our lives that we can forget to examine them. We remember appointments, answer messages, care for others, and move from one responsibility to the next. Yet a quieter question deserves our attention: How am I actually doing? A journal gives that question somewhere to land. It offers a private space to acknowledge what is working, admit what hurts, and consider what needs to change.

A practice with deep roots

Journaling has no single inventor. Its history brings together several traditions: recording events, examining conscience, preserving memories, and working through ideas. In the second century, Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius wrote the personal philosophical reflections now known as Meditations. These writings illustrate a purpose still familiar today: returning to principles that can guide daily conduct.[1]

By the seventeenth century, diary keeping also served spiritual reflection and personal accountability. English minister John Beadle's 1656 A Journal or Diary of a Thankfull Christian encouraged readers to keep a record of their lives. Samuel Pepys began his diary on January 1, 1660, creating another enduring example of the practice.[1] Across later centuries, journals became workspaces for creativity as well. The Morgan Library & Museum has exhibited John Steinbeck's working journals and a travel diary in which Albert Einstein included mathematical notes.[2]

Other diaries carry the weight of historical witness. Anne Frank received her diary for her thirteenth birthday on June 12, 1942. Her writing preserved her thoughts and experiences during the Holocaust; she later revised much of it with publication in mind.[3] These very different records remind us that a personal voice can illuminate both an individual life and the world surrounding it.

What the page makes possible

Today, journaling can help us notice what hurried living obscures. University of Rochester Medical Center describes it as a tool for clarifying thoughts and feelings, identifying stressors, and recognizing patterns.[4] Its value is personal; it is one supportive practice within a broader approach to well-being.

Consider the difference between writing "Today was exhausting" and asking why. Was the day overrrowded? Did you agree to something you wanted to decline? Did you overlook your need for rest? A specific observation gives you something useful to work with. Repeated entries may reveal that the same commitment leaves you depleted—or that a small ritual consistently brings you joy.

Gratitude belongs here, too, alongside honesty. You can appreciate your home and still feel lonely. You can celebrate progress and acknowledge disappointment. Give both experiences room on the page. Then ask what they are teaching you.

Bringing intention into everyday life

That is the invitation at the heart of my Intentional Living Journal: make time to hear yourself and give your next steps some thought. Use it to record the experience beneath the activity. After a gathering, write about the conversation that stayed with you. After a difficult decision, name the value you protected. When something brings you peace, consider how to make room for it again.

For those of us navigating life after 50, these questions can be especially meaningful. Responsibilities shift. Relationships evolve. Long-held ambitions may deserve another look. Ask yourself: What still fits the person I am becoming? What am I ready to release? What would I like to experience next?

Begin with five quiet minutes. Write what you feel, what you need, and one action you can take tomorrow. Once a week, reread a few entries. Look for recurring concerns, unexpected pleasures, and promises that need your attention. If you miss a day, return when you can.

Over time, those pages become a record of your choices and your growth. Open your Intentional Living Journal and begin with one honest sentence. Your present situation is not your final destination—and today's reflection can help you choose your next step.

BEGIN YOUR NEXT CHAPTER

Scan to order the Intentional Living 90-Day Journal.
keithharleycollection.com

SOURCES: 1 King's College London | 2 The Morgan Library & Museum
3 Anne Frank House | 4 University of Rochester Medical Center

The life behind the looks

Inside the book: resilience, individuality, enduring love and the courage to keep becoming.

The part a camera cannot show

The publisher's preview of pages 42-43 opens a deeper door. Aki and Koichi explain that their public happiness has a private history, including a challenging period for their family. They considered carefully whether to share it. Their reason for doing so was the hope that someone facing hardship might feel encouraged to continue.

That passage gives the fashion a different weight. Joy does not require a life untouched by difficulty. A playful outfit or a moment of closeness can exist alongside a complicated history. For our readers, that is a useful permission: you can appreciate today while still working through what came before.

Style as a shared language

The contents place their beginnings alongside sections about fashion, love and continued growth. The practical style section includes favorite looks, essentials and advice. It is an inviting combination for readers who want the pleasure of beautiful clothes and a broader conversation about the people wearing them.

Our editorial takeaway is to start with attention. Notice the pieces you reach for because they feel like you. Consider proportion, texture and ease before adding something new. An outfit can be thoughtful without becoming a performance, and getting dressed can be a small daily expression of self-respect.

