

Belle Vie[™]

Beautiful Life

Launch Articles — Founding Edition

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In loving memory of Mebrahtu Dawit

October 2, 1927 · Embaderho

Laborer at six. Literate in six languages. Father. Proof.

You Are Not Declining. You Are Ascending.

The article that starts everything.

My father was born on October 2, 1927 in a small highland town called Embaderho — in what is now Eritrea.

He lost his father before he could remember him. By the age of six, with no father and a mother doing what she could, he was sent out to work as a laborer.

Six years old. Working.

At sixteen he taught himself the English alphabet. That single act — that one stubborn refusal to accept the ceiling circumstance had placed above him — opened a door that never closed again. He went on to master six languages. Tigrinya, his mother tongue. Then Amharic. Arabic. Italian. French. English.

He put my late sister Tahirih and me in Catholic private schools with private tutors. He carried us across continents — Kaduna, Nigeria. Monrovia, Liberia. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia — through Italian schools and American schools and Ethiopian schools and Liberian schools, all in the first eleven years of our lives. He made the challenges more palatable. He navigated more than anyone I have ever known.

He kept learning until the very end.

And at the end — when his body was doing what bodies eventually do — he showed me something I will carry for the rest of my life.

He showed me that decline is a story the body tells. It is not the story of the person inside it.

His curiosity did not decline. His love did not decline. His dignity did not decline. His power — the kind that lives in the bones of who a person truly is — did not decline. It deepened.

I am telling you this because of you.

Because somewhere in Northern Virginia — and beyond — there is a woman reading this who is changing. Her hormones are shifting in ways no one prepared her for. Her body feels unfamiliar. Her emotions arrive without warning. Her sense of herself — who she is, what she is for, what comes next — feels less certain than it used to.

And the world, in a hundred quiet ways, is telling her this is decline.

I am here to tell you that is not the story.

What you are experiencing is not the end of something. It is the beginning of something you do not yet have language for. And the reason it feels disorienting is not because you are falling apart — it is because you are becoming more fully yourself than you have ever been. And that is always, always uncomfortable before it is

beautiful.

My father proved this with his life. A laborer at six. Literate in six languages. Magnificent at the end.

The circumstances of your beginning — or your middle, or what feels like your ending — do not determine the depth of your becoming.

What is actually happening in your body.

As a Registered Nurse I want to give you what most wellness content does not — actual clinical understanding of what perimenopause and menopause do, so you can stop being afraid of it and start working with it.

Perimenopause typically begins in a woman's early to mid-forties — sometimes earlier. It is the transition period before menopause, during which estrogen and progesterone levels begin to fluctuate. This is not a malfunction. This is your body doing something it was designed to do.

Physically: irregular periods, hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disruption, changes in skin texture and hydration, hair changes, weight redistribution, joint sensitivity.

Emotionally: mood fluctuations, increased anxiety, irritability, periods of sadness that arrive without obvious cause.

Psychologically: brain fog, memory concerns, a sense of identity shifting — who am I becoming, and is that okay?

The answer to that last question is yes. It is more than okay.

The psychological shift of midlife transition is not a crisis. It is, for many women, the moment when the people-pleasing patterns of earlier life begin to fall away and something more authentic emerges. That is not decline. That is discernment.

What my father taught me about this moment.

Every day of my life I look at what my father built — from nothing, across continents, in six languages — and I ask more of myself. Not because I owe the world more. But because his life showed me what a human being is capable of when they refuse to accept the story that circumstances write for them.

It does not cost us anything to honor ourselves as we honor those around us.

The woman who is exhausted from holding everyone else up. The woman who would never speak to a friend the way she speaks to herself in her own mind. She is not declining for feeling uncertain about what comes next. She is human. She is honest. She is, whether she knows it yet or not, ascending.

What to do with this.

The practice: Once a day — just once — ask yourself the question my father's life asks me every morning: What more can I become today? Not what more can I do. What more can I become?

The permission: You are allowed to be in the middle of something. You are allowed to change — hormonally, emotionally, psychologically — and to give yourself the same grace you would give without hesitation to anyone you love.

It does not cost you anything to honor yourself as you honor those around you.

You are not declining. You are ascending. Welcome.

— Gloria Dawit-Puri, RN · Founder, Belle Vie™ & Amata Lucè™ · Burke, Virginia

What Your Skin Is Telling You About Your Hormones

The clinical connection most estheticians never explain.

When my father moved our family between Nigeria, Liberia, and Ethiopia in the first eleven years of my life, my skin responded to every climate differently. Humidity. Dust. Water quality. Temperature. The skin is not decorative. It is responsive. It is a living record of what is happening inside.

