Corey Andrew Powell ([00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Hello everyone. I am Corey Andrew Powell, and welcome to another episode of Motivational Mondays. I'm your host again, uh, on this podcast. We do it every week and we're so happy that you are joining us once again. So, I am joined today by Ritu Bhasin. I wanna make sure I said that correctly, hopefully. And she is an authenticity advocate, inclusion expert and social justice advocate, committed to helping people live their truth and their best, most empowered lives. She's the author of the new book, which I have here. It's called, "We’ve Got This: Unlocking the Beauty of Belonging," and I wanna say Ritu, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Ritu Bhasin ([00:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you so much for having me, Corey. It's a delight to be here. And you got my name right.

Corey Andrew Powell ([00:42](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, thank you. Good, good. Cuz I hate when I butcher name, so I'm so happy, <laugh>. I did it right and did some justice. So thank you so much for being here. And I wanna just start with, as I was talking to you before we started recording, your personal story is so amazing and I think people will really identify with it across all spectrums. But just to begin, I would love to talk about your book, though, "We've Got This," and what the inspiration was behind that title.

Ritu Bhasin ([01:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, thank you so much for asking and for having me on. So, so let's start with the book and, and I'm gonna hold it up too because I, it's, it's new for me to have the book in my hand, <laugh>, and it's new for me to hold it up. And I'm so excited. And for those of you who are listening and not watching, just so you know, so I identify as being a brown girl in that my parents are from India. So culturally, racially, I am both South Asian, but I'm also, I I call myself a brown girl. And, and I am holding up my new book, which is also Brown. And what I've been saying is brown girl chose a brown book deliberately, deliberately, which I'm happy to speak about as well. So I called the book, We’ve Got This: Unlocking the Beauty of Belonging," because one of the things that I have deeply struggled with throughout my life up until this point of transformation is experiencing acceptance for who I am, honoring, being honored for who I am, feeling like I can authentically stand in my power and reveal who I am so that I can experience belonging.

Ritu Bhasin ([02:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

It has been a lifelong struggle for me to live a life that I, where I could, can actually could actually be who I am. And through a lot of deep self-reflection and healing work, I finally am standing in my power and feel beautiful both inside and out. And I've realized that I've got this, like I can do this and I've realized that there are practices and strategies and tools for anyone else out there who struggles to belong to make this happen. And so you've got this too. And then the final piece, and the reason why I actually called the book we've got this is because I thought growing up that my feelings of being alone, feeling lonely, alienated, rejected, unworthy. It was just me. And now in doing all of the layers of work that I do, I've realized that this is a collective experience that some of us, because of our identities and all the difficult, hateful, uh, hurtful things that come our way, we experience this more than others, but it's a collective experience and we're in it together. And if we can commit to doing it individually and come together to help each other rise together, we've got this mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so I want this to be a movement. And that's why I've called it, "We've Got This."

Corey Andrew Powell ([03:41](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I love that. And that's part of why I do these conversations or have these conversations because I really want people to engage and to learn about what others may go through that they don't realize. And especially, we talk a lot about the quote unquote privilege word. And uh, some people argue that doesn't exist, but there are some who are enlightened and they say, yeah, I don't go through the things you go through because there is no preconceived stigma before I walk into a room based on how I look. And so when people start to get it, I think we are better off. And that's why these conversations are very important. And I want to ask you just to delve a little bit into those feelings you said you had of like the insecurity, the, you know, not feeling adequate and all the things you mentioned born and raised in Canada mm-hmm. <affirmative> as you mentioned, to uh, uh, parents who were, uh, Sikh Punjabi family, correct?

Ritu Bhasin ([04:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yes. So my parents are immigrants to Canada, and I am Canadian. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I'm, I'm South Asian, but I'm also Canadian. And you're gonna hear the Canadian and how I speak everyone <laugh>. And when I say things like out and about.

Corey Andrew Powell ([04:44](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Out and about! Yeah.