Partnership with room to grow

Love has a place of its own in the book's structure, with attention to patience and individuality within a relationship. These headings raise questions worth carrying into our own homes: do we make space for the other person's interests? Are we still interested in who they are becoming? Do we bring kindness to ordinary moments?

Their public fashion journey also shows a willingness to experiment. Speaking with Vogue about Dior's 2025 Kyoto show, Koichi described trying an unusually embellished coat, while Aki spoke about a cape with an unexpected detail. Their choices suggest that knowing your taste can give you the confidence to explore.

Keep something ahead of you

For the 50+ Club, the possibility in this story feels especially close. We can keep developing interests, deepening relationships and discovering new ways to express ourselves. A next chapter does not have to resemble an earlier one to deserve our full attention.

That is why this book earns a place in our culture edit. Let it begin a conversation with your partner, your friends or yourself. Choose one beautiful thing to wear this week. Make time for someone you love. Keep a little room in your plans for surprise. Your life still has things to teach you, and you still have something to bring to it.

DR. HARLEY'S BOOKSHELF

Bring Life / Style home

Aki & Koichi • Epic Ink • 216 pages.

Scan the QR code or tap here to shop Dr. Harley's Amazon link.

As an Amazon Associate, I earn from qualifying purchases.

REPORTING NOTE: Based on the publisher's description and selected preview pages (contents; pp. 8-9, 42-43), plus interviews in PEOPLE (June 13, 2024) and Vogue (Dior Kyoto, 2025). This is a researched spotlight, not a full-text review. Cover: The Quarto Group.

Publisher & preview PEOPLE interview Vogue interview

AKI & KOICHI / LIFE / STYLE

The Joy of Being Yourself

A remarkable couple, a new book, and a reminder that love, personal style and possibility can keep growing with us.

AN INTENTIONAL LIVING EDITORIAL FEATURE • SELECTED BY DR. KEITH HARLEY



Life / Style • Aki & Koichi • Epic Ink.
Cover courtesy of The Quarto Group.

A life worth showing up for

The first thing you notice is the pleasure they take in getting dressed. On the cover of Life / Style, Aki wears vivid red tailoring and tartan; Koichi pairs relaxed neutrals with a bright knit cap. Their round glasses, easy smiles and contrasting silhouettes make a persuasive introduction: individuality can look wonderful together.

Dr. Harley has been eagerly awaiting this book. It is easy to understand why it belongs in the Intentional Living conversation. Aki and Koichi offer a compelling image of growing older with curiosity intact. Looking at them, the question becomes less about what someone our age is allowed to wear, and more about how we want to feel when we enter a room.

An unexpected new chapter

Aki and Koichi are based in Los Angeles and originally came from Japan. Their life together spans more than four decades. The publisher describes a new chapter that began when their daughter, Yuri, started recording their outfits. Family life supplied the setting; everyday dressing became the invitation.

Different, beautifully together

In their 2024 PEOPLE interview, Aki described dressing for her own tastes; Koichi emphasized simplicity, fabric and quality. Their daughter spoke of two complete individuals in partnership. That distinction feels essential: a shared life can leave room for separate preferences, and affection can make those differences something to celebrate.