Your hormones are happening inside.

And if you are in perimenopause or menopause — or even in your late thirties noticing that your skin is changing in ways your current routine is not addressing — your skin is not betraying you. It is communicating with you.

As a Registered Nurse and Master Esthetician I sit at the intersection of two disciplines that rarely talk to each other as much as they should. Medicine understands hormones. Esthetics understands skin. Belle Vie™ exists, in part, to bring those two conversations into the same room.

Estrogen and your skin — the relationship you were not told about.

Estrogen is one of the primary architects of skin health. It stimulates collagen production — the structural protein that gives skin its firmness and resilience. It supports hyaluronic acid production — the molecule responsible for your skin's ability to hold moisture. It maintains the skin's barrier function — the outermost protective layer that keeps irritants out and hydration in.

When estrogen begins to decline in perimenopause your skin feels it before your doctor mentions it.

Reduced collagen. Skin loses firmness and begins to appear thinner. Fine lines deepen. The face may begin to look less structured — not because you are aging badly but because the scaffolding is literally changing.

Reduced hyaluronic acid. Skin that used to hydrate well begins to feel dry regardless of what you apply. This is not a product problem. This is a hormonal shift.

Compromised barrier function. Skin becomes more reactive. Products that worked for years suddenly cause irritation. This is your barrier — weakened by declining estrogen — struggling to do what it used to do automatically.

Hyperpigmentation. Hormonal shifts can trigger or worsen melanin production irregularities — leading to the dark spots many women in midlife notice appearing or intensifying.

This is not your skin giving up on you. This is your skin responding accurately to a hormonal environment that has changed.

What regenerative aesthetics does that standard facials cannot.

I built Amata Lucè™ around a single premise: treat the cause, not just the appearance. A standard facial addresses the surface of the skin. Regenerative aesthetics works at a structural level.

Treatments like Purasomes exosome microneedling signal the skin's cellular machinery to begin regenerating. Exosomes carry growth factors that communicate directly with skin cells — stimulating collagen production and restoring the skin's own capacity to function at a higher level.

Dermafrac microdermabrasion with serum infusion opens microchannels through which active ingredients reach the dermis — where surface products cannot penetrate. The serums delivered are selected specifically for your skin's current hormonal state.

The Perfect Derma Peel — formulated with glutathione, the master antioxidant — addresses hormonal hyperpigmentation at a cellular level. Safe for all Fitzpatrick skin types.

What I measure. And why it matters.

At Amata Lucè™ every client begins with The Lucè Structural Assessment™ — a 19-criteria clinical analysis using 2D and 3D imaging. Hydration levels. Barrier integrity. Pigmentation mapping. Collagen density. Hair and scalp condition.

I measure because I have lived the consequence of a treatment applied without sufficient clinical understanding of the skin in front of it. In 2012 I went to an esthetics studio for help and left with a chemical burn that took six months to heal. That experience became the foundation of everything I built.

I measure before I touch. Always.

What you can do at home right now.

- 1. Audit your ingredients. Use our free AI Ingredient Checker at amataluce.com/ingredient-checker to see what may be working against your hormonally transitioning barrier.**
- 2. Prioritize barrier repair. Look for ceramides, niacinamide, and gentle humectants. A compromised barrier makes every other skin concern worse.**
- 3. SPF 50 daily. Non-negotiable. Estrogen decline makes skin more susceptible to UV damage and hyperpigmentation.**

My father had an exquisite love for language because he understood that language is how we make sense of experience. When we have words for what is happening to us we are less afraid of it.

This article is my attempt to give you language for what your skin is doing. It is not failing. It is not betraying you. It is responding — accurately, precisely — to a hormonal environment that has changed. And it is waiting for a protocol that responds with equal precision.

Your skin is not declining. Neither are you.

— Gloria Dawit-Puri, RN · Founder, Belle Vie™ & Amata Lucè™ · Burke, Virginia

It Does Not Cost Us Anything to Honor Ourselves

On building community, crossing cultures, and the standard my father set.

In the first eleven years of my life I lived in Kaduna, Nigeria. Monrovia, Liberia. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

I attended Italian schools. American schools. Ethiopian schools. Liberian schools. I navigated languages and cultures and social codes that shifted beneath me the way the ground shifts in a new climate — requiring constant recalibration, constant figuring out of where I fit and how to belong.

My father made it possible. Not by shielding us from the challenge of it — but by being so thoroughly and unwaveringly himself in the middle of it that we had something to orient by. A fixed point. A north star made of human dignity.

