

- Carole Copeland...: Boy, am I excited to be with these lovely ladies who I've known for many years, but we have been Ebony speakers for about 13 years. I want to first talk about what it's like to survive and thrive as women of action during a pandemic. I'm Carole Copeland Thomas and I want to introduce to you my good buddies, sister girlfriends, and women of action. First, Nancy Lewis, and then Debra Gould, and Michelle Porchia. Nancy, take it away. Tell us what you do.
- Nancy Je Lewis: What I do is a lot of D&I work, leadership. I'm an executive business coach. So I help organizations transform the organization by transforming the people. So at the end of the day, it's about the people.
- Nancy Je Lewis: A couple of things I think that will help me during this pandemic to thrive and to continue to move forward is one to do check ins with my clients, not to ask for business, not to say anything other than how are you doing through all this? How are you emotionally doing? And we may get to the business later on, but just checking in having conversations and just having real conversations, talk to them about their issues and just sometimes giving them a word [inaudible 00:00:01:05].
- Nancy Je Lewis: As an ordained minister, sometimes I wind up praying with people and giving them just hope in terms of in the midst of all this, that there is still hope and one of the things I think that has also helped me stay grounded is that my spiritual connection, my faith in God, because as an entrepreneur, this is really a time that you have to have true faith, not fake faith. You have to have faith. You got to faith your way through it.
- Nancy Je Lewis: Again, two things, virtually checking in with your clients, not to ask for anything, but just to say, how are you doing emotionally? Let them know I care about you as a person. You're a client but I care about you as a person. Secondly, to be spiritually grounded in your faith. That's my two things.
- Carole Copeland...: I love the way faith your way through the moment or I'm paraphrasing what you said. Love it. Thank you so much. Debra Gould, take it away.
- Debra Gould: Thank you. Hello Ladies. Great to see you home. The Debra Gould Associate Inc. is a management consulting and training firm and my specialty areas in leadership and diversity and inclusion and one of the things that during this pandemic, I found myself, first, I was petrified. I realized quickly I had to snap out of it and come out of my comfort zone and shell and do something. One of the first things that I was able to do, Carole, is to check in with my family, my friends, my [inaudible 00:02:24], my ebony speakers ladies, to check with my family, my neighbors and most importantly, my clients, just to see how they was doing. What do you need? When it came to my clients, I didn't do an immediate ask of any particular services and I kind of delayed that for a while because I wanted to make that connection, that touch point to let them know that I cared enough just to reach out and let them know I wanted to be there to support them maybe until a couple of weeks went by.

Debra Gould: I wanted check in with my clients. That's just my own survival and drive to, to just see where I stood with my existing contracts and what I found out during that period, that most of them were shifted to the phone or I have to wait now til 2021. That was not a good snapshot, but I wanted to let my customers know that I'm here to serve them, not only in my existing contracts, but other offerings where they see a need because they was juggling emotionally a lot with employees and how to keep themselves and their families safe. I wanted to make sure that the sensitivity was there.

Debra Gould: No one was prepared enough for the pandemic. I have to really, in my waiting, search out other grants and we would share that information with the SBA idol. I was able to get a thousand dollar grant. I've also applied and was approved for the paycheck protection plan, the PPP, and here right now on August 7th, I've already submitted my paperwork on IRS 5138, my forgiveness loan and now I'm in the waiting for that final step that you will forgive that loan.

Debra Gould: And so it's been a survive, not thinking about diving, throwing in the towel because he's [inaudible 00:04:31]. There's so many possibilities and my biggest fear has been trying to adapt to the online virtual. So that's how I've been using my best energy during this time.

Carole Copeland...: Awesome. [crosstalk 00:04:46] Absolutely, Debra, and you are so great at sharing information, particularly about the grants that you have identified and you've passed it to all of us. So thank you very much for that. Super. Michelle Porchia. Boy, I tell you, this is a woman of action and man, she's going to tell you what she's done since the pandemic. Michelle Porchia, take it away.

Michelle Porchi...: I'm Michelle Porchia and my company's Inner Dimensions, LLC. I'm a life coach and I help people to take time for themselves and to just make sure that they are in good standing with themselves before they can help others. I also help people with transitions in their personal lives.

Michelle Porchi...: I've been able to survive and thrive by being open to possibilities and looking at new things. It's about having a new page or a new chapter in your life and what is that going to look like? So it's about trying new things, being open to possibilities, being thankful for the opportunities and possibilities that come to you and so that's basically how I've been able to thrive, getting involved with Habitat for Humanity, and then building homes for the senior community, the first and only senior community in the United States that Habitat for Humanity has built.

Michelle Porchi...: So that's been a really exciting thing for me and in doing that, it has allowed me to actually go around and speak to people about the possibility and opportunities of doing that. So it's a whole different chapter I never would have predicted, but it's been exciting and it has also opened up throughout other things. So it's about really being open to opportunities and possibilities that may not look like what you thought they would.

- Carole Copeland...: Well, she's being very modest because right now she's in her home office with the home that she built because of Habitat. Tell us a little bit more, Michelle, about that. We're so excited for you.
- Michelle Porchi...: Well, as I said, Habitat in Orange County, North Carolina saw a need and filled it, and that is a need for affordable housing for seniors and so they did a whole new model on having a community for seniors. There's 24 units here. We could either work onsite, which I was able to do, thank God, for my 250 hours, and then also help with the homes for others involved as well and so I just applaud Habitat for having that vision to be able to do that.
- Carole Copeland...: Well, congratulations to you too, because she moved in her new home during the pandemic. That's what women of action will do. That's great. Well, we're, we're talking from Atlanta, Fayetteville, Georgia, Atlanta, Georgia area from new Orleans, Louisiana from North Carolina and in the Boston area. Again, we've been together for 13 years. They have been my riding buddies and we have encouraged each other.
- Carole Copeland...: For me as a diversity speaker and professional, I've been in business for 33 years, about five or six years ago, I began to really migrate over to technology, having online coaching services. I had used other platforms before using Zoom and then hooked on to Zoom about four and a half years ago became pretty skilled with it and so when the pandemic hit, I knew that my business was going to shift. A lot of activities were going to sort of wait until things would settle down.
- Carole Copeland...: I had just finished my 27th black history breakfast, literally the weekend that everything shut down here in Massachusetts. So, that was quite an amazing experience and then to just settle down and say, "This is going to be a long, long ride." By the beginning of April, I said, "I'm pretty good at Zoom. I think I can probably teach people how to use Zoom," put it out there to my Facebook friends, asked if they were interested in taking a free Zoom class and it took off. So now 24 free zoom classes later, I've actually now picked up coaching clients who want learn more about Zoom. My clients have come back and so I am now doing Zoom sessions with my clients. Some 200 women strong with an organization I worked with. They had their conference virtually. They hired me to be their Zoom director and then my other clients in terms of diversity work, etcetera.
- Carole Copeland...: So it's been amazing where I thought I was going to be pretty dormant, like a bear hibernating. I have not been dormant at all. I've been very, very busy. So I love what Michelle said, being open. I love what my sister girlfriends have said. This has been a time period where I've had to pivot, but use my skills and share my skills with others. We thank you for watching us. We're going to come back with some more tips and tricks from Ebony speakers and thank you all so, so much. We'll see you soon. Take care.

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