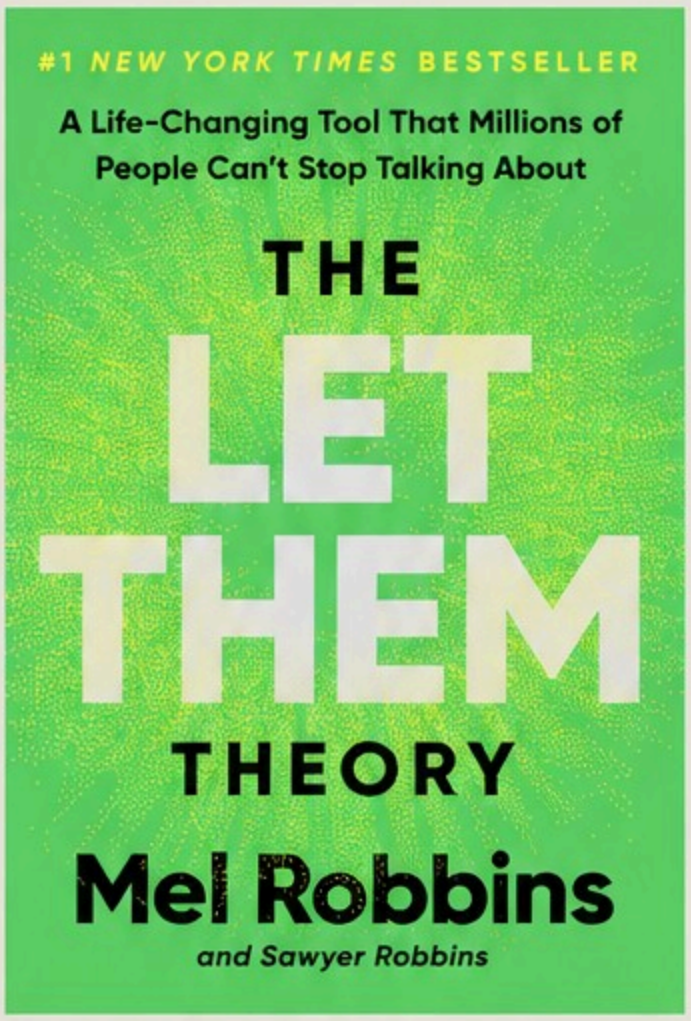
MEL ROBBINS / THE LET THEM THEORY

Let Them. Then Let Me.

The two small sentences at the heart of Mel Robbins's book can change the way we spend our attention—and the way we take responsibility for our own lives.



Mel Robbins. Photograph supplied by Dr. Harley.



The Let Them Theory, by Mel and Sawyer Robbins. Cover supplied by Dr. Harley.

The pause that changes the story.

Imagine you have made thoughtful plans for a dinner, and a friend cancels at the last minute. Your first impulse may be to replay the message, draft a reply that hides your hurt, or decide what their choice says about your worth. Mel Robbins offers a brief interruption: **let them**. Let the friend make their choice. Then comes the part that matters just as much: **let me**. Let me name my disappointment, decide whether to ask what happened, and make a plan for my evening.

That is the engine of The Let Them Theory, written by Mel Robbins with her daughter Sawyer. The phrase is easy to remember because it divides an emotionally tangled moment into two questions: What belongs to another person? What belongs to me? Robbins applies it to stress, judgment, comparison, adult friendships, helping people who struggle, and romantic relationships.

Release control; keep your agency.

The first half can feel like relief. People may dislike a decision, respond imperfectly, leave an invitation unanswered, or pursue a life you would not choose for them. You can express a need or offer support, but you cannot manufacture their response. The energy spent trying to do so can become a full-time job.

The second half keeps the idea from turning into resignation. You can speak honestly, set a limit, make another invitation, leave a draining conversation, or continue with a goal even when someone doubts it. "Let me" moves you from managing another person's reaction to acting in line with your own values. It is the difference between waiting for permission and choosing your next step.

Where the practice gets real

A philosophy worth returning to is one that still works after the inspiring moment has passed.

When friendship changes

Adult friendships do not always keep the same rhythm. A friend may be less available, forget to check in, or invest elsewhere. “Let them” means observing the pattern without pleading for an old version of the relationship. “Let me” means asking directly for the connection I want, listening to the answer, and making room for relationships that are reciprocal.

This does not require a dramatic breakup. Sometimes the most mature response is to change your expectations, extend one honest invitation, and stop carrying the entire friendship alone.

When a loved one struggles

Care can slide into managing someone else’s choices. You can offer practical help, listen, and make information available. You cannot do another adult’s inner work for them. The question is not whether to care; it is how to care without surrendering your own sleep, finances, or peace.

“Let me” might mean offering a ride to an appointment while declining to cover a repeated expense. It might mean saying, “I love you and I cannot make this decision for you.” Support has a shape; rescue without limits often does not.

At work and in public

A colleague may misunderstand an idea. A stranger may judge a post. The aim is not silence in every situation. Present your case clearly, correct a material error, advocate for fair treatment, and do the work that reflects your standards. Then allow that others will form views you cannot supervise.

For creators, leaders, and anyone starting again after 50, this is especially useful. If every choice depends on universal approval, an important project can remain forever in draft. Let the opinions exist. Let yourself publish, apply, pitch, learn, and improve.

What “let them” cannot excuse

Robbins has explained that the approach does not mean standing aside when someone is in danger, accepting discrimination, or giving up your right to advocate for yourself. It also does not require staying in a relationship where disrespect is repeated. A boundary is an action you take: what you will say, what you will allow in your home, or whether you will remain.