Ritu Bhasin ([04:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Out, out in Canada, there I am out and about in Canada, everyone. Yep. And we're Punjabi by culture, which means we're North Indian and we are Sikh by faith. And so, uh, Corey, here's something really interesting. So my faith is called Sikhism, or Sikh. I am a Sikh . Okay. In, in this moment as we are learning to decolonize language as leaders, as, as, as citizens of the world, we're decolonizing as much as we ca can a name pronunciation matters, as you noted right at the beginning. So it's actually pronounced Sikh and Sikh as Sikh and Sikhism and Sikh as opposed to Sikh and Sikhism.

Corey Andrew Powell ([05:25](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Ah, thank you for that. And here's why. Ill tell you that's important to me. I live in a very, uh, predominantly Indian, uh, community in Jersey City, New Jersey, and there's a large community of Sikh <laugh> now it feels like a word to say.

Ritu Bhasin ([05:38](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, you can just say Sikh.

Corey Andrew Powell ([05:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

A Sikh of six people. Yeah. Of si of six. Six. Yeah. Yes. Um, and so, and I've never, they were probably too gracious to like correct me, but I've <laugh> I've been calling him like seeks for like 20 years now. So, but thank you for correcting me.

Ritu Bhasin ([05:50](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Well, like, I mean, let's be real, Corey. It's like we call ourselves seeks because we too have been living in a colonized way, like our hearts and minds mind. So India, as you know, was colonized by the British for hundreds of years, both literally formally and just in spirit. And we, when we come from communities that have experienced oppressive systems like colonization and imperialism, we too end up embodying impression, or we can, it can live in our minds and bodies. And so if you and I had talked 10 years ago, I would've known that the correct pronunciation is sick. But I wouldn't have been in a place where I would've corrected you or anyone else because I was doing my own work around shedding the internalization of white supremacy and colonialism that lives inside of me. But this is a different moment in time, and I am a different person, and I stand in my power, and now I feel good to do this. And so many times as six, we don't correct people, and that isn't because we're trying to mislead, but we ourselves are trying to navigate this world that is fraught with hate and intolerance. And so sometimes it can be challenging to find our own voice. Now that said, we've got this, we, there is a way to make this happen.

Corey Andrew Powell ([07:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. And I will say, I, I, I think traditionally what comes to mind for me, and of course it could be exceptions to every rule, but Sikh are very typically peaceful people. Like kind of, um, not in any way sort of like over overtly aggressive as far as maybe some people may think that.

Ritu Bhasin ([07:35](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You mean like, like the stereotype or the bias that that pa that out there, that puts us into the ca the stereotypical category of, of being terrorists, for example.

Corey Andrew Powell ([07:44](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

People, yeah. People see it, people see the head dresses and all kinds of horrible stereotypes happen. And I've seen a physical assault on a man who was Sikh and it just tore me apart. And it was when the Persian Gulf War started and someone attacked him at a gas station and said, this is all your fault. And I'm like, you idiot, that's not even the same country. Like, what are you talking? But that kind of stuff bothers me.

Ritu Bhasin ([08:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, I mean, I, I, there's so much I can say here. Like, so as members of the Sikh faith community, we are visible. We are very visible. Like my father wears a turban, has a beard. If you follow me on Instagram, you'll know for example that despite my efforts to go viral, uh, I'm putting up many, many videos. Uh, there's a video of my father and his turban handing me two bright yellow plastic bags filled with Indian food he made for me. And that video has gone viral <laugh>, you can't even see me, but my Sikh father is going vi viral. I love it. So we're very visible, which is the point of the turbine. So historically, the reason why my peoples, we wear head coverings, uh, across genders by the way, is so that we do stand out as members of the Sikh faith. But in the us in Canada, especially post nine 11 and in this continued world of hate and intolerance, oftentimes we are, uh, we experience hate crimes tied back to our identities and the hate incidents and mistakenly believing that we're Muslim.

Ritu Bhasin ([09:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Although, let me tell you, as a Sikh, if you are attacking us, mistakenly believing that we are Muslim because your attack is geared towards Muslims, you're still hurting me because if an injustice anywhere as an, an assault to justice, uh, everywhere. And so, so it still hurts me to know that it's happening because you think I'm Muslim. And I call that out too. But it's, it's, you know, it, this is the part, this is the thing about this moment in time when we as individuals who deeply care about change within our workplaces and within society at, at large as leaders, as future leaders, this is a moment for us to really deeply take a look at our own internalized biases that we hold about who people are, whether that's their hair, religious head coverings, how they speak, what they look like, what their titles are, which school they went to, which neighborhood they live in. And so much more for all of us to interrupt our individual biases. And then of course, to take a look at the systemic inequities that are entrenched across every system and structure and society in our workplaces in order to create environments where everyone can experience belonging. And this is what my hope, that my hope is that all leadership work is rooted in these principles.

