

*A moment with*  
**Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy,**  
 business and life coach and  
 founder of Harlem's first yoga studio



**Q.** You live in Manhattan and run two growing companies. Yet you're committed to living holistically and keeping stress under control. Tell us—how can we live our lives, raise our families, do well at our jobs, and stay sane?

**A.** It's a lot. Stress will always be there; it's how you manage it. First, you need to go back and determine what you're doing with your life: Start to live intentionally. Once you spend that time contemplating, you'll have your own map for making value-based decisions. You can say "no" more easily and set priorities and boundaries.

**Q.** Then what?

**A.** Learn stress-management tools; what's your release? When I was in my height of working in the corporate world, I almost died because I was working myself into the ground. I ended up in the hospital with my whole digestive system ulcerated. My mom helped to heal me holistically, and it got me into that mind-set.

**Q.** What's your release?

**A.** Yoga. It has taught me the balance between effort and ease: Push hard, then rest. It's during the rest period that you often reap the benefits. Figure out what helps you to release, and tap into it every day.

**Q.** It seems especially difficult for women to find time for rest periods.

**A.** Women have a caretaker mentality, but somehow don't realize that if they don't take care of themselves, they can't take care of other people. In order to give the essence of you, and be fully present for the people you love, you have to take care of yourself first.

**Q.** You went from being one of MTV's youngest top executives to being a business and life coach and yoga teacher. What are the benefits of that sort of transformation?

**A.** It brought me back to the essence of living, which is being present. I realized that every single moment of every single day is so important. It's how you have to live.

**Q.** Do you have any mentors?

**A.** Definitely—my mom, who's a successful entrepreneur and has always had a holistic view of health. I try to be that role model for other people because, particularly in urban areas, many people don't have someone like that to look up to. I founded Ta Yoga House, the first yoga center in Harlem, to promote healthy living and stress relief. I realized it wasn't even a choice; I had the responsibility to give back. I've been so graced in so many ways. What's the point if you don't share?

**Q.** Why do you think stress is such an epidemic?

**A.** We place such a premium on activity and efficiency—you have to be busy, you have to keep doing. It can wear on you, physically and mentally. There is also the survival-of-the-fittest mentality, where people think they have to work long hours to be successful. People think it's about putting the time in, not about managing energy. These are values that are imposed on us by society.

**Q.** If there were a piece of advice you could shout from a mountaintop, what would it be?

**A.** You have the ability to have an incredible life. It comes down to the power of choice. Unveil your purpose. Take time to be with yourself, go internal, listen to your body and to your own thoughts. Start living a life that feels right.

—Christian Nardi