If you have tried to be understood and the other person continues the same behavior, “let me” may be a decision to step back. Your peace matters, and so does your safety.

A sentence to keep

Let them choose. Let me choose how I respond. Write it where you will see it the next time you feel pulled into someone else’s decision.

The Intentional Living question

Where am I spending energy trying to get a different response from someone else? What one action is mine to take this week? Answer those questions in your journal, then revisit them in a month. That is where a memorable phrase becomes a lived practice.

REVISIT THIS PAGE

Try the two-column journal exercise: “What they may choose” on the left; “What I will choose” on the right. Return to your answers when the situation changes.

Book note: The Let Them Theory (Hay House, 2024) is by Mel Robbins and Sawyer Robbins. This is an original editorial interpretation based on the publisher’s description, author materials and a published book excerpt; it does not reproduce the full text. Images supplied by Dr. Harley.

Mel Robbins / book Publisher Author on boundaries

A FRESHER WAY TO EAT

Eating the European Way

What can we learn from a market basket, a simple kitchen and a meal worth sitting down for?



The lesson is in the pattern

Picture an ordinary evening: tomatoes and greens on the counter, beans warming with garlic, olive oil and herbs, bread on the table, and everyone sitting down long enough to taste the meal. This is one of the appealing images behind “eating the European way.” It is also something we can do in an American kitchen, without a plane ticket or a perfect schedule.

Europe is not a single menu. Food habits differ across countries, regions, income levels and families. The American Heart Association says there is no one standard Mediterranean diet. Its common pattern emphasizes vegetables, fruit, beans, grains, nuts and olive oil, with fish or poultry in moderate amounts. That is a useful model, not a rule that every European follows.

Indeed, a study of 22 European countries found substantial variation in calories from ultra-processed food. The World Health Organization also warns that many European diets contain too much sugar, salt and saturated fat. Geography alone does not make a plate healthy.

The American convenience trap

Our own food environment makes quick choices easy. In U.S. nutrition survey data from 2021–2023, adults got an average of 53 percent of calories from ultra-processed foods. Sweet baked goods, savory snacks, sweetened drinks and sandwiches were prominent sources. This is a population average, not a description of every American home.

“Ultra-processed” describes a category of industrial formulations, often designed for convenience and a long shelf life. It does not mean that every useful packaged item is suspect. Plain frozen vegetables, canned beans, yogurt and tinned fish can make a fresh-tasting meal possible on a busy Tuesday. The practical question is what the package helps you do: cook and nourish yourself, or replace most of the meal with sugar, salt and little fiber?

In a small controlled NIH study, people offered an ultra-processed diet ate roughly 500 more calories per day than when offered an unprocessed diet. That result supports attention to the whole eating pattern; it is not a promise that one swap will transform anyone’s health.

Bring the rhythm home

Keep the pleasure. Make the ingredients easier to reach. Start with one meal.

Build a market basket, wherever you shop

Choose two vegetables, one fruit, one bean or lentil, a whole grain, and a protein you enjoy. Add an olive oil, lemon, garlic or herb for flavor. A neighborhood supermarket, a farmers market and a freezer aisle can all serve this plan. Buying in season can help with taste and price, but frozen produce is a sound fallback.

Make the basket work twice: roast a tray of vegetables tonight and use leftovers in eggs or a grain bowl tomorrow. Cook beans from dry if you enjoy it; rinsed canned beans make dinner happen faster.

Cook and eat at home more often

Make home the default setting for a few meals each week. Choose two dinners before you shop, prep one versatile ingredient, and cook enough for lunch or another supper. Tomatoes and beans can become a pasta sauce, a soup, or a topping for toasted bread. Roast vegetables once; use them in a salad, eggs, or a grain bowl later.

Give the meal a place on the calendar and at the table. Eat with family, invite a friend, or make a quiet dinner for yourself. A plated meal and 15 unhurried minutes can bring pleasure back to eating without requiring elaborate recipes or hours of prep.

A week of doable changes

Monday: Trade a sweetened drink at lunch for water, sparkling water or unsweetened tea. **Tuesday:** Make pasta with tomatoes, spinach, garlic and white beans. **Wednesday:** Add fruit and plain yogurt to breakfast, sweetening to taste instead of buying a dessert-like cup.

