

## All Things Self-Care Ladies

### A Sensational, Enjoyable, Blazing and Memorable night at the Victoria Hotel, in Melbourne CBD!

When women gather to learn, and share their knowledge, expertise, and experiences on Self-Care, and to laugh and dance the room becomes electrified, and time stands still. This is an event launched by women, about women's wellbeing, empowerment and for women. Launched on 4th November 2023 in Melbourne Victoria, this event brought women to support and celebrate one another. The event is an informal sickle cell disease and mental health awareness to shine a light on these two important causes.

The event called All Things Self-Care Ladies' is created by Agnes Nsofwa and mentored by Mel Magengezha. Agnes is a registered nurse, PhD candidate, Founder of Australia Sickle Cell (ASCA), Consultant, Entrepreneur, Public Speaker, and Creator of Olana Dolls. Mel Magengezha, the mental health expert, an award winner of Australian Ladies in Business Initiative and Community Champion of the Year 2023. Mel is also the host of 'Mbuya vaRaphy Radio Talk show'. These ladies together with 16 other vibrant speakers, worked tirelessly to deliver a successful, sensational, enjoyable, blazing, and memorable event. The event was opened with a warm welcome and a reassuring prayer led by Agnes Nsofwa and the Charismatic Mel who were both the masters of ceremony at the event.

There were approximately 16 wonderful speakers / panellists segmented into different groups based on different themes. They successfully presented an array of the dimensions on Self-Care. Panellists eloquently and successfully strive to respond to the questions put to them to the best of their knowledge and expertise.

The first group of keynotes covered 'Inclusive Overall wellbeing' presented by Ruhee Deghani, the Founder of Allied Collective. Chantal Kabamba Founder of How Are You Magazine presented 'Emotive Self-Care'. Initially Chantal introduced 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'One Health' in general. She stressed the importance of the intersectionality between the health and wellbeing of us humans, animals and that of plants/ecosystem and their independence. She then demonstrated that the number of women in both Australia and New Zealand taking anti-depressant are significantly higher compared to men's. Chantal also highlighted 'Holistic Health' and its Nine dimensions of health (which could include Physical Self-care, Emotional Self-care, Financial Self-care, Relational Self-care, Spiritual Self-care, Social Self-care, Occupational Self-care, Environmental Self-care, and Attitudinal Self-care) and how they influence one another. Chantal finally presented Emotive Self-Care in a more detailed. Natalie Tshiunza, a Co-Founder of ASCA talked about Self-Care in home.

Soon after the first groups completed their presentations, Mrs Gwendoline Munshya, the wife of the current Zambian Ambassador in Australia was one the of the guests of honour who spoke about how certain facets of culture disempower women. She urges women to off load some of the house chores to other family members in the house.

The second group presented 'Self-esteem', it comprised of firstly Dorcas Maphakela the Founder of OZ Africa TV and Co-Founder of Yo City Writer, Visual Artist, Holistic Wellbeing Advocate at Healing with My word. Secondly Sofia, a Neuro-Transformation/Image Coach who also is a Creator of MODZI Active wear and Dr Christine Chisengantanbu.

Dr Chisengantambu (Tina) is a lecturer at ACU in NSW and entrepreneur, founder of Zamolo. Tina spoke about 'Self-esteem as the twilight of womanhood.' Self-esteem is important because how one perceives oneself determines how one behaves and the character they portray. She pointed out that a person's view of themselves is influenced by social determinants such as background and cultural factors to mention a few. Tina posits that defining womanhood goes beyond fulfilling the traditional roles and duties of being a woman such as being a wife, a mother, and the professional roles of a person's career. These roles, good as they may be, are not an end in themselves but they are a means and avenues that help to shape and build the character of being a woman. She also highlighted fear as the enemy of self-esteem because fear breeds intimidation, and self-doubt and magnifies failures. When fear and self-doubt are taken away, a woman can define who they are and ultimately, they can shine the 'Self' and show the best version of themselves. In sum, self-esteem is the candlelight of womanhood, because it brings out the true self of 'I am who I am, I am a woman!'

