

# Janet Spence - Growing And Winning: One Single Mother's Journey To Empowerment

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Faced with immeasurable obstacles on her educational, career and personal journey, Janet Spence, single mother of four and a leading Sagicor Life financial advisor, could not have foreseen victory during some of her darkest moments, but she was always determined to witness the beauty of overcoming by leaning on her faith and an innate drive for success.

A victim of domestic abuse, Spence survived a series of broken relationships, before she started to appreciate her role as a single mother to her children – Feli, Toni, Cody and Emma.

"I have been a victim of physical and verbal abuse, usually from the onset of my relationships in the past, so I decided to raise my children on my own. It took a while, but I realized that I am independent, bold and strong, just like my own mother who raised us alone after my father died," she said.

Spence said this has strengthened her bond with her children, the oldest now 27 years old and the youngest, 10. "My kids are my partners, each time I have to make a big decision, I ask their opinions and assure them that their thoughts matter to me. Sometimes they may not agree with my decision, but I reason with them and show them the reason for everything I do."

It is this bond that keeps her strong in managing the challenges of raising now 22-year old Toni, who has struggled with developmental and learning disabilities and who was also the victim of an abduction as a teenager. Spence said while her daughter's disabilities have presented many challenges over the years it has also strengthened her faith and made her a better parent.

"Dealing with my daughter's challenges as a single mother drew me closer to God. I have learned forgiveness, patience and perseverance on this journey," she said.

Formerly a registered nurse, Spence worked with the Kingston Public Hospital and Andrews Memorial Hospital during her time in the medical field, the culmination of a battle over several years to complete her studies while working fulltime as a patient care assistant and raising her first two children.

"I remember it was very difficult to provide for the children, while studying and working fulltime. But I took on the struggle, until my final year of school, when my work superiors told me I was breaching protocol with this arrangement. This was the beginning of a nightmare as I was told I had to resign my job or drop out of school."

She eventually sought legal advice and, despite a fraught period, was able to complete her studies. Spence would later read for a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work from the Jamaica Theological Seminary and a Master's in Public Health, with a major in Gerontology, at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona.

Although she fought so hard for her nursing career, and eventually became a Manager with the Nurses Association of Jamaica, Spence responded positively to an invitation by then Sagicor Life, Mandeville Unit Manager Maurice

McDonald in 2017 when he described to her the possibilities for even more growth and success as an insurance advisor.

Driven for success and having honed a persevering mindset from her work as a nurse, she immediately started to rack up awards in her Branch after accepting the role, by winning the Rookie of the Year trophy, in her first year. In 2019, she transferred to the Spanish Town Branch from Mandeville, and has continued to take home trophies for her performance. She has also qualified for the Million Dollar Roundtable (MDRT), a global, independent association of the world's leading life insurance and financial services professionals.

"My Sagicor journey has been a very rewarding one, I have had engagement opportunities both locally and internationally, which have helped me to grow as a person and a professional. It has been very exciting, to be able to contribute so much and help families achieve their dreams" she said.

Spence said her children are a big part of her being able to achieve her career goals, as they throw their support behind her work.

"They actually help me to work; my youngest daughter jokes that I technically have four other assistants alongside my official assistant. They are my motivation; they propel me to the top; it's all about them. No matter what happens, I have no choice but to keep going," she said.

Even as she is surrounded by her own trophies and has been one of the most consistent performers at her Branch this year, she declares that her children remain her greatest source of pride.

"My proudest moment right now is watching my children as they grow up and excel in school and in sports and start a career. The joy I get from bonding with them and seeing them do well is the biggest deal to me. I tell them daily that I love them, and I wouldn't trade that for anything," she said.

Spence, who was raised in Hanover by a mother with strong Christian principles, said she encourages other single mothers to put their trust in God, while they align their focus towards achieving their dreams.

"You must be patient and consistent. Keep going; don't ever quit. Be the best friend to your children, talk to them a lot, listen to them, pray with them and stay close to them always," she said.

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