

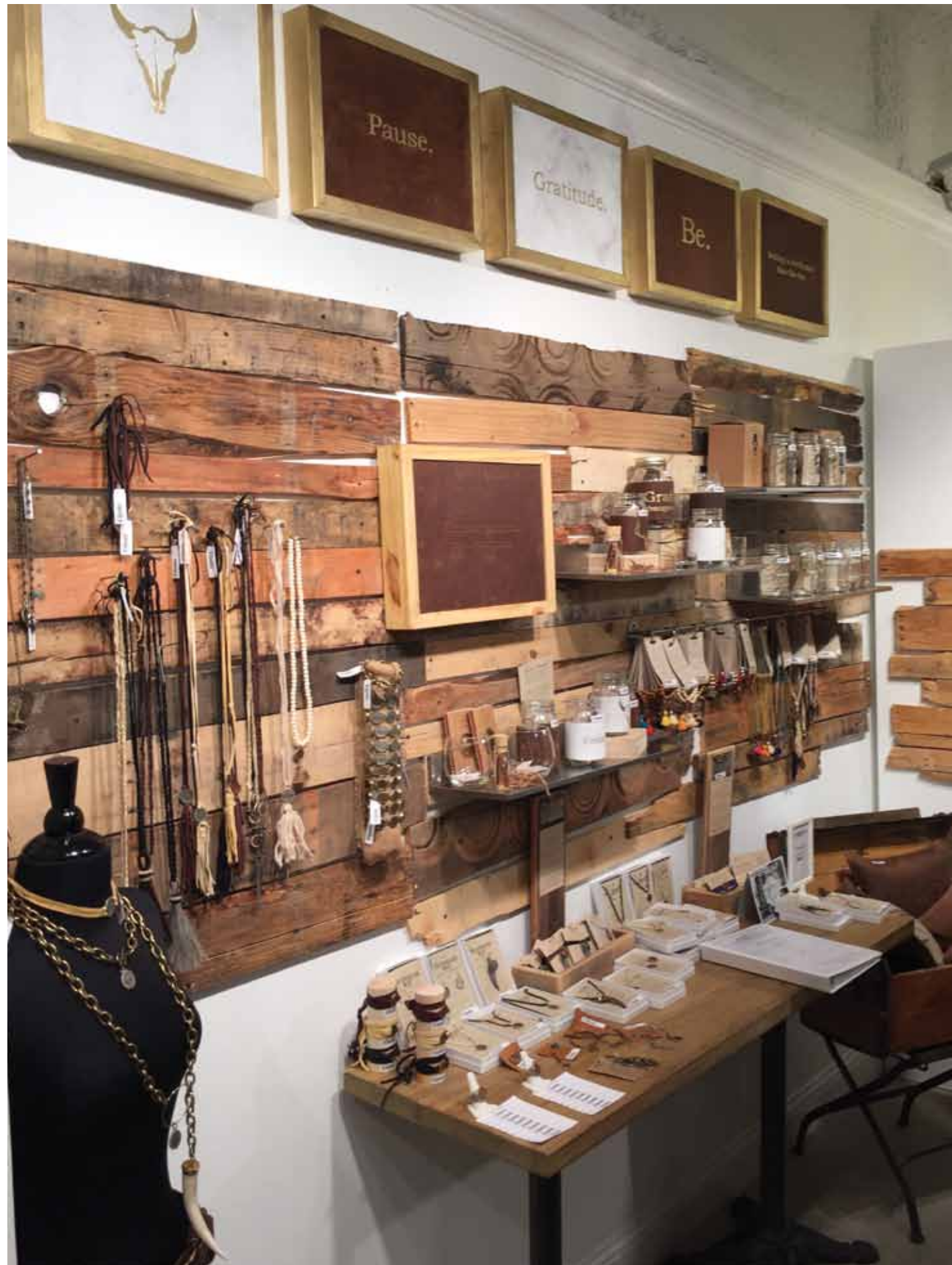
LAURIE LIBMAN-WILSON

STUDIO PENNY LANE

AT DALLAS GIFT MART

If you had a penny for every one of Laurie Libman-Wilson's thoughts, it could fill a mint. In the wake of a horrific tragedy that befell a friend's young children, this 50-year-old Los Angeles native felt called to spread the positive practice of mindfulness and gratitude, particularly among kids. But how? After months of careful consideration, she had a lightning-bolt moment when she noticed a penny laying on the ground. "I still didn't exactly know what I was going to do, but the penny became the focus," she recalls. Ultimately, that humble coin gave rise to Studio Penny Lane, a thriving jewelry, gift, and home goods manufacturer and wholesaler.





