



LEVEL UP: This Life Coach Says Now's the Time to Level Up

To launch this special series, Alicia talks to experts about how each of us can step into our fullest potential in the new year. Life and business coach Wendy Amara explains how to lay out the action steps that will help you accomplish your goals, and shares personal stories about leveling up when she expanded her business - and when she had twins!

Ad: *Connect your little ones to their Latino greatness with Canticos. Their bilingual learning app, books, and toys, teach kids phonics, math, and even emotional intelligence in English and Spanish. Visit CanticosWorld.com/Latina to try Canticos and start their bilingual journey. Watch out, world.*

Alicia Menendez:

Are you ready to level up, live your best life, step into your full potential, stop playing small? However you describe it, we are here for it and here for you. To kick off the new year, we're talking about how you can take things to the next level. Your relationships, your money, your health. But first, the big picture. Wendy Amara is a strategic life and business coach. She has coached thousands of clients and now she's here to demystify what it really looks like to take that big leap.

Wendy, thank you so much for doing this.

Wendy Amara: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Menendez: I am excited to have you and I'm excited to have you be the one who is kicking off this series on leveling up, and so I wonder what leveling up means to you.

Amara: Leveling up to me means looking at the different areas of your life and asking yourself what's the next level for me. Do I want a next level? And if I do, what is that? What does that look like? Does that mean a promotion? Does that mean making more money? Does that mean starting a business? Does that mean starting a family? Or does that mean getting married? Whatever the next level is for you. So, that continued growth, right? Asking yourself, "Where do I want to be five years from now? Where do I want to be three years from now? What do I really want for my life?"

And I think a key question also is am I living up to my potential? Because sometimes we're connected with the potential of, "Oh, I could run this company." Or, "Oh, I could do the job of my executive director." Do you want that? And then how are you setting your life up such that that happens? Because that doesn't just happen by accident. That happens with a lot of focus, and thought work, and action, and breaking through limiting beliefs.

Menendez: When in your own life have you leveled up?

Amara: The biggest level up for me was having twins. That was a big level up. Yeah. That's what taught me, oh, I can do anything if I can do this. I had my first daughter... Me and my husband had been married for five years and then we tried to have a second child, and I was over 35, and we ended up using some fertility treatments. We did an in-uterine insemination, which is just an IUI, and I ended up pregnant with twins, and it was shocking, even though when you're doing fertility treatments that's a possibility. But it was still shocking, because surviving with them, bringing them home, and at this point I also had a business, which felt like another baby. I was already running my coaching practice and I had like seven clients I was working with, and I was doing contract work, and having to put all of that on hold for a while just to kind of survive, and keep them thriving, and get a lot of help, and shift my mindset.

I really had to expand into this next level of growth in order to see my life in a new way because now we went from a family of three to a family of five. One of the things that really helped me is I completely changed my relationship with time. All of a sudden, the value of something like 15 minutes was so high for me, like it was worth so much. To get 15 minutes to take a shower was so valuable for me. So, that was one of the first things that changed, is I started to look at time from this new perspective of, "Oh, wow. Every minute of my life is so valuable, because either I'm taking care of a kid, or I've gotta be producing results in my business or in work."

So, that was one experience of leveling up. Another one is really taking my business to the next level. I said, "Okay, I'm gonna make six figures. I'm gonna make six figures and more." And it was just a decision I made in my mind of, "I'm done playing small in this world of coaching. I know I can do better." And now I have a family of three, and we had bought a new house, so this was the time to kind of say, "I need to play a bigger game." The universe is calling me up for a bigger game. And that's how sometimes it feels. It doesn't always come just from you. It comes from the universe telling you, like a little whisper that then keeps coming up over and over again. You're meant for something more, you're meant to play a bigger game, you're meant to do more.

And when that voice was in my ear, I was like, "You know what? I am meant to do more and I'm gonna grow this business and I'm gonna take it to the next level." And so, I left some of my contract work, so I consciously made a decision to shift, and consciously made a decision to focus my attention and really grow into the six-figure coach that I am now.

Ad: *You all know I did not grow up speaking Spanish. My husband did. And it's really important to us that our girls have exposure to the language. When I interviewed Susie Jaramillo, the creator of Canticos, she gifted me a book for my girls, and they love it. Like, we read it all the time. And now the older one is using their bilingual learning app. They use the same nursery rhymes from our childhood, Burrito Sabanero, Elefantitos, and Arroz con Leche, to teach kids concepts like phonics, letters, math, and emotional intelligence through song and play.*

The games and the songs alternate between English and Spanish, so it's super easy to learn the languages, plus the characters are adorable. Pollitos, Elefantitos, we can't get enough. I want to squeeze their little cheeks. They've also got beautiful books, games, and toys that just bring the lessons and fun from the app full circle. If you want to learn more about bringing language and culture to life for your little one, visit

CanticosWorld.com/Latina. That's CanticosWorld.com/Latina. Start their bilingual journey today and watch their Latino greatness shine.