Thursday: Roast vegetables and chicken or tofu together; save half for tomorrow. **Friday:** Serve leftovers with a whole grain and olive oil-lemon dressing. **Weekend:** Choose one meal to cook slowly with someone you love, or for yourself. Notice which change feels easy enough to repeat.

The ingredient list is a tool

Read labels on the foods you eat often. Compare added sugar, sodium and fiber, then choose the version that fits your needs and your budget. A long ingredient list is not a diagnosis; it is a prompt to look more closely. Build most meals from foods that still look like food, and let convenience ingredients support the cooking.

The American Heart Association recommends a pattern that limits added sugars, sugary drinks, sodium and highly processed foods while centering vegetables, fruit, whole grains and legumes. These are habits available on either side of the Atlantic.

THE INTENTIONAL LIVING TABLE

This week, prepare one dinner from five recognizable ingredients. Sit with it. Ask: What tasted better, what made cooking easier, and what would I happily make again?

Sources: CDC/NCHS (2025 U.S. intake); Mertens et al., European Journal of Nutrition (2022 European comparison); WHO Europe (nutrition overview); American Heart Association (Mediterranean eating pattern); Hall et al., Cell Metabolism (2019 trial).

CDC European study WHO Europe AHA NIH trial

AN INVITATION TO GO FURTHER

The Safari

Follow the light across the savanna. Listen. Look closer. The trip of a lifetime begins with choosing the experience that feels like yours.



Illustrative editorial imagery: African wildlife scene created for Intentional Living.

When the world asks you to slow down

The engine is quiet. Your guide stops the vehicle, and suddenly the landscape speaks: a giraffe moving between trees, a line of elephants crossing the grass, a bird calling from somewhere you cannot yet see. Safari is a Swahili word for journey. The best one gives you more than a checklist of animals; it gives you time to notice a living world on its own terms.

A typical day begins early, when wildlife is active and the light is soft. You ride with a trained guide, return to camp for breakfast or a midday rest, and head out again in late afternoon. Depending on the destination and lodge, you might add a boat cruise, a permitted guided walk, or a sunrise balloon flight. Evenings invite dinner under the stars and the pleasure of retelling what you saw.

Choose your kind of wonder

An African safari is not one trip. Open East African plains, the water channels of Botswana, and the salt pans of Namibia create different rhythms. The season changes the landscape, too. Dry months may make animals easier to spot near water; green months can bring lush scenery, young animals and extraordinary birds.

Wildlife is wild. No guide can guarantee a lion, a river crossing, or the Big Five on a particular day. Come with a wish list, then make room for surprise: a troop of monkeys, a herd of zebra, a leopard track in the sand, or the hush just before sunrise.

A wildlife note: Lions and leopards are African safari cats. Tigers live wild in Asia, so we have left them out of this African journey.

Five ways into the wild

Start with the landscape and the experience you want; let the animals be the gift.

KENYA / MAASAI MARA

The great plains

Lions, cheetahs, elephants, giraffes, zebra and wildebeest inhabit the wider Mara ecosystem. July to October is associated with migration possibilities, but herd movements and river crossings follow rain and cannot be booked like a performance. A guided drive and several nights in one area give the landscape time to reveal itself.

TANZANIA / SERENGETI

A moving wilderness

The Great Migration travels through this ecosystem across the year. The park highlights June to October for dry-season viewing and January to February for calving. Lions, leopards, elephants, buffalo and rhinos are present, along with abundant birds. A balloon ride at sunrise is a memorable optional extra.

SOUTH AFRICA / KRUGER

A classic first safari

Kruger offers established roads, rest camps, guided options and a broad wildlife range: elephants, lions, leopards, rhinos, buffalo, giraffes, zebra and vervet monkeys. The park describes April to September as its dry season, traditionally favored for viewing around water. Pair the safari with time elsewhere in South Africa if your schedule allows.

BOTSWANA / CHOBE + OKAVANGO

Water and wilderness

On the Chobe River, a boat trip can bring a different perspective on elephants, hippos, crocodiles and birdlife; game drives reveal giraffes, monkeys, antelope and predators. The Okavango adds channels and floodplain scenery. Botswana tourism notes that dry-season wildlife often concentrates near water, while the green season rewards birders.

