

Connecting the Dots: How Media Impacts Your Mental Health

A Quarterly Bookshop & Movie Shop Series — Built By and For Black Women

Series Overview

Connecting the Dots is a quarterly gathering — part bookshop, part movie shop — created specifically for Black women and built around our healing, our wholeness, and our complexity. Each quarter, the series takes one piece of media — a film or a book — and uses it as a mirror: a way to examine how the culture we were raised in has shaped who we are, how we move, what we believe about ourselves, and what we're ready to reclaim.

This is not a passive experience. It is a communal, intentional space where Black women come together to watch, read, reflect, and speak freely — connecting what we see on screen or on the page to what lives inside us.

Frequency: Quarterly (4 sessions/year)

Format: 2–2.5 hours per session

Audience: Black women — period. This space is built for us.

Tone: Communal, honest, tender, and grounded in lived experience

Why This Series Exists

For too long, Black women have been asked to find themselves in stories that were not made for them — or worse, in stories that actively reduced, misrepresented, or erased them. At the same time, there exists a rich and powerful tradition of Black women making art, writing books, and telling stories that see us fully.

Connecting the Dots exists to center that tradition. To slow down inside it. To ask not just what does this mean culturally but what does this mean for me, in my body, in my relationships, in my mental and emotional health?

Because our healing doesn't happen in isolation from the culture we live in. The images we were raised on, the stories we were told about Black womanhood — they live in us. This series helps us name them, examine them, and choose which ones we carry forward.

Recurring Anchor Questions

These questions ground every session and build continuity across the year:

What did this piece of media teach me — explicitly or implicitly — about Black women? About me?

What beliefs, behaviors, or patterns in my own life might trace back to messages like this?

What do I want to unlearn, reclaim, or carry forward?

Session Structure (Repeatable Template)

Time	Activity
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0:00–0:20 Welcome, grounding, and framing question for the session
0:20–0:55 Film screening or curated excerpt / Book passage reading
0:55–1:25 Facilitated group discussion
1:25–1:55 Personal reflection — "Connecting Your Dot" journaling prompt
1:55–2:20 Group share + closing intention setting
2:20–2:30 Resource sharing, upcoming quarter preview, community care check-in
The Four Quarters
Q1 — Black Girl (1972, dir. Ossie Davis)
Theme: When Dreams Live in a House Full of Doubt
Lens: Past Media

Directed by the legendary Ossie Davis and based on J.E. Franklin's celebrated off-Broadway play, *Black Girl* is a three-generational family drama set in Watts, Los Angeles. It follows Billie Jean — a young Black woman and high school dropout who dreams of becoming a dancer — as she navigates resentment from her half-sisters, her mother's complicated love, and a household shaped by poverty, pain, and broken cycles. Davis was deliberate in showing that working-class Black women — who were not stereotypes, not props, not reduced to trauma — had stories that were "provocative and relevant." Released against the backdrop of both the Black Power movement and the rising feminist movement, the film is a portrait of what it costs a Black woman to dare to want something for herself.

What We're Connecting:

How do the women in Billie Jean's household reflect the ways pain gets passed down when it has nowhere else to go?

What messages did you receive — from family, community, media — about what you were allowed to want or become?

How does resentment between Black women show up when resources, love, and opportunity feel scarce — and what do we do with that?

Journaling Prompt: Think about a dream you've had that the people around you didn't understand or support. Where did their doubt come from — and what did you do with yours?

Q2 — Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery by bell hooks
Theme: Healing Is Not a Luxury — It's Our Right
Lens: Past Text

bell hooks' *Sisters of the Yam* is one of the most important wellness texts ever written for and about Black women. In it, hooks examines how racism, sexism, and the relentless demands of a capitalist culture have eroded Black women's emotional and psychological well-being — and she names this not as personal weakness, but as the predictable result of living in a world that was never designed for our flourishing. hooks argues that self-recovery is not self-indulgence. It

is survival. It is resistance. She weaves together truth-telling, community sisterhood, the reclaiming of our bodies, and a return to nature as pathways back to ourselves.

What We're Connecting:

hooks writes about how many Black women learned emotional "dissimulation" — masking, suppressing, performing — as a survival strategy. How do we still carry that?

What does it look and feel like to prioritize your own emotional honesty in a culture that profits from your silence?

How do the wounds Billie Jean and her family carried in Q1 connect to the healing hooks maps out here?

Journaling Prompt: What is one thing you've been taught — by media, family, religion, or culture — about how Black women are supposed to feel, or not feel? How has that shaped your life?

Q3 — In Our Mothers' Gardens (2021, dir. Shantrelle P. Lewis)

Theme: What We Inherit, What We Choose

Lens: Present Media

This documentary is a love letter to Black womanhood across generations. Director Shantrelle P. Lewis travels across communities and family trees to explore the relationships between Black mothers, daughters, and grandmothers — and the ways that creativity, spirituality, resilience, and joy are passed down alongside pain. The film centers voices that mainstream media routinely overlooks, and it insists that Black women's interior lives — their artistry, their faith, their capacity for love — are worth documenting, celebrating, and building from.

What We're Connecting:

What did you inherit from the women who raised you — in terms of both wounds and wisdom?

How does it feel to see full, complex, unfiltered Black womanhood reflected on screen?

What do you want to consciously pass on — and what cycles are you choosing to end with you?

Journaling Prompt: Think of a woman in your lineage — biological or chosen — who shaped how you move through the world. What did she give you? What are you still figuring out what to do with?

Q4 — God Is a Black Woman by Christena Cleveland

Theme: Reclaiming the Sacred — You Were Always Worthy

Lens: Present Text

God Is a Black Woman is both a spiritual memoir and a theological revolution. Christena Cleveland — social psychologist, theologian, and activist — documents her own pilgrimage away from the white, male image of God she was handed, and toward what she calls the Bláck Madonna: a vision of the divine that is Black, female, embodied, and liberating. The book is a rigorous and deeply personal examination of how the images we internalize about God shape our sense of self-worth, our mental health, our relationship with our bodies, and our capacity to believe we deserve to be free.

What We're Connecting:

What image of God or ultimate goodness were you raised with — and whose face was on it? Whose wasn't?

How has the consistent centering of whiteness and maleness in sacred spaces shaped how you see yourself, your value, your voice?

What becomes possible — internally, emotionally, spiritually — when you place a Black woman at the center of the divine?

Journaling Prompt: Write about a moment when you felt unworthy — not good enough, too much, or not enough. Where did that message come from? What would it mean to believe that the sacred looks like you?

The Year-Long Arc: From Wound to Wholeness

Each quarter builds intentionally on the last. By year's end, participants have moved through a complete journey:

Quarter-Media-The Movement

Q1 — Black Girl (1972)-Film · Past Name the wound — what was stolen, suppressed, or never allowed to bloom

Q2 — Sisters of the Yam-Book · Past-Begin the healing — self-recovery as a radical, political, personal act

Q3 — In Our Mothers' Gardens-Film · Present-Witness the resilience — what was passed down, reclaimed, and worth celebrating

Q4 — God Is a Black Woman-Book · Present-Reclaim the sacred — reframe your worth, your divinity, your right to take up space

A Note on Space

Every session is facilitated with the understanding that healing is not linear, that Black women's experiences are not monolithic, and that this room holds people at different places in their

journey. What is consistent is this: you are welcome here as you are. You do not have to perform okayness. You do not have to have answers. You only have to show up.

This series was built for us — by and for Black women — because we deserve spaces that treat our inner lives as worthy of this much care, this much intention, and this much love.

Proposal prepared for community presentation. Community care guidelines and grounding practices are part of every session.