Menendez: What does it look like to frame your own mindset?

Amara: For me, it started with a decision that I made. The decision came from an uncomfortableness, where I felt like I was out of alignment with what was currently happening, and it did feel like the universe was calling me into this bigger game. So, whenever I paid attention to that, to what the universe was saying, what would happen is there would be this little internal voice that says, "You want more, you deserve more, what do you really want?" So, it was a mindset shift first. It was getting clear around what I really wanted. Clarity. Getting clear on what does the up leveling look like for me?

Because I wanted to make more money and effect change in more people, but not necessarily work more. So, that was a clear distinction for me. I was like, "Well, I could do it by working 60 hours a week, but that's not what I want to do. I want to build something so that I end up working 20 hours a week, but I'm making three times more money and effecting change in more people." So, I needed to learn to leverage my time. So, first was the decision of what do I want, the clarity around that, and once I was clear on what that was, then it was the mindset of, "Okay, well, who do I need to be to make that happen?" Not what do I need to do to make that happen. That will come. But the first mindset shift is who do I need to be to make that happen, so who are the women around me that are working 20 hours a week, managing their family, and making six figures, and having more freedom of time? And love their work, that was the other thing that was important to me. It had to be... There had to be passion behind the work that I was doing.

So, that was the first mindset shift. It was who do I need to be to make that happen and the answers that came to me were, "I need to be resourceful. I need to be strategic. I need to be focused." Focus was a big one for me, because for me, focus wasn't just about what am I saying yes to. A big part of the focus was I need to be able to say no to a bunch of other stuff that distracts me from getting really clear on the life that I want to build. Saying no is just as important as what I'm saying yes to.

And then I had to get other people on board, right? So, the mindset shift was I'm the one responsible for holding this vision, and now I get to motivate, inspire the people around me to get on board with this new vision.

Ad: *Is there something that's getting in the way of your happiness or that's preventing you from achieving your goals? I have found in my own life that talking with someone can make a big difference, but sometimes the logistics, finding the right person, the time to connect makes things complicated. BetterHelp Online Counseling connects you with a professional counselor in a safe and private online environment. You can get help on your own time and at your own pace. You can schedule secure video or phone sessions, plus chat and text with your therapist. BetterHelp's licensed professional counselors specialize in everything from depression, to relationships, to self-esteem.*

In fact, so many people have been using BetterHelp that they're recruiting additional counselors in all 50 states. Best of all, it's an affordable option. Latina to Latina listeners get 10% off your first month with the discount code Latina. So, why not join one million people who are taking charge of their mental health? Go to BetterHelp.com/Latina. That's BetterHelp, H-E-L-P, .com/Latina.

Menendez: I want to dig in on the piece of that that I find the most challenging, which is the saying no to other things. What were the things that you were saying no to and how did you get clear with yourself about those priorities?

Amara: It started with being really clear on what I wanted to create. So, getting clear on the lifestyle that I wanted to live, or the job that I wanted to step into. For me, it was the CEO of my business and really owning it from a CEO standpoint and not just being the coach, but also starting to see my business as I'm owning this entity that at some point will have a team of people to support me, right? In order to leverage my time.

So, once I got clear with that, and by clarity I mean you have to be able to draw a picture in your mind of what that is. So, visualization, meditation, intention setting, all of that is part of the work that I did on myself to be able to really paint that picture. Then I took that picture and I made it concrete. What are the things that I really need to focus on? Concrete and measurable. Okay, I need to have 20 private clients, or I need to have 25 women in my group coaching program, or I need to hit these numbers in sales. Whatever they were. Numbers, either based on amount of people that I was impacting or money coming in, and there's these metrics. You can measure your business in terms of what is the success that you want to achieve.

So, I took the visual and the vision of what was the life I wanted to live and the feelings that came from that and I made it measurable. Once I made it measurable, I had a map to get from point A to point B. So, then I would look at the map and there were some pillars that I was living from to create that map. So, I would say no to anything that wasn't going to help me hit these three target points or four target points and wasn't in alignment with these beliefs or pillars that I have. Some strong beliefs of who I am, like staying in integrity with my mission, staying in integrity with who I am. So, if a company came and asked me to speak, but it was a company that was... I knew the audience was not gonna look like me at all, that wasn't in integrity with my mission. I now had a mission where I was purposefully wanting to effect change in women of color, so if that was not gonna be in the audience, that was out of integrity. I would say no to that.