NAMIBIA / ETOSHA

The drama of the waterhole

Etosha's vast pan and waterholes create a spare, striking landscape. Look for elephant, lion, rhino, giraffe and antelope. Here the reward is often patience: park near a waterhole and watch who arrives. Add Namibia's desert scenery for a longer journey that feels unlike the grasslands of East Africa.

Wildlife examples and seasonal windows are possibilities, never sighting guarantees. Confirm access, dates and park rules when booking.

The animals you came to meet

Go for the icons. Stay for everything you did not know to look for.



Illustrative editorial wildlife portraits: lion, leopard and vervet monkey. Images created for Intentional Living.

From the vehicle

Elephants move in family groups and may gather along rivers; give them generous distance. **Giraffes** can appear almost silent until you see how high they reach into a tree. **Lions** may be resting through the heat; early and late drives improve the chance of seeing activity. **Leopards** are elusive and often favor trees or cover. A sighting is thrilling precisely because it is never assured.

The traditional Big Five are lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino. The name comes from an old hunting term; today, let the list inspire conservation-minded viewing rather than a race to collect photographs.

Look beyond the headline

Monkeys, including vervets in several safari regions, can be delightfully expressive. Baboons, zebras, antelope, hippos, crocodiles and hundreds of bird species complete a much richer story. Your guide may notice a warning call or a fresh track before you spot an animal at all.

Keep your hands inside the vehicle where required, never feed wildlife, and follow the guide's instructions. In a private reserve or on a permitted guided walk, ask about the exact safety protocol. The most beautiful encounter is one that leaves the animals undisturbed.

A DAY TO IMAGINE

5:30 a.m. coffee and a game drive • 9:30 breakfast • midday rest • 3:30 p.m. guided drive or river cruise • sunset reflection • dinner beneath the night sky.

Your safari, step by step

Save this checklist. The planning is part of the adventure.

- [ ] **01 CHOOSE THE STORY**

  Pick plains, river, delta or waterhole. Decide whether your priority is big cats, elephants, migration, birdlife, photography or relaxed lodge time.

- [ ] **02 CHOOSE A SEASON**

  Compare dry and green seasons for your destination. Migration is mobile; do not book a specific crossing as a guarantee.

- [ ] **03 BUILD A REAL BUDGET**

  Price flights, internal transfers, park fees, lodge, meals, guided drives, tips, insurance and optional experiences. Ask exactly what is included.

- [ ] **04 BOOK THE RIGHT GUIDE**

  Choose a reputable operator; ask about guide training, group size, vehicle, park access, conservation practices, cancellation terms and accessibility.

- [ ] **05 CHECK DOCUMENTS**

  Confirm passport validity, transit rules, visa or electronic authorization, and the latest advisory, local laws and traveler-specific guidance. Requirements change.

- [ ] **06 PLAN HEALTH EARLY**

  See a travel clinician at least 4–6 weeks ahead. Review destination-specific vaccines, yellow-fever rules, malaria prevention and your regular medications.

- [ ] **07 PROTECT THE JOURNEY**

  Arrange suitable medical and evacuation coverage for remote areas. Share itinerary and emergency contacts; keep digital and offline copies.

- [ ] **08 PACK FOR THE DRIVE**

  Bring neutral layers, comfortable shoes, sun protection, binoculars, camera, power bank and a soft bag if your light aircraft has limits.

