

## March Madness for the People Who Matter Most



*Heather Lageman for xSEleratED*

March is here, and you know what that means...brackets, buzzer-beaters, and the beautiful chaos of March Madness. We fill out our brackets with hope, we cheer for our teams, and we ride the emotional rollercoaster of every upset and underdog story.

But here's a thought: What if we brought that same energy to celebrating the real MVPs in our lives?

This March, while you're watching teams battle it out on the court, I'm challenging you to create a different kind of bracket...one that celebrates the actual people who show up, shine bright, and inspire you every single day.



**The Real All-Stars Are Closer Than You Think**

Think about it. Your coworker who always brings positive energy to Monday morning meetings. Your friend who texts you random memes just when you need a laugh. Your child who tried something new even though they were scared. Your neighbor who shovels your walk without being asked. Your partner who remembered that small thing you mentioned weeks ago.

These people deserve a championship celebration too.

They're not playing for trophies or TV contracts. They're just being authentically, wonderfully themselves, and that's worth spotlighting.



## **#LetYouBeYou: Your Personal March Celebration**

This March, I'm inviting you to celebrate the people in your life with **#LetYouBeYou** and personalized shout-outs like:

**#LetWalterBeWalter** – for your mentor who always knows how to make you feel valued and inspired

**#LetLeighBeLeigh** – for your teammate who brings creativity and brilliance to every project

**#LetHeatherBeHeather** – for the colleague who still sends handwritten cards and notices the little things

**#LetJaniceBeJanice** – for your friend who is always there with humor and support

Fill in the names of people who inspire you, support you, or just make life better by being exactly who they are.

King Clark Carter Johnson THOMPSON  
Janders Hitt Harry Perry Jamey  
Lewis Kelly Cullivan Watson Amelia Hall  
Moore Martin Jones Alan Young Jones  
Brown Reed Garcia Lewis  
Miller Jenkins Baker Morgan Butler  
Anna and Florey Grace Scott Wilson DE

## Your Bracket of Awesomeness: Activities to Celebrate Your People

Just like March Madness has its showcase, let's create some fun ways to celebrate your personal all-stars. Here are some activities inspired by tournament play:

## **The Sweet Sixteen Gratitude Challenge**

Over 16 days in March, post about 16 different people who've made an impact on your life. Share a specific story or moment that shows why they're awesome. Use #LetYouBeYou and their personalized hashtag.

## **Create Your Championship Bracket**

Make an actual bracket, but instead of teams, fill it with categories:

- Best Listener vs. Best Advice-Giver
- Most Likely to Make You Laugh vs. Most Likely to Make You Think
- Brings the Best Snacks vs. Brings the Best Vibes

Match up the people in your life and crown champions in each category. Share it with them!

## **The Final Four Appreciation Notes**

Pick four people who've been game-changers for you recently. Write each of them a handwritten note (yes, actual paper!) telling them specifically why you're a fan of theirs. Mail it or hand-deliver it...the surprise factor is half the fun.

## **Buzzer-Beater Compliments**

Set a timer and challenge yourself to send spontaneous, specific compliments to people throughout the day. "You absolutely nailed that presentation." "Your garden looks amazing." "I love how patient you are with your kids." Quick, genuine, and unexpected...just like a buzzer-beater.

## **The Championship Celebration Dinner**

Host a "championship" dinner or gathering for your people. Create silly awards like "MVP of Making Me Feel Better" or "Best Defensive Player (always has my back)" or "Sixth Person Award (always there when I need them)." Make certificates. Get ridiculous. Celebrate big.

## The Cinderella Spotlight

March Madness loves a good Cinderella story. Don't we all love to cheer for the underdog? Celebrate someone who defied expectations, including themselves. Maybe they overcame a challenge, tried something new, or showed courage. Share their story (with permission) and cheer them on.

## The Selection Sunday Shout-Out

Dedicate one Sunday in March to flooding your group chats, social media, or even a family Zoom call with shout-outs. "I'm selecting [Name] for the tournament of awesome humans because..." Get everyone involved.

## Build a Bracket Wall

Get creative and literally build a bracket on poster board or a digital platform. Fill it with photos of people you appreciate. As the month goes on, add stickers, notes, or drawings around their pictures showing why they advanced to the next round of your gratitude.