He was a man who had taught himself to read at sixteen. Who had labored as a boy and learned as a man. Who met every culture, every language, every new circumstance with the same quality: kindness, integrity, presence.

The way he treated me created a standard for how I should treat others. And just as importantly — for how I should treat myself.

When I moved to the East Coast I noticed something missing.

I came from Minnesota. From a Midwestern culture where community is not a feature of daily life — it is the infrastructure of it. Where neighbors know each other's names. Where warmth is not withheld until it is earned but offered freely as a first gesture.

The East Coast is extraordinary. The intelligence, the ambition, the diversity of perspective — extraordinary. But the warmth is different. The community takes longer to find.

And I kept meeting women who were struggling in that gap. Women who had moved here from somewhere warmer — culturally, emotionally — and who missed the kind of belonging that does not require an event or a reason. Women navigating hormonal transitions and psychological shifts in relative isolation. Women who were giving everything to everyone and had quietly stopped giving anything to themselves.

I recognized something in them. The cost of always showing up for others without showing up for yourself.

My father never confused self-sacrifice with virtue. He served his family and community with everything he had. And he understood that a person who does not honor themselves cannot fully honor those around them.

What it actually costs to not honor yourself.

I am a Registered Nurse. I have seen what chronic self-neglect does to a body. I have seen it in blood pressure numbers and cortisol levels and inflammatory markers. I have seen it in the skin — because the skin is never just the skin. It is a record of what the body is carrying.

The woman who never sleeps enough because she is carrying everyone else's burdens. The woman whose stress hormones are chronically elevated because she has no space that is genuinely hers. The woman who has stopped doing the small things that used to give her pleasure — because there is no time, and her needs always come last.

Her skin shows it. Her body shows it. Eventually her health shows it.

This is not a judgment. This is a clinical observation delivered with complete compassion. Because I understand why it happens. Particularly for women. Particularly for women of color. Particularly for women raised to believe their value is inseparable from their service.

But my father — who came from nothing and gave everything — never modeled self-erasure. He modeled self-mastery. There is a difference.

Self-mastery says: I will keep developing myself because a person who keeps growing can keep giving. Self-erasure says: I will give until there is nothing left.

My father learned six languages so he could engage more fully with the world. He kept learning until the very end because the capacity to give is directly proportional to the depth of what you have cultivated in yourself.

It does not cost us anything to honor ourselves as we honor those around us.

What community actually means.

Belle Vie™ is a platform. Articles and conversations and clinical information and shared stories. But underneath all of that it is an attempt to build what the East Coast sometimes makes difficult to find — a warm community.

A place where women tell each other the truth. Where they hold each other through the hard passages without judgment. Where they remind each other — as often as necessary — that changing is not the same as diminishing. That asking for help is not the same as failing. That honoring yourself is not selfishness. It is the foundation of everything else.

My father crossed languages and continents to give his daughters a community wherever they landed. He understood that no person — no matter how capable, no matter how resilient — thrives in isolation.

You were not meant to do this alone. The hormonal transition. The psychological shift. The emotional recalibration. None of it was designed to be done in private, without witness, without companionship.

Belle Vie™ is the community I am building so that no woman in Northern Virginia — or beyond — has to do it alone.

A word about the standard.

My father set a standard for how I should move through the world. Not through lectures. Through example.

He showed me what it looks like to encounter difficulty with dignity. To serve without martyrdom. To keep learning when the world has given you every reason to stop. To treat every person — including yourself — as worthy of genuine care and respect.

That standard lives in everything I build. In the way I treat every client at Amata Lucè™. In the financial planning I offer through Lucè Financial™ — because financial security is also a form of self-honor. In Belle Vie™ — in every article that says to a woman: you are worth understanding.

Where to begin.

If something in this article has landed — if some part of you recognized itself in these words — I want to invite you to do one thing today.

One thing that is entirely and unapologetically for you. Not for your children. Not for your partner. Not for the hundred obligations that will still be there tomorrow. One thing for you.

It does not have to be large. My father began with the English alphabet. One letter at a time.

Begin wherever you are. And know that Belle Vie™ is here. Walking alongside you.

Because you are not declining.

You are ascending.

And you deserve witnesses for that.

— Gloria Dawit-Puri, RN · Daughter of Mebrahtu Dawit · Founder, Belle Vie™ & Amata Lucè™ · Burke, Virginia

*Belle Vie*TM
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"Never give up. Always serve your family and community with kindness and with integrity."

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