Corey Andrew Powell ([10:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. Well, I love that, you know, you, that's the outcome that you hope for with this sort of exposure in these conversations. Because I will tell you what's funny, I follow like five Instagram accounts of, um, sick men who the clothing does Yes, yes, yes.

Ritu Bhasin ([10:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Style.

Corey Andrew Powell ([10:40](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

The, I'm like, I wanna wear a turbine because I wanna match. Yes, yes. <laugh>. I wanna match my bow tie and turbine with my, I mean the style, the beautiful fabrics. And you know, what I want to do is always look at cultures and see the beauty that they are exuding and not look for things that are stereotypical or these bizarre tropes that we all subject to. So I lit, I literally have like these, uh, Instagram accounts were, I'm like, oh my gosh, that is the, the men are great.

Ritu Bhasin ([11:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Fashion is huge in my culture. And, and I'm, and when I say culture, I mean stepping back to Mother India, like we as a, as a south, uh, as Indians, as South Asians are diaspora and back home. It's, it's, we are, we love our fabrics and, and bright colors and looking beautiful. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and feeling beautiful is important to us because we're also the motherland of some really important traditional practices as it as it relates to feeling beautiful on the inside. Like I'm thinking about like yoga and mindfulness that's connected to yoga, breath work, all that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([11:41](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. Uh, there's a woman who reminds me of you as well, her name is Zee Clarke, also an author, and Zee had a very, what she called, she said, I did the black girl version of Eat, Pray, Love. I had a high powered job. I was, had all this pressure on me, not just as a woman, as a black woman. And I just gave it all up and went to India. And then she learned breath work. Yes. And she learned meditation and it changed everything. So I wanna talk to you about that. But before we do, I do wanna ask you though a bit more about your, your upbringing because you do belong to this beautiful culture, but you are Canadian, um, but you have, have your nationality is, or your ethnic background is, is, um, Punjabi, you have talked about not feeling sort of, I don't know if the word was like kind of comfortable in that at the time as a young person, you know, why you felt like a misfit, I think was a term that you used while you were growing up in that family. Was it more or less because of how Canadian, like a racist society in Canada made you feel? So you were apprehensive about your, about being other? Or what was that really for you that made you feel like a misfit?

Ritu Bhasin ([12:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

So I had a really difficult, troubled childhood in, in many respects because I, my parents, when they first immigrated to Canada, this is now over 50 years ago, they moved to a very working class neighborhood, like as new immigrants to the country. They were just finding their footing. They financially struggled. And so up until the age of about 11, my siblings and I grew up in a very working class inner city neighborhood. But when we were, when I was around the age of 11, my parents made a decision, massive financial stretch for us to move to a very homogeneous white affluent suburb outside of Toronto. And it, they made this decision for myriad reasons, including that they wanted us to get better access to education and social networks they didn't have access to. But they also knew that as brown kids growing up in white Canadiana, it was important for us to learn how to shift cultural codes.

Ritu Bhasin ([13:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And all of this did happen. But the problem is that I experienced years and years of relentless bullying and racist childhood bullying at that. And that was deeply traumatizing. And so at school, I was struggling to not only feel safe from harm, but I just, I didn't feel like I belonged. I just, I struggled to have friends. I, the ridicule, the torment, the harassment really had an adverse impact on my soul and spirit, my self-esteem and so much more. But then at home, I was also struggling because my parents as new immigrants to the country, they were grappling with how Indian should she be like, how like, let's make her really Punjabi. No, no, that's, no, no. We should get out there and we're in Canada and we're gonna be modern immigrants and you should embody whiteness. And then it was like, oh, wait, slow down.