The third group talked about 'Relational Self-Care' which was presented by Anastacia Wainaina, the Founder of Anastacia Wainaina organisation, Speaker, leadership strategist, coach and podcast host, Emillia Magengezha. Ms Wainaina's presentation was interactive and reflexive. Strength from within was highlighted by Rashell Zhungu, an entrepreneur and business owner of Mainini Lashell's kitchen and a Motivational Speaker who showed us that our life 'Struggles could be blessings in disguise' when we press on with unyielding faith in God.

A reflexive and thoughts provoking table discussions was incorporated into the event. It was empowering and liberating to see other women from the audience standing up and share their thoughts about what Self-care means to them.

Three sessions of panel discussions were held after keynotes completed their presentations. The first panel discussed 'Self-Care Self-esteem', led by Suzy Dingle, a Health and Lifestyle Coach partnering with Herbalife Nutrition, Alice Smith, Chika Nnaji, Lina Munera from Professional Migrant Women, Adjoa Mkwanzani, Patience Rabai Founder and President of Afro-Aussie women in Business. The second panel discussed 'Conducive Career Environment' led by Patience Rabai and Amanda D'Rozario, a Business Transformation and Strategy leader.

Ms Nomsa Napier, a Nurse Practitioner for mental health and addictions, currently the Director of Trinity Community Services was the second guest of honour. A Zimbabwean-born Nomusa Napier, a mother of three, reveals the profound meaning of self-care in her life. It was her children and life circumstances that guided her towards a career as a nurse practitioner.

Following a challenging journey, the 48-year-old has now established herself as a Nurse practitioner in the 'alcohol and other drugs' field in Bendigo. Additionally, she possesses specialised training in mental health. Nomusa stumbled upon her current niche almost accidentally, recounting her journey of overcoming grief and a workplace accident. In 2004, after moving to New Zealand, a workplace accident left her seriously injured, altering the course of her life. Describing the incident, she explains, 'My arm got caught in the machine on night shift. I was stuck in the hospital for two months with a skin graft, and witnessing these compassionate nurses caring for me inspired me to pursue nursing!'

After completing her nursing degree and undergoing a study placement in mental health services, Nomusa found herself working in the hospital's medical ward. Unfortunately, tragedy struck – her husband passed away, leaving her as the sole parent of three children. After her husband passed away, she faced judgment and heard numerous lies. Despite the gossip, she made a conscious decision not to engage in justifying untruths. She firmly believed that God would ultimately unveil the truth. Instead of wasting her time on defending against lies, she trusted in God's intervention and

focused on what truly mattered to her. Faced with the choice of succumbing to grief or rising above it to provide security for her children, Nomusa embraced the values, beliefs, and resilience instilled in her by her mother.

Her communication skills, not only with patients but with everyone around her, played a pivotal role and opened numerous doors. Despite the hospital's expectation for her to continue working night shifts, Nomusa's former placement manager intervened, offering her a community-based role in alcohol and drug services.

Countering the stigma surrounding drug use holds significant importance for Nomusa. She asserts, 'People in my community avoid discussions about mental health and substance abuse due to stigma, and I believe that's where my passion stems from'. She emphasizes that individuals don't simply use drugs; they often turn to them as a form of self-medication for trauma. Nomusa, who has a son struggling with mental health issues, advocates for a non-judgmental approach.

Undertaking a substantial amount of online study has not been easy for Nomusa. She acknowledges, 'Once I set my mind on something, I ensure that I accomplish it. I don't want things to linger, so I invest a lot of effort and always seize opportunities when they arise.'

Nomusa's eldest son manages her own business, and her youngest recently completed his third year of medical school in Adelaide.

The 3rd and last panel discussion was on 'Relationship Self-Care' and was held by Patience Rabai, and Amanda D'Rozario.

In the intervals between the gala's activities, Shingi DJ Samaz the wonderful DJ entertained attendees and participants to a beautiful mix of selected music. The event ended with a lot of dancing.

'All Things Self-Care Ladies' not only imparted some useful skills on wellbeing to women, but it also brought along some evidence-based experiences in Self-Care that participants and attendees could put into practice to enhance their wellbeing. Furthermore, women have now started to weave a supportive network to enhance social health, share their resource information, much needed following the aftermath of COVID.

On behalf of ASCA, Agnes Nsofwa thanks all participants and attendees for sharing their time, knowledge, expertise and for showing their support.