- [ ] **09 LEAVE ROOM TO WONDER**

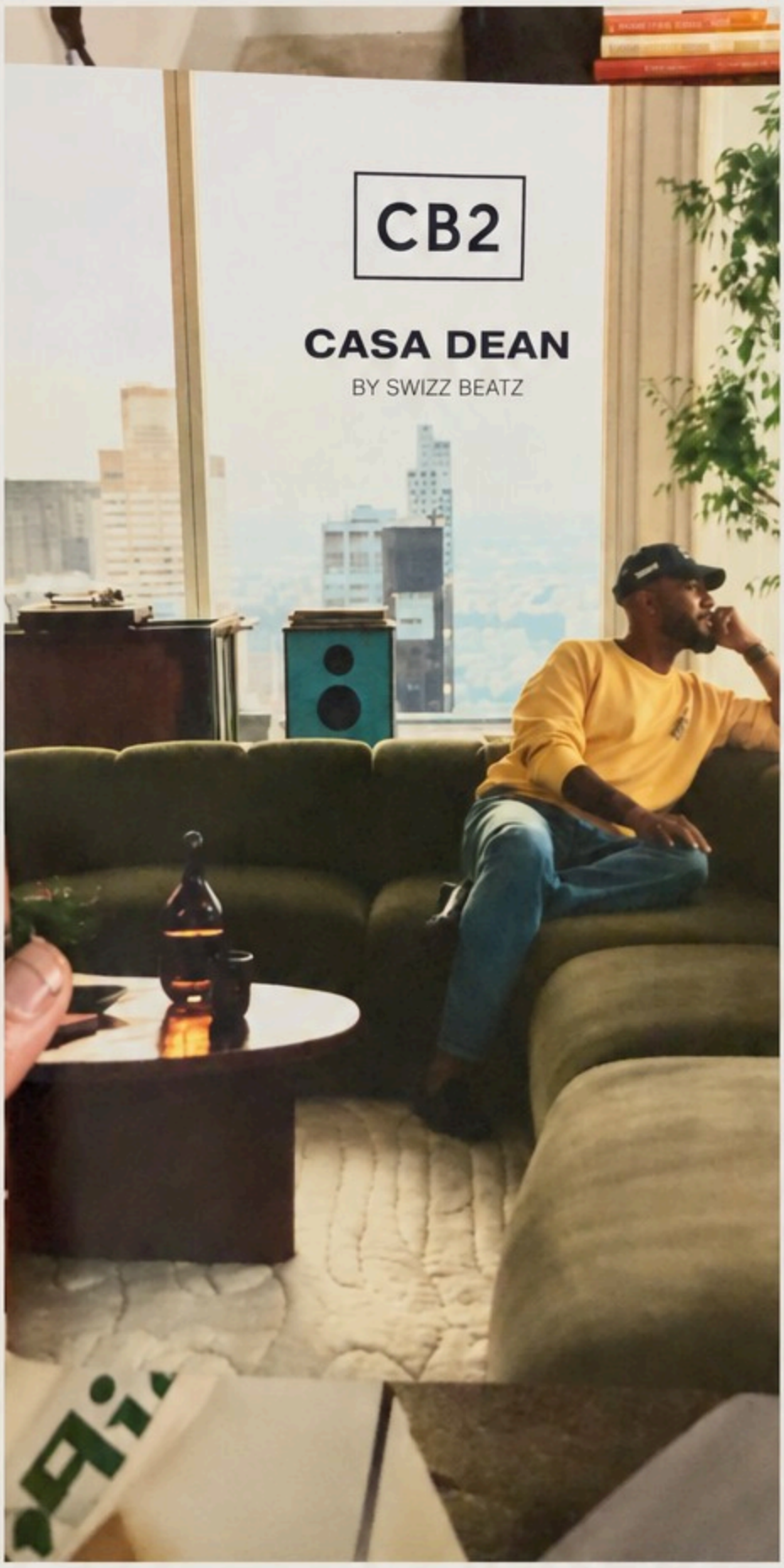
  Stay at least several nights in the safari region. Resist overpacking the schedule. Keep a journal of sounds, conversations and small surprises.

AN EIGHT-NIGHT FIRST-SAFARI SKETCH / SOUTH AFRICA

Night 1: arrive and rest. Nights 2–5: settle into one Kruger-area base for morning and afternoon game drives, with a free midday. Nights 6–8: add Cape Town for food, art and the coast. Build in travel time between regions; confirm every transfer before booking.

EDITORIAL SOURCES & PLANNING: TANAPA (Serengeti); Kenya Wildlife Service; SANParks (Kruger); Botswana Tourism; Namibia Ministry of Environment; U.S. State Department country advisories; CDC Travelers' Health. Recheck current rules before buying travel.

Serengeti · Kruger · Chobe · Etosha · Travel advisories · CDC travel



Dr. Harley's photograph of the Casa Dean collection cover at CB2.

THE CULTURE OF HOME

Where Art Comes Home

With Casa Dean, Swizz Beatz gives furniture the same invitation he gives music: come closer, stay awhile, and make something together.

BY INTENTIONAL LIVING MAGAZINE

The olive sofa on the catalog cover does more than set a mood. Kasseem Dean—known to the world as producer and DJ Swizz Beatz—is sitting on a piece designed for conversation. Its curve suggests a gathering, while its green velvet brings his taste for saturated color into the room. That tension between sculpture and welcome is the point of Casa Dean, his collaboration with CB2.