## Brackets of Legacy Building: Expanding Your Potential and Capacity

In athletic competitions, brackets are often a tool of elimination, pitting talented teams against one another to determine who wins out at the end of the tournament. But real life is not a win-or-go-home proposition. Instead of whittling down connections and opportunities to one sparse option, we can reverse brackets so that they expand and build out our opportunities for difference-making and leaving meaningful legacies.

Eliminating options is a systematic, often analytical process of paring down a list to remove secondary, less desirable or unattractive options that make arriving at a decision more final. Simplifying and making a single choice can be a solid strategy for high-stakes and time-sensitive decision-making, reducing choice overload and clarifying confusion. But it is limiting, committing us to one way forward, How many times does a tourney champ repeat the next season? Today's ambiguous, quickly-morphing world rewards those with the flexibility and agility to entertain multiple paths to success.

Expanding options is a generative process of seeing more possibilities and finding better solutions, energized by a full range of options. Best used for brainstorming, innovating and increasing connections to people, skills and resources, it increases flexibility, divergent thinking, and the potential for a full, sustainable legacy. By flipping your bracket to expansion mode, you give yourself the luxury to add on to your present success so that your future becomes even more vibrant, thriving and enduring. And isn't that what impact is all about? In sports, dynasties are made pursuing the future; the fastest way to lose your edge is to hold onto the past.

Consider the expansion bracket below. Instead of reading it from multiple points to a single goal, flip the grid and start where you are now and generatively identify next steps left-to-right that open up the future to new, realistic, achievable levels of impact.

How can you increase connections and capacity in the next six months? Add four actions on your bracket.

From there, which people, resources and opportunities will propel you forward in the coming year? Fill them in on your bracket.

Then, for the long run, what strategies, actions and targets will get you where you want to be in five years? Fill them in accordingly:



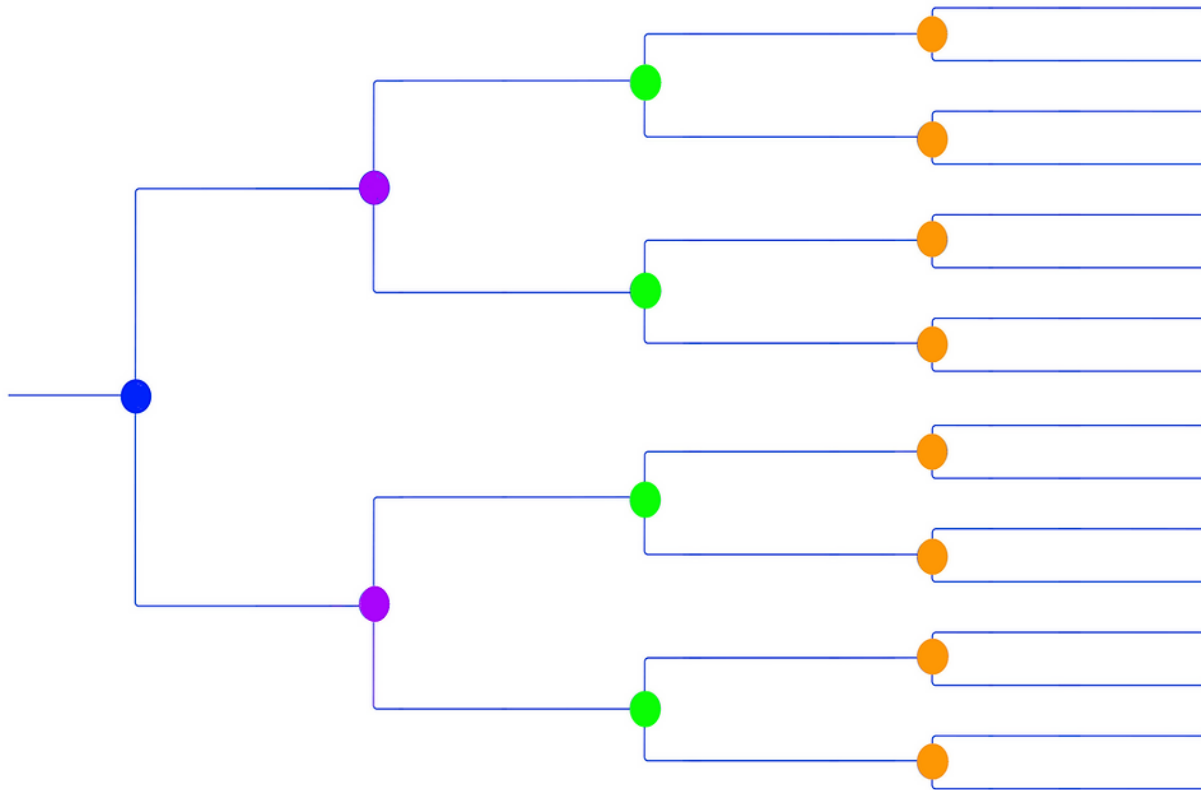
# ***IMPACT BRACKET***

**NOW**

**6 MONTHS**

**1 YEAR**

**5 YEARS**



## **Why This Matters**

We live in a world that's really good at criticism and comparison. We see highlight reels and curated perfection everywhere we look. But the people who make life actually worth living? They're not perfect. They're just them...beautifully, messily, authentically themselves.

When we celebrate people for being who they are, we give them permission to keep being that person. We tell them their quirks matter, their efforts are seen, their presence makes a difference.

And honestly? We could all use more of that.

Also, instead of seeing ourselves in competition, brackets can help us create a laser-like focus on our aspirations, hopes and dreams. When we use the tools we have as generative ways forward, we no longer limit ourselves to the finite options right in front of us, and we all deserve that kind of a rich, rewarding future.



## Let the Tournament Begin!

So yes, fill out your basketball brackets. Cheer for your teams. Enjoy the madness.

But also take some time this March to be a fan of the people right in front of you. The ones who don't need a stadium to be champions. The ones who win by just showing up and being themselves.

***#LetYouBeYou***

***#Let[YourPersonsName]Be[YourPersonsName]***

Who's in your bracket this year?

And don't forget YOU! Fill out your own bracket with impact that points you to your future!

***Now get out there and celebrate your people.***

***March Madness has nothing***

***on the awesome humans in your life!***



# Your xSEleratED March Bonus Resource!



## 30-DAY BRACKET OF AWESOMENESS

🏆 Celebrate the Real MVPs in Your Life 🏆

#LetYouBeYou

**Welcome to your Personal March Celebration of Awesomeness:**

This isn't about basketball—this is about the incredible people who make your life better just by being themselves. For the next 30 days, you'll spotlight someone different each day. Fill in their name and why they're amazing.

**How to Play:**

- Each day has a prompt/category
- Write WHO deserves recognition
- Add a quick note about WHY they're awesome
- Share your favorites on social media with #LetYouBeYou
- Bonus: Actually tell these people what you wrote!

<b>DAY 1</b> Who makes you laugh the hardest? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 2</b> Who always has your back? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 3</b> Who inspires you to be braver? Name: How:	<b>DAY 4</b> Who gives the best advice? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 5</b> Who gives the best hugs? Name: Why:
<b>DAY 6</b> Who taught you something important? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 7</b> Who shows up when it matters? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 8</b> Who brings the best energy? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 9</b> Who listens without judging? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 10</b> Who challenges you to grow? Name: Why:
<b>DAY 11</b> Who remembers the little things? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 12</b> Who makes ordinary moments special? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 13</b> Who never gives up? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 14</b> Who has a gift you admire? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 15</b> Who tells the best stories? Name: Why:
<b>DAY 16</b> Who makes you feel understood? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 17</b> Who stayed by your side during hard times? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 18</b> Who celebrates your wins? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 19</b> Who has a contagious smile? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 20</b> Who do you trust completely? Name: Why:
<b>DAY 21</b> Who does kind things no one notices? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 22</b> Who surprises you with their strength? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 23</b> Who lives authentically? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 24</b> Who brings calm to chaos? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 25</b> Who has grown so much this year? Name: Why:
<b>DAY 26</b> Who makes you feel safe? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 27</b> Who brightens every room they enter? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 28</b> Who loves unconditionally? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 29</b> Who deserves more recognition? Name: Why:	<b>DAY 30</b> Who are you most grateful for RIGHT NOW? Name: Why:

🏆 Challenge Complete! 🏆

Now go tell these people what you wrote about them.

Share your journey with #LetYouBeYou and inspire others to celebrate their people too!