

THE STORY: I grew up in Lima, Peru and moved to Georgia 24 years ago. My two sisters and I were raised by a single mother with her own business. She taught us how to be strong, independent, confident, and wise with money but the thing I loved the most was her faith. No matter what happened, her faith was steadfast.

I am the baby of the family, so I had it easier in some ways, but I made decisions that were unexpected such as doing non-paid ministry for three years at the UGA Wesley Foundation after graduating from college. In fact, it was in ministry during college that I started to think I could be a counselor.

After graduating from the University of Georgia, I made the decision to get my master's in clinical mental health. I went to Richmond Graduate University, which is about 10 minutes from downtown Smyrna. Richmond did an amazing job at cultivating a sense of family and, through self-reflection papers and theological courses, I was able to heal during those years. I became more "me" and I learned to love myself. Interestingly, I met my husband at Richmond, so I will forever love that school!

I started private practice in late 2019, the same day I found out I was pregnant with my first baby girl. Six months later, COVID-19 hit. I had time to pause and to reflect on what I wanted. So, in 2021, I started a group practice. In addition to the ups and downs of starting a business, I lost my mom to cancer in December of that year. This devastating blow was followed by the joy of becoming pregnant again in early 2022, which helped me make it through the year. Whenever I had doubts, I could hear my mom saying to keep going. I am thankful that I can continue her legacy of being a female minority business owner driven by my faith.

The name Remain Connected came from knowing that we are never alone, and that if we can remain connected to God, our inner self, and others around us, we can thrive.

WHY I CHOSE TO LIVE IN COBB: I have absolutely fallen in love with Smyrna! It has a small town feeling with the walkability of a city. I wanted to invest into this community and bring more mental health awareness, so I made the decision to close my East Atlanta office and move it here. Best decision I could have made. When we go on walks, I look at my husband and say, "I LOVE our city."

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB? To sit with people in their grief, in their brokenness, in their worries,



Photo by LaFluiche Photo

Mayra Richards, LPC

Remain Connected Counseling

is truly a gift. I help them know that it will be ok and they are not alone. Second to that, having clinicians under me who love God and are so caring, kind, and loyal.

LEISURE TIME: I have two little girls (3 and 7 months) who keep me busy. I love to read, focus on self-care, and recently, I got into Sudoku.

BEST ADVICE: The best investment you can make in life is to heal from your past so you can thrive in the present and influence your future.

WHAT'S NEXT? We are adding more clinicians and are continuing to train our clinicians in highly researched counseling practices, and we recently started accepting insurance. We want to bring more mental health awareness to more people and to grow our practice in a way that best serves our community, and ultimately, beyond.

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