Dean named the collection for his family. He wanted a creative home where art, entertaining and ordinary life can occupy the same space. CB2 says the designs draw on the sculptural energy of the La Jolla home he shares with Alicia Keys, and were developed with Evan Jerry of Studio ANANSI and CB2's design team. Brutalist strength, Brazilian modernism, burl wood, leather and tactile upholstery meet pieces intended to be lived with.

FROM THE BRONX TO THE LIVING ROOM

Dean's eye did not begin in a furniture showroom. He has described growing up amid the visual language of the Bronx and discovering art while building a career in music. His background as a DJ and producer is legible in this collection: the Lam-Loulé console is designed for records and equipment, while the room itself is treated as a place where people can listen, talk and create.

With Keys, he founded the Dean Collection, a family art collection and cultural platform. Their Giants exhibition, organized by the Brooklyn Museum in 2024 and now traveling, centers work by Black American and diasporic artists. It reveals a conviction that art should have a life beyond a private wall. Casa Dean translates that belief into the furniture and rituals of home.

PHOTO: DR. KEITH HARLEY. Collection-cover art and likeness: CB2/Casa Dean.

THE CASA DEAN EDIT

Four pieces. One creative home.

CLICK THE IMAGES OR NAMES TO VIEW EACH PIECE AT CB2.



01 KINDRED CURVED SECTIONAL

Olive velvet follows a generous curve. Modular seating makes space for a room to gather.



02 BRAINSTORM CHAIR

Racing-green leather, channel detailing and a wood frame make a quiet place to think.



03 OBAIR COFFEE TABLE

A red enamel hexagon recalls a game table; exposed oak gives the sculptural top its structure.



04 LAM-LOULÉ DJ CONSOLE

Burl wood and green leather conceal storage for records and equipment, ready to roll into a party.

LIVE WITH IT. MAKE IT YOURS.

There is a useful lesson here for any home, regardless of budget: choose a room around the life you want to have in it. Begin with one piece that invites use—a chair for thinking, a table for conversation, a console that gives music a place. Add art you genuinely connect with. Leave enough space for people to move, sit and belong.

The pieces carry Dean's biography without turning the room into a shrine. British racing green, the family names, the DJ equipment, the bold red table: each detail has a reason. That is the collection's most lasting design idea. A meaningful interior is assembled from memory, curiosity and hospitality, then animated by the people who enter it.

EDITORIAL SOURCES: CB2 Casa Dean collection and individual product pages; The Dean Collection; Brooklyn Museum/Newfields, Giants exhibition. Product photography © CB2, reproduced here for editorial review. Confirm image-use permission before publication.

CB2 COLLECTION DEAN COLLECTION GIANTS

THE LAST WORD

Living well, together



A CLOSING REFLECTION FROM KEITH

There is a moment at every gathering when the preparations fall away. Someone tells a story, someone else laughs before the ending, and we forget to check the time. In that moment, I remember why we made the effort to come together.

I love a beautiful room and a thoughtful table. But the table was never meant to be a test. It is a place where we can be known. The meal can be simple. The flowers can come from the grocery store. The most memorable detail may be that you looked someone in the eye and made them feel welcome.

This season, notice who needs a seat. It may be a friend starting over, a neighbor spending the holiday alone, or the person you see every day but have not truly checked in with. An invitation does not have to be grand to be generous.

Give yourself permission to arrive with your own life as it is, too. Some of us are celebrating. Some are grieving. Many are doing both. We can make space for all of it without asking anyone to perform happiness.

Let people help. Sit down while the food is still warm. Stay for the story after dessert. Rest enough to enjoy the company you worked so hard to gather.

A full life is not measured by how flawless the evening looked. It is measured, in part, by the care we offered and the care we allowed ourselves to receive. When the room empties and the candles go out, that is what remains.

Make room. Pull up a chair. Be here for the life happening now.

DR. KEITH R. HARLEY, JR.

INTENTIONAL LIVING

DECEMBER ISSUE

HOLIDAY, ELEVATED
Create a home that welcomes.

GATHER BEAUTIFULLY
Good food.
Great company.

THE GIFT OF INTENTION
Give thoughtfully.
Live fully.

YOUR NEXT CHAPTER
Reflect, reset & begin again.

MAKE ROOM FOR JOY
Celebrate what matters most.

DR. KEITH HARLEY

DECEMBER 2026