Ritu Bhasin ([14:52](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Who do you think you are? The childhood, like white parents. You can't talk to us that way. No one. Yeah. <laugh> Yeah. Has if like slow down there, like what do you think this is a white household? Yeah, yeah. And like, like where you have rights, like you don't have rights, like whatever f that. And so I just to say I I, I was struggling both at home around who I am culturally, but then at school with like, okay, no, I'm not brown. I'm actually white just like you. Ah, but I'm not really, and I'm a smart girl who's like quite sassy and no, I'm not fancy because they, because the neighborhood I grew up in was like really affluent and they had designed clothes and my parents, my, we were still shopping at Wilco, which existed back then. And so, uh, did did you have Wilco in the US?

Corey Andrew Powell ([15:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

We didn't have Wilco.

Ritu Bhasin ([15:33](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Walmart, walmart. It's the, it's the predecessor to Walmart. Wilco in Canada turned into Walmart. Yes.

Corey Andrew Powell ([15:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Okay. Wow. Okay. So I do know the equivalency, obviously then if you were shopping there and those girls are going to like Prada so <laugh>

Ritu Bhasin ([15:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. The, the Prada version at the time, like Benetton, which, which my parents were like, we're not gonna Benetton, we are going to Walmart and you are gonna get your outfit from Targe <laugh>. And so I just really struggled. And so when I say that I grew up feeling like a misfit, it was really like literally in all, every aspect of my life, the place where I think I felt the safest was, and this is gonna sound so epically nerdy, but I felt the safest in studying and in my books. And you know, even just today I was, um, finishing up recording my audiobook and I'm in the studio at, at, uh, Random House in Canada at the publishers and there's all these books around. And I was like finding myself distracted and being pulled towards the books when I like realized I at heart am a nerd <laugh>. Like that is like being around books and words and studying and like, that's my comfort zone because that's where I felt the safest as a kid. I could get lost in it, but it was amongst others people that I felt like a misfit. Yeah. But me and my words, that's, that was a safe place.

Corey Andrew Powell ([16:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. And I think what you just laid out, you kind of were an anomaly. I mean, you had all these different sort of, as I use the term before, intersectionality's happening Yeah. At once, which can be really conflicting. And you mentioned the, the code switching, which again, that's one of those things that if you're, uh, if you're not brown trying to succeed in a predominantly white society, you will never really know what that means. But we'll tell you today, if you're listening and watching that, you know, it does mean that you, you kind of, you navigate between these two different existences being sort of, um, I guess able to to be accepted in both worlds. So that impacts how you speak. You might try to assimilate your language to sound more, quote unquote white as they would call it. But in my case, I'm like, I'm just speaking English. I don't know why you're saying I sound white, because it's the same English that white kids speak. So every kid in America who gets outta elementary school should be speaking the same way. But, so I, I grew up with that, so I understand that. But the thing is though, no matter how much we code switch, we walk into the room and you can't code switch the exterior.

Ritu Bhasin ([18:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. Once people see us. And, you know, the intersectionality of my identity really did have a profound impact on, on my upbringing and but also how I navigated the world. And it's like, as a woman of color, I'm cisgender and hetero. So as a woman of color from a minor religious minority group, I struggled. I struggled a lot because, and not just at school. So, so Corey, as you know, uh, I ended up choosing the most high conforming profession to enter into <laugh> as a, as a young woman of color. In her twenties, I chose to become a lawyer mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I thought at first that I would practice like more social justice focused law, but what ended up happening is I got swept up into the corporate towers because that's where all the cool kids were going. And frankly, that's where they were making more money.

Ritu Bhasin ([18:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And I, in my twenties, was making more money in my first year of working as a lawyer in the towers than my parents did combined Hmm. When I was growing up. And so for me, it was so enticing to be in that world of like fancy suits and high towers and swish restaurants and offices where the fancy pens. And I just like all of it, all of it. And the intersectional experience was really hard because the messages weren't just okay, as someone who's not white, you should embody more white centric ways. And when I say white centric ways, I mean like more Anglo Anglo centric ways of behaving and be more direct and, and embody more of the Anglo rooted activities of the, the corporate world. Like learning how to play golf and skiing and understanding how to navigate a, a table setting at a fancy restaurant where you have.

Corey Andrew Powell ([19:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Its 15 forks and.

