

## Dr. Sandra Maria Anderson-Spencer



Dr. Sandra Maria Anderson-Spencer founded Love Gardens Ministries International, Inc (LGMI). A 501(3)c nonprofit, LGMI is a holistic mentorship and counseling program that mentors empowers, and transforms the lives of individuals, families, and communities through psychosocial and psychoeducational initiatives. Sandra is an advocate of health and wellness. She is a witness that faith and hope can restore every life, no matter the circumstance.

Sandra has overcome insurmountable odds through faith in God, including childhood sexual abuse at seven and sex trafficking at eleven. Her tumultuous life led to her placement in the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at twelve years old. She became pregnant at thirteen and continued in DCF custody, foster care, and shelter homes. Her life presented her with a front-row seat, from witnessing domestic violence to surviving it. Unresolved trauma left Sandra depressed, anxious, suicidal, and, for several years, homeless. The trauma led her to crack cocaine addiction at sixteen and a 1987 drug-sting arrest captured on national TV by the Broward County Sheriff's Office during the "War on Drugs."

In 1990, Sandra's faith in God and her fight for education freed her from crack cocaine and alcohol addiction. All the same, in 1992, Sandra became very ill. At that time, a diagnosis of AIDS came as a wake-up call, pulling her out of apathy, self-pity, and the numbing mental trench of all the grievous offenses collected during childhood turmoils. That same year, through her Christian Faith, Sandra fought for her health and wellness by gaining the courage to confront the pain, the torment of domestic violence, self-abuse, and childhood secrets. She fought for her education, and in 1994, Commissioner Clay Shaw awarded her Alumni of the Year in Nursing from the BETA program. During that time, Sandra and her compassionate doctor, Alberto Mestre, fought for her life, going from a CD4 of 2 (AIDS diagnosis) to a healthy T-cell count with an undetectable viral load.

In 2004, Sandra climbed Pikes Peak in Colorado, taking a stand to take back her life and wellness completely. After two days on the mountain, Sandra reached the summit: 14,115 feet. That same year, Sandra filed for divorce and freed herself from domestic violence. She lived in her car for over a year, traveling out of state to feel safe. Still, she persevered, and in 2009, Sandra earned her bachelor's degree in human services. In 2016, Sandra completed her autobiography, "Lessons from the Thorns; His Grace is Sufficient." Her book chronicles her fight for mental health and wellness after trauma. In addition, the documentary *Taking Innocence Project Docuseries* captures parts of her life's story and other survivors of human trafficking. Sandra is the International Best-selling author of the collaborative book "Chosen: A Call Through Refinement."

Sandra has made education her priority, and later, in 2013, she received her master's in organizational leadership at Palm Beach Atlantic University. In 2023, Sandra graduated from Liberty University, earning her Doctor of Education degree in Community Care and Counseling Marriage and Family Therapy. She completed her dissertation on the Psychosocial impacts of transgenerational trauma on the parenting styles of African American women.

Today, Sandra operates her mentoring and coaching practice, LGMI, and she also creates programs as the Minority AIDS Coordinator for the Department of Health to halt the transmission of trauma in families by increasing awareness of "why" we do what we do to get to the underlying problem. Additionally, 30 years HIV positive, she helps others understand the importance of knowing their HIV status, getting tested, and staying well. Sandra believes that counseling is imperative.

Knowledge and self-awareness are critical. When we are teachable, we can **Restart to Restore** our lives. Sandra implements a multidimensional approach in her coaching practice to help transform lives with long-term, sustainable, positive outcomes. We are here to serve and impact true transformation in individuals, families, and communities.

To contact Dr. Sandra, please go to:

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**Autobiography:** "Lessons from the Thorns: His Grace is Sufficient" is found on Amazon and Audible.

**Documentary:** Taking Innocence Project, which chronicles part of her story, can be found at the link: [Watch Taking Innocence Project | Prime Video \(amazon.com\)](#)