Growing up as the middle child of three, I was the creative kid with the short attention span, the one teachers always described as a daydreamer. I did go to junior college for a while, but my real education came through traveling. Unlike those backpackers who would hit 10 cities in two weeks, I would find a place and stay. I spent three summers on the Greek island of Mykonos, planting roots and cultivating a circle of good friends.

When I was 25, I married my husband, Donn. We have three kids: Madison, 24; Hollis, 21; and Donovan, 19. Though Donn and I divorced after 17 years of marriage, I asked him to run the business side of Studio Penny Lane, which frees me to do all of the designing. In 2005, while still married, we moved our family from Southern California to Nicaragua where we started an eco-friendly development on the country's west coast. Around the same time, we bought property in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, a place I'd gotten to know because a friend and I would travel there to buy items to sell in our shop. I decided to build a home in San Miguel, and being a homebuilder was fun for me.

Two years later, I met Conrad Morales in Mexico and we connected on a spiritual level. He was raised in the low-income projects of Los Angeles and spent several years in prison for drugs. He was deported when he got out, forcing him to leave his four kids behind in California. The two older boys, ages 11 and 13, were left under the care of an aunt and uncle on their mother's side. Tragically, the boys were abused and eventually murdered by the aunt and uncle, who were convicted and sentenced to the death penalty. →

“GO CONFIDENTLY IN
THE DIRECTION OF YOUR
DREAMS. LIVE THE LIFE
YOU’VE IMAGINED.”

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Conrad suffered tremendously knowing what had happened to his children, and that his life choices meant he wasn’t able to be there for them. When Conrad died unexpectedly, I felt the desire to do something to change a world where children suffer such unspeakable horrors. I wanted to empower children to follow a path of compassion and kindness, and to live and dream without fear, which is the practice of mindfulness. I found a penny on the ground one day and it occurred to me that Conrad was my own “penny from heaven.” Studio Penny Lane grew out of that inspiration.

Today we offer dozens of products, including glassware, jewelry, leather goods, and candles that are carried by hundreds of retailers and e-commerce sites all over the country. I design the pieces, which are then made in the U.S. or Mexico. Among our most popular items is the penny jar in our apothecary collection, which we debuted at the end of 2013. Of everything we do, this is quite literally our message in a bottle. When you wake up, you can put a penny in the jar and think of one thing you’re grateful for or tuck a note in there at the beginning or end of your day. It’s a simple but powerful way to cultivate the practice of gratitude — the essence of Studio Penny Lane’s DNA.

Where Women Create BUSINESS would like to thank Laurie Libman-Wilson for her involvement in our summer issue. To learn more, visit studiopennylane.org, Facebook (StudioPennyLane), Twitter (@PennyLaneSTD), Instagram (@studiopennylane), and Pinterest (studiopennylane), and contact laurie@studiopennylane.org.

Article written by Lisa Martin on behalf of Laurie Libman-Wilson.

Photography by Ashley Jo Ella Thomas.



BUSINESS TIPS

- Be in alignment with your true nature and what brings you joy. If you believe with all your heart this is what you are meant to do, then it is. The road will be challenging but keep moving in the direction of your dreams.
- Trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be, even if it feels difficult, uncertain, or scary. Find the lesson, learn from it, and move forward, because whatever you are learning in the moment will serve you at some point.
- Be grateful. As hard as it might seem at times, look at the small things, even if it is simply the fact that you are breathing. You have a purpose — we all do. Remind yourself that what you’re doing matters.
- Lead by example, particularly where your children are concerned. The younger generation seems to have expectations not proportional to their contributions. When my ex-husband and I lost everything as a result of the recession of 2008, our kids pitched in and worked with the business; our older son still does. My three kids have become very responsible and independent as a result.
- Be authentic and work hard. Speak from your heart and from truth, and people will hear you. I’ve been incredibly fortunate in my life to have parents who are hardworking, honest and incredibly dedicated to their family. They do things with integrity, something I aspire to as well.
- Build a tribe. Bring on people who are strong where you are weak, people you can connect with and trust. You cannot do everything, nor should you. Seek out like-minded individuals to help mentor and support you in your business and life. I joined a group of entrepreneurial women who have really been there for me, including giving me advice on what I should include in the TED Talk I did a couple of years ago.
- Commit your soul to your story. Taking products to market can be overwhelming. I don’t like selling, but I do like talking to people and educating them about the brand and about mindfulness. I talk about the practice of gratitude and how my products fit into that, and then I turn them over to people on my team who do like to sell.