Ritu Bhasin ([19:50](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, 14 forks, 13 vessels through which you can drink your beverages. <laugh> not alone ordering from a wine list. Like I was like, I don't know, I I'm so sorry. I'm like, my people eat, we eat with our hands. <laugh>. Like, like that's like, I grew up eating with my hands, like literally 2 billion of us in the South Asian re region eat with our hands. Like whatever. So, so I just like, it was, there was that, but there was also the, oh, as a woman, uh, no one said to me, okay, as a woman to get ahead, you should act more like a man. But the messages were always there. It was like, talk about sports or be more direct or be more gritty and ask for what you want. Be more assertive. And with the double binds of bias as a woman, if we're too assertive, then it's like, oh, she's abrasive and.

Ritu Bhasin ([20:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And then if you're, if you don't ask, then it's like, oh, she's has tint and timid and mousey. And so I struggled with that. I struggled with growing up like in a really working class immigrant household where it's like we didn't go to fancy restaurants growing up and we didn't have like summer houses or lake houses and all of that that we went to and or the opera and like, just like the, the things that I felt the pressure to hide about myself, to mask about, or for that matter, the pressure to learn about, just enough so that I can navigate conversations to be like, to fit in. And by the way, for those of you who are listening and not watching, I am doing air quotes on fit in. And when I say fit in, I'm talking about the, our experience of changing who we are in order to have the doors of acceptance open.

Ritu Bhasin ([21:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But fitting in is not the same as actual belonging. Cause belonging happens when we are accepted and honored for who we really are fitting in is about, let me change this about myself and mask this aspect of my identity. And in fact I call it performing. When I say performing, I don't mean the high performance. I mean life is a stage and we're actors on the stage acting out this persona of who we are. I felt constant pressure to show up as my performing self at work because of all of my intersectional identities. And it helped because the doors did open and I did become successful at a very young age. But the problem is it wasn't on the basis of who I am. And so while on paper I was successful on the outside looking in, you would've said, wow, when I, by the time I got to my early thirties, wow, she's really got it going on. But if you asked me in my early thirties how I felt in my soul, I would've said to you, I felt spiritually vacant and lost and confused and frankly broken about who I was.

Corey Andrew Powell ([22:29](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. Wow. And I think, you know, and that leads me up to my next question, which you actually answered, cuz my next question was going to be, I know that on the outside looking in, it looked like you had everything, but you had this profound unhappiness at that time. But you did ex you just shared why that was. And I know that, you know, things change for you when you sort of finally have this epiphany, I guess, or you make this decision to, uh, to change. Now was the decision like, I'm going to India to clear my head or was like, I'm just getting outta here going someplace and it happened to be India and then you had this profound sort of change in, in how you viewed yourself and and your self-reflection.

Ritu Bhasin ([23:09](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. So, so just to catch listeners up on a little bit of my story. So there I was practicing law for a few years and then transitioning. I hated the practice of law for myriad reasons, which I talk about online. You can check it out, <laugh>. And then I transitioned to doing HR at a large Canadian law firm in the towers. And I did that for many years. And while I was, uh, that journey, uh, in the legal profession was about 10 years, uh, into my early thirties, like to mid thirties, really successful but unhappy. There were a few things that happened to me that signaled Ritu, leave the scene. You have got to transform your life. First of all, I just, I was working nonstop. I was struggling in relationships in that I was struggling. I wanted to be partnered like as a woman. I, I was your typical woman in her thirties who's internalized the messaging that you must find a partner and settle down and mate.

Ritu Bhasin ([24:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And so I felt the pressure to do that. I was struggling with drawing boundaries with my parents. I didn't really love what I was doing at work, but I was making a lot of money and I thought this is the right thing to do. And, but in my mind, I just had these negative narratives constantly looping and I was trying to do thi I was doing therapy and I was doing some healing work, but it just wasn't getting me to where I needed to be. And I was overriding, I was ignoring a lot of the physical signals in my body that I was really stressed and unhappy until I started to have severe back pain. So I, I was not sleeping well. I was clenching, I clenched was clenching my teeth so tight at night. I cracked a tooth. Mm-hmm. My hair stopped growing. I was having all kinds of stomach issues in my early thirties.