There are ways to get really clear on what your mission statement is and then you look at your calendar in the morning, or your calendar for the week, and you look at what you have on your calendar, and you can literally rate on a scale of one to ten, how does this directly affect my mission? The more I learned, the more I realized how important that is. Now, I'm at the point where I coach some CEOs and that's the first thing they do, is they open their calendar on Sunday nights usually and they're like, "What can I take off? What can I take off my calendar this week that I could delegate to somebody else or maybe not do it at all?" And one of their first questions is, "What meeting do I not need to be at?" So powerful, right? Such a powerful shift. Does it align with my mission? Does it align with my vision? What am I really focused on?

Ad: *We asked our producer, Paulina, to try out the new Summit Intarsia Sweater from Faherty. She is the youngest and hippest among us. Her response, "It is the most delicious, softest sweater." She says wearing it feels like she's, "Hugging a redwood tree by the Pacific Ocean while the wind whips my long hair." I can see why. The whole Faherty collection gives me watching the sunset on the beach vibes. Wearing Faherty pieces feels like the coziest you have ever been outdoors, telling stories around the bonfire, taking a long walk hand in hand on a moonlit night, or looking up at the stars on the porch, and that's by*

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Menendez: Can you give me a sense of what those conversations with the people in our lives who are trying to get on board look like?

Amara: One of the things that happens when you level up is there's an uncomfortableness. There's an uncomfortableness that's happening inside of you and there's an uncomfortableness for the people around you as you level up, because they want you to stay the same. They like you the way you were. So, if you were super supportive your whole life and you said yes to every family party, or you were always the one willing to give people a ride anywhere they needed to go, now you're starting to say no to things, right? So, you're starting to look at how you spend your time, because you're spending more time focused on building the up-leveling life.

So, those people tend to get uncomfortable with what's happening in you, and you're uncomfortable too, because your brain doesn't like it either. Our brain wants to keep us safe and small, and it equates taking risk, and feeling uncomfortable, and feeling fear, as actually being in danger. So, two things when we're talking to other people. One is we need to be aware of our own brain and what our brain is gonna do, because if we know what it's gonna do ahead of time, we don't let it control us. We don't make decisions based on the fear in our brain or even the negative thinking happening in our brain. And two, when we're talking to other people we want to see things from their perspective. So, for my husband, for example, who I had to get on board with this whole idea of I'm gonna build my business and I'm gonna switch who I'm focused on, which means I'm gonna need more help with the babies, which he was like, "Whoa, wait a minute here." What's the win-win? What's the win for him, right? How is this going to affect him?

Hey, but listen, I could build this business and effect change in this many people in this timeframe, which means eventually we could look at buying another house, or we could look at you going down to working part-time. So, I spoke to him from a place of what's in it for him, because the truth is when you up level, the people around you sense that, and even though there's an uncomfortableness, some people will also up level because you are energetically vibrating at a different energy now. And some people also, by the way, will just fall to the wayside. They won't get on board no matter what you do. No matter how much you inspire them or not. So, one quick tip is look at it from their perspective. How is it a win-win for them? And then secondly, I would say talk to them about the journey as it's happening. Include them in the ups and downs of the journey, so that they can see it's not a straight line and that you're putting work into it. And why it matters to you.

So, instead of doing it on your own, separate from them, include them as you are up leveling.

Menendez: Your mindset's clear. You have built some structures and systems around you. How do you then hold yourself accountable?

Amara: You've gotta put yourself in a situation where you cannot not follow through. Some people like to say you burn the boats, which means you're going from one island to the other island, so you're up leveling an island, right? The island you're leaving is your old self and you take the boat to the new self island, where you meet the new goal, and you burn the boat, which means you can never go back. There's no way back. You just can't. There's no way. Once you've arrived at this new island, you have to make it work.

There's a couple of ways to do that. One is tons of support. You also need a couple of good friends that will hold you accountable. A coach can also hold you accountable. Or a group coaching model that will hold you accountable. You need accountability, because as human beings, our default button is set to stay the same. So, accountability is big, right? Structure accountability.

