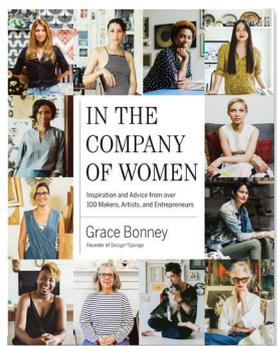


# ELLE.COM COACH OF THE MONTH: GRACE BONNEY

This month on ELLE.com, a design buff turned social-impact crusader will help make your life feel as good as it looks

Grace Bonney is no stranger to remodeling, whether it's making over the kitchen in the 1850s upstate New York house she shares with her wife, cookbook writer Julia Turshen, or completely reworking a major book idea just months before the manuscript is due to her publisher. In fact, the 35-year-old founder of Design\*Sponge—a home-design blog launched in 2004, replete with inspiration plus DIY tutorials and set apart from others of its ilk by both its longevity and consistent high quality—might just be the Internet's most adaptable woman.

In her own words: "I'm so motivated by seeing problems I think I can try to provide a solution to." And that's on all levels, from personal to professional to global. As an undergraduate, Bonney, who'd grown up sure that she would one day write for a newspaper, found herself less than enthralled by NYU's journalism program; she promptly transferred to Virginia's College of William & Mary to study fine art. When the design magazines she wrote for in the years after graduation began shuttering, she jumped ship and turned Design\*Sponge, which had been a side project, into her primary career. The site itself, now



Bonney and Winky in their upstate New York home

barreling toward its thirteenth year, has gone from primarily DIY inspo to a wider-reaching, civic-minded lifestyle project with a companion book (*Design\*Sponge at Home*, 2011) and a podcast (the 2012–2015 career interview series "After the Jump" returns this year)—and a range of personal posts from its contributors. Bonney herself has written essays on such topics as her recent diabetes diagnosis and coming out to friends and family at age 30.

Her latest career about-face occurred last year as Bonney worked on her second book, slated to be a do-it-yourself encyclopedia, a topic that had become her "bread and butter." But her heart wasn't in it; she realized she'd become far more interested in the women behind the projects than the projects themselves. "I kept meeting these incredible women at craft fairs and conferences, and nobody seemed to be writing about them," she says. "I just had this aha moment." With some help from Turshen, she wrote an entirely new proposal, sent it off to her publisher, held her breath—"I was totally prepared

to give my advance back"—and was met with complete enthusiasm.

The book, *In the Company of Women* (Artisan), is a triumphant compendium of interviews with more than 100 female entrepreneurs, from activists to designers to bakers—among them, illustrator Maira Kalman and ELLE.com Editor-at-Large Melissa Harris-Perry. Questions range from "What did you want to be when you were a child?" to "Name the biggest overall lesson you've learned in running a business." The answers are intriguingly varied. "I loved talking to Tavi [Gevinson] as much as I did Eileen [Fisher]," Bonney says. "To have so many decades of age and experience in between them was just fascinating." And, of course, this is Bonney's aesthetic we're talking about, so the interviews are accompanied by stunning portraits of the women in their homes and work spaces.

Bonney will be launching *In the Company of Women* this month with a 10-city mega-tour, which will include panels with women who appear in the book alongside local business owners for "a really real, frank discussion about what it's like to be a woman in charge," Bonney says. In the meantime, she'll be all yours, doling out advice on ELLE.com.—Keziah Weir

## CLIMATE CHANGE

HELP YOURSELF (AND THE LADIES AROUND YOU) WITH BONNEY'S LESSONS IN ENTREPRENEURIAL REINVENTION

### OCTOBER 3 WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE

"I'm somebody who has written and done podcasts at length on work-life balance and how to achieve it," Bonney says. "I kept likening it to a seesaw: If it's going back and forth, it's not a permanent place." Learn how to get through the ups and the downs.

### OCTOBER 10 TOGETHER WE STAND

In a landscape where women are constantly pitted against each other (see every celeb "catfight" ever), it behooves us all to seek out community over competition. This week, learn how Bonney made the mental switch and the benefits it afforded her.

### OCTOBER 17 THE GOLDEN TRIAD

On talking to three generations of entrepreneurs: "I learned just as much from a 20-year-old as I did a 66-year-old," Bonney says of Gevinson and Fisher, respectively. Here, Bonney distills the best business advice she received from women at every career stage.

### OCTOBER 24 THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVITY

Bonney noticed a lack of representation for LGBTQ people and women of color. "And then I realized I'm a part of the problem," she says. She shifted her focus and reinvigorated her career. Find out how you can spread the love.