Ritu Bhasin ([24:50](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

There I was in the corporate towers corporate dream but really unhappy. And then I started having excruciating back pain from sitting and stress. And long story short, a few of my healthcare providers said, you know, you should, why don't you try yoga? Cause you seem like you're really stressed and it'll help you build, strengthen your core. And I was like, okay. And I was already thinking like, you know what, like white people around me, all around me are doing yoga <laugh> and my people invented yoga. Why am I not doing it? I should do it right. You can do it. Why can't I, I'm gonna be naturally good at it cuz my people invented it. <laugh> on now. And so off I go to yoga class and I'm like, what in the actual app? This is really hard. Yeah, it is. And <laugh>, it's like actually is.

Ritu Bhasin ([25:31](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But I fell in love with it. And so I started doing it more and more and more. And when I say I started doing it more and more like I became consumed by it in the sense that I started doing yoga retreats and I'd go on yoga vacations and I was reading about it and then I was like, you know what? I'm so lost and confused. I need a minute from my job. I need a minute from my life. I just need a minute. Mm. And so I decided to take a sabbatical, like a leave of absence from my job in the corporate towers where I was working as an HR leader. Unheard of to do this at the time, even now because at law firms it's like, what? You wanna take a break? Why would you do that? Right, right. And as part of that sabbatical, I went to India where I studied, I did my first, I studied yoga, I did my first yoga teacher training program in an ashram for two months and spending two months away from my real life, again, I'm putting that in quotes, back home, stripped of all the labels and the identities I had embodied before I left in this moment in my mid thirties where it was like, Ritu, who are you really for two months meditating, caring for my body, caring for my mind and spirit was ultimately the catalyst for transforming my life.

Ritu Bhasin ([26:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And I was already on the journey to transform my life. I just, I needed something to push me into that deep place of self-reflection. But what I also needed to have happen, Corey, which did happen for me, is I needed to be stripped of the personas I had created for myself. Like all that shifting codes and all that shifting of identities basically led me to a place where in my mid thirties, if you had said to me, Ritu, who are you? I would've would've said to you, I don't know who I am, but I have a corporate Ritu and then I have a weekend and then I have a Saturday night on the dance floor with you. And then I have the Ritu who sees her parents on weekends. And then I have the Ritu who's at fam with family friends. And then I have the Ritu who's on dates and then the Ritu who's with her friends. And then I have the miserable, lonely, sad crying, ugly crying Ritu on Friday nights on her couch by herself with her ice cream. I didn't know there were so many personas. And that experience was a catalyst to bring me to this point where I am now where if you said, who is Ritu? I'd be able to give you a uniform answer across all of my experiences.

Corey Andrew Powell ([27:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Wow. I just got goosebumps literally from that. I mean, whew, because I, I, it speaks to this idea of authenticity and that's why you are the authenticity expert that you are because you, you've lived it. When you cannot be your full self in an environment you are walking in, you are walking into that space self devalued and less than because you're not being able to shine at full throttle. And so I think so many of us feel that way and it's based on all kinds of other stuff. And we begin to internalize it and believe a lot of those negative things that I think are signals and programming that we've gotten from other people. I know you mentioned like people around you we're constantly making decisions or trying to force you into decisions that you didn't wanna do. And then of course you mentioned dating that didn't work out, that sort of pressure once you're content with self, yes. I find none of that matters cuz I'm good, you know, but it takes us a while to get there. Like you had to go to India to get there, but <laugh>

Ritu Bhasin ([28:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, thousand percent. Exactly. Exactly. And in my book I like, I talk a lot about the ashram experience and like, yeah, but you know, but, but Corey, but Corey here, here's the thing, here's what I've learned. Okay. We don't need to go halfway around the world and take two months off from our job and put on a uniform and study a tradition that's 8,000 years old to transform our lives like we can. You can start today. And so as someone who's deeply committed to authenticity and and advocacy for being who you are, there's a few things I would say to you right away. Like step number one, if I said to you, who is your authentic self, what would you say? And by the way, in my first book, the authenticity principle, I define authen, your authentic self as if there were no negative consequences for your actions, your authentic self is how you would show up in that.