Menendez: I so feel what you are saying about how even as you begin to up level and even as you begin to shift your mindset, there's this little voice that's like, "Wouldn't it just be easier for us to play it safe? Wouldn't it just be easier for us to play it small?" For me, a lot of that comes from any perceived resistance from others around me becomes an easy out. Like I wasn't able to persuade everyone that it was time to up level, or I didn't get everyone bought in on the next mission, so now I'm both concerned that it's not the right mission and I, as a creature of comfort, am wanting to revert to comfort. In that moment, how do you continue to push yourself forward?

Amara: You go back to your vision. You go back to the reason you started. And usually that voice has not completely died out, so there is still a little voice in you that wants you to move forward, that wants you to continue, even if nobody else gets it, because that little voice more than likely has been with you for a long time. That's why you decided to take action, because you couldn't get rid of it. So many of us try. We tried. I tried to live in mediocrity. I really did. Because I could go out and get a nice corporate job and just make money and be happy. Supposedly. But that didn't do it for me. That just didn't do it.

And it's not in everyone. That's the other thing also I think that's important to understand, is this is happening to you, but it doesn't necessarily happen to everyone. There are some people that are very happy with steady, stable, but for you there's this little, tiny voice, right? When you run into that situation where you haven't been able to convince everybody, there is doubt, there is fear, there will be doubt. Let's just get that straight out. There will be doubt. There will be fear. There will be failure, by the way. It is not a straight line. You will fail. And you will get yourself back up, and then you'll keep going, and then you'll fail again, and then you'll keep going. I must have failed 100 times between where I started and where I'm at now. And I'll fail another 100, and that's okay. I've changed my relationship with failure, also.

So, how do you keep going? You get stronger and stronger. You get reconnected to your vision, your reason why. You connect with that internal little voice, and this is why it's important to have tools in our day-to-day life that feed that voice. And you need people around you to remind you. You do need some people to be holders of your sacred vision, because they will remind you on the days where you're like, "This sucks. I just want to quit. Why can't I just be happy? I make good money. I'm okay." And there are people in our lives who we share this with who will be the holder. They will be the reminder. Because we

will forget. We will forget why we started. That's a human condition. That is the human condition. We will want to forget.

Our brain is trying to do everything to get us back into mediocrity.

Menendez: I will also say, having been a failed life coach or a life coach school dropout, that some of the things that struck me most were I very often will hear, especially from girlfriends, like, "I'm not entirely sure what I want. I don't know what I want. I'm not clear what I want." And that what I found in those coaching sessions was most people do know what they want. Most of us, deep down, know what it is. It is about stripping away all of the self-limiting thoughts and the shame we feel about saying out loud what we want, or what we think we're worthy of, and that work that you tend to do at the beginning is some of the hardest.

Amara: What happens at the beginning is destructuring and letting go, a peeling away of all the limiting beliefs, or the blocks that we have put up to gain real clarity. And sometimes I find also, because clarity comes from taking action... My clients don't like hearing that oftentimes, because it usually means I put them into some sort of action before they feel ready. But you know, it's like learning to swim. You gotta get in the water.

Menendez: Is there anything I missed?

Amara: We talked about our brain being set to this default button, right? Okay, our brain is also set to negative thinking. It's more stimulated by negative thinking than it is by positive thinking. So, a negative thought equals our brain lights up more. More adrenaline, more dopamine, all those chemicals, right? So, be aware that at all times, your brain is trying to sabotage you into thinking more negative thoughts than positive. So, the negative thoughts are gonna start to become bigger and bigger, and you have to be consciously aware of that, because you can shift that. It just takes practice. Takes a discipline and a consistency to focus on the positive.

Well, what's the best-case scenario instead of what's the worst-case scenario. What are the best things that happened this year, or the best thing that happened this week? Instead of what's the worst thing that happened this year or the worst thing that happened to me, which is where our brain will automatically go. So, these are changes in our mindset that can help us along the way to up leveling.

Menendez: Wendy, I cannot wait for people to listen to this.

Amara: Thank you.

Menendez: I gotta go burn my boats. 2021, that's gonna be my mantra. 2021. Burn all the boats.

Amara: Burn all the boats! Oh, yes. I would love to help you do that. Yes. Let's burn the boats.

Menendez: Thanks for joining us. Latina to Latina is executive produced and owned by Juleyka Lantigua-Williams and me, Alicia Menendez. Virginia Lora is our managing producer. Cedric Wilson is our producer. Carolina Rodriguez mixed this episode. Manuela Bedoya is our social media editor. We love hearing from you. Email us at hola@latinatolatina.com and remember to subscribe or follow us on RadioPublic, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, wherever you're listening, and please, please leave a review. It is one of the fastest, easiest ways to help us grow as a community.

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