

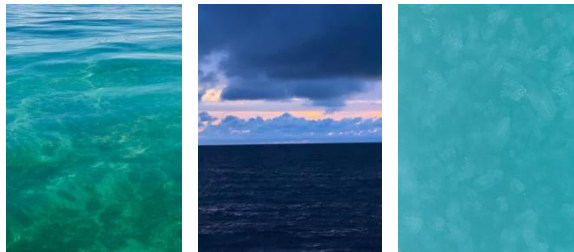
HELLO 2026 PLAYBOOK

THROUGH THE CRACKS 2025

This year, a line from Nigerian philosopher and poet Bayo Akomolafe stayed with me:

“Cracks are where the world churns — not because things are falling apart, but because something else is trying to take shape.”

2025 felt full of cracks. In the world, in leadership, in everyday life.



We’re living in a new era. One that Tom Friedman, the Pulitzer-winning journalist, calls the *Polycene*: an era where everything is connected to everything else. Technology shapes politics, politics reshapes work, work reshapes identity. Change no longer arrives neatly. It overlaps, accelerates, and isolates.

When the world feels this uncertain, it’s natural to look for firm ground. But certainty, it turns out, is a poor substitute for safety.

Bayo reminds us, *“We were trained to think stability is safety. But sometimes the safest place is the one that’s just beginning to shift.”*

One of my main takeaways this year is that in a world that keeps shifting, belonging is how safety moves with us — and community is what makes that belonging possible.

So the question isn’t how we get back to solid ground. It’s how we learn to stand together while the ground keeps moving — as leaders and as human beings.

As we close 2025 and step into 2026, here is my invitation to pause with a set of reflection questions. Not to seal the cracks, but to explore them.



Onwards with love!

Let’s continue to invest, in the communities that help us stay connected while the ground is shifting.

I look forward to connecting with you and working on things that matter in 2026,

Barbara

2025: THE VIEW FROM HERE

looking back on the year that was

ENCHANTED LISTENING: WHAT DID YOU HEAR IN 2025 WAS IMPORTANT?

NOT INSTRAGRAM-ABLE: WHAT MEMORY FROM THIS YEAR STILL SITS VIVIDLY WITH YOU?

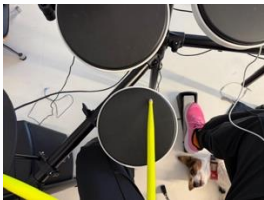
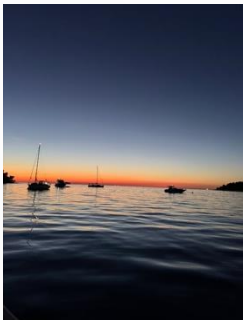
SUPPORTING CAST: WHO SHOWED UP FOR YOU IN 2025 IN A WAY YOU WON'T FORGET?

THE DOOR YOU SAW BUT DIDN'T OPEN: WHAT OPPORTUNITY TEMPTED YOU OR SCARED YOU?

BOOM: WHAT WAS YOUR MIC-DROP MOMENT THIS YEAR?

SYSTEM ERROR: WHAT REMINDED YOU BEAUTIFULLY, HILARIOUSLY, OR PAINFULLY THAT YOU'RE NOT A ROBOT?

SPARKPLUG: WHICH THREE TASTES, SOUNDS, TEXTURES ,OR SCENTS LIT UP YOUR SENSES THIS YEAR?



My Top 5 Moments 2025:

Became an IMI-Qualified Mediator

Many conflicts would never occur if we just had a conversation. If only world peace were as easy as getting people in the same room with a cup of tea.

Saw Oasis in Edinburgh

Thousands of strangers, joyous energy that could power an entire grid. A reminder that music still brings people together in a way nothing else can.

Time in nature - sailing, sunsets, sunrises, and star-watching. No agenda, no deadlines - proof that the world keeps offering beauty so don't forget to look.

Deep reflection in the Austrian mountains

Rediscovered my inner rebel - the one that guards what really matters and whispers "when the world asks you to sit down, stand anyway."

Started playing the drums

Yes, this is happening. I can now officially play *Smells Like Teen Spirit* (the simple version, but let's not ruin the moment). Forming a punk rock band may or may not be on the horizon.

2026: HERE WE GO

looking ahead on the year that will be

SEND THE SCOUT AHEAD: WHAT SMALL EXPLORATION COULD YOU KICK OFF TO SEE WHAT'S POSSIBLE IN 2026?

SKY BEFORE SCREEN: WHAT RITUAL DO YOU WANT TO CREATE IN 2026 TO KEEP YOU CONNECTED TO WHAT MATTERS?

PERMISSION TO MISBEHAVE: WHAT "GOOD BEHAVIOR" ARE YOU READY TO RETIRE IN THE NEW YEAR?

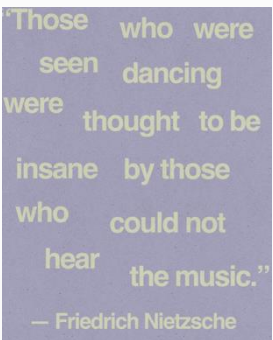
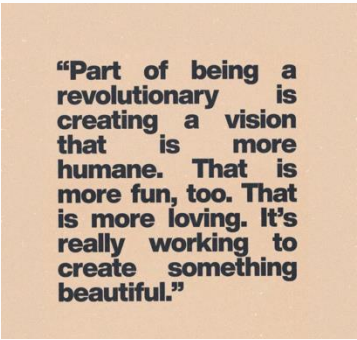
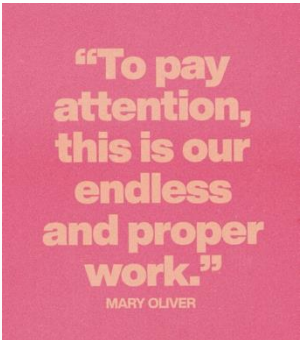
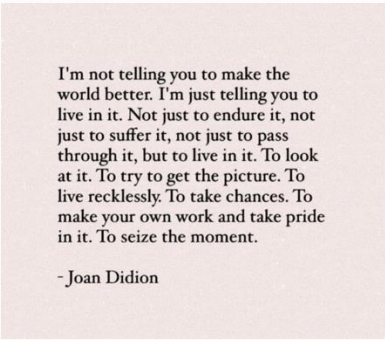
GO BAREFOOT: WHAT PART OF YOUR LIFE IS ASKING FOR MORE TEXTURE, MORE SENSATION, MORE REALNESS?

THE WILD CARD: WHAT "WHY NOT?" POSSIBILITY ARE YOU OPEN TO IN THE COMING YEAR?

BREAK THE ALGORITHM: WHERE DO YOU WANT TO STOP BEING PREDICTABLE - EVEN TO YOURSELF?

THE UPGRADE: WHAT IS ONE THING YOU COULD DO TO MAKE THE NEW YEAR 12% MORE INTERESTING?

Sharing some inspiration, I want to take into 2026



OUTLIERS MATTER

For the rebels, the explorers, and the quietly brave



Clowns I met around the world this year — including one very questionable example of me 😊 — a reminder that play, courage, curiosity and a touch of silliness can open doors to our shared humanity



Last year, I paid attention to the small things — handwritten signs, gentle strangers, quiet reminders of our shared imperfection. It taught me that courage often shows up quietly: in small choices, subtle shifts, and moments that don't look heroic at all.

This year, I want to add something else: the outliers. The ones who dare. Who try something different. Who don't wait for permission. Who follow their curiosity, their weirdness, their sense of play.

Because the world we're in now doesn't reward safe thinking. It rewards imagination and creativity. The people who bring joy and playfulness into serious spaces — who experiment, stay curious, laugh in uncertainty, and build things that didn't exist five minutes ago.

2025 LEADERSHIP OUTLIER AWARD

This year I want to celebrate the leaders who didn't just think outside the box - they recycled the box, set it on fire, and built something better. Welcome to the Outlier Leadership Awards: honouring the top three bravest and most brilliantly disruptive moves I had the honour of witnessing this year:

1. Leadership Mute Button

A global media company banned senior leaders from speaking in meetings for one week each quarter. They could only listen and ask clarifying questions. The result? Three times more ideas and leaders suddenly saw how often they'd been shutting conversations down.

2. Operation "Single Task"

A tech startup outlawed multitasking for everyone, including the board. No laptops or cell phones in meetings. No Slack during deep-work. No overlapping tasks. Productivity jumped 40%, stress plummeted, and people said they "felt human again." Most companies reward chaos - this one banned it.

3. Strategy Walkabout

A manufacturing company ditched its usual strategy workshops and sent senior leaders out into the organization for two days of 50 individual, face-to-face conversations with staff at every level each. Then they rebuilt the strategy based on what people said. Boards usually operate in PowerPoint clouds far above reality. This one went straight to the people living it.

**A BLANK CANVAS FOR
YOU TO WRITE, DOODLE,
OR A SPACE FOR YOU TO
JUST ENJOY**





HAPPY 2026!

**ALWAYS CURIOUS TO HEAR
YOUR THOUGHTS, IDEAS AND
REFLECTIONS!**

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