Ritu Bhasin ([29:46](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

No negative consequences, this is how you would speak, this is what you would wear, this is how you would emote, this is who you'd love. This is where you draw boundaries. This is where you'd sit who you'd say no to. It's what you'd be doing for a living and so much more. So if I said to you, who is your authentic self? How would you answer that? Step one, for a lot of us, we have the answers. The the issue is actually making that happen. I'll come back to that in more in a moment. For some of us we don't even have the answer to that. And if you don't have the answer to that, because you're so lost from shifting cultural codes and curating who you are, like showing up as your performing self, the one who's acting who you are, as opposed to being who you are, the real work is around figuring out who are you.

Ritu Bhasin ([30:30](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And so online at ritubhasin.com, I have lots of free empower pages which help you to self-reflect. But you can take a step back and just ask yourself things like, if there were no negative consequences, what would my voice sound like? Like how would I speak? How would I dress at work with my family? What would I do with my emotions? A lot of the questions I've already asked. So you literally do the deep self-reflection work around who you are. And by, we don't need to be at an ashram to do this. Like you can do this on your own on a Saturday afternoon or on a Friday night or whenever. You can do this with yourself now. Then the second thing I would say to you is that as part of our self-reflection, I'm gonna encourage us to spend a lot of time with our body and our mind.

Ritu Bhasin ([31:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Most of us actually spend quite a bit of time with our mind because we're tuning into the negative narratives. We hear the voice in the head saying all kinds of mean evil stuff about ourselves to ourselves. One of the questions I love to ask is myself, when I hear the mean stuff is what Dr. Phil used to say back in the day, how's that working for you <laugh>? Yeah. And it's like that is some mean stuff I'm saying to myself, but the place where we're spending less time on is on our bodies. Your body is a powerful anchor to help you decide what you want, how to act, how to show up in any given moment. And by tuning in, like what is my body saying to me about how I feel about this person or this moment or this experience, we can start relying on ourselves, our inner knowledge.

Ritu Bhasin ([32:12](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I call it my, I call it our core wisdom in my new book, "We've Got This," core wisdom is about the knowing we hold within that helps us to better understand what our mind embodies mind and body are telling us, settle ourselves when we do feel stressed and activated, release any of the negative energy coming up. But also helps us to use our voice and stand in our power. So starting to rely on your body is something you can do right now by with breath work and just tuning in like where am I feeling tightness or tension and why is that showing up? Or I'm feeling really tense in my shoulders, like maybe I should like do some neck stretches to release the tension, which sounds like a bunch of hokey pokey stuff. But I am telling you right now, as someone who has r literally transformed her life through what I'm sharing with you, it's these types of strategies that help us to live, work, and lead our best.

Ritu Bhasin ([33:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And then the very last thing I'll say is, let's remember that we live as for those of us in Canada and the US in societies that are entrenched in these systems of sameness and conformity and homogeneity around largely male, cisgender, hetero, white, affluent, elitist norms. And in these norms, these normatives, we are encouraged to not feel in our bodies. We are encouraged to think and be data driven and to make decisions just on our minds as opposed to tuning into our bodies. And yet we know from all of the studies around happiness, leadership and effective decision making, being intentional, relationship building, collaboration, inclusion, psychological safety, all of the key underpinnings of leadership, both individually and collectively, the being body focused is what causes us to be effective as a leader both for ourselves and for others. And so I'm asking us, inviting us to disrupt all of the conditioning around us to go within. And that's pretty like radical out there cuz it, it flies in the face of what we've been taught historically, but this is a moment for change and this is why I think my message is so important. Also, we've got this.

Corey Andrew Powell ([34:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Ritu Bhasin. Thank you so much for being here today. Learn so much from you and I think you're awesome. We're gonna make sure everyone can follow you or have your links there when this podcast airs so people can find more about your wonderful work you're doing and that you're very welcome. Thanks for being here today on Motivational Mondays.

Ritu Bhasin ([34:46](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you so much. Bless. Be well everyone.

Corey Andrew Powell ([34:49](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/GBZH14b74u4aaK5qnMt_vY9Vbo6Way3dffKl72qFodrfIEAz1a5-bgKIot2Rn9Se4O_r2UnFUp1PeU35BHqSPYF891I?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays, presented by The National Society of Leadership and Success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcast. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, and